



Iowa Breastfeeding Strategic Plan

2023 - 2026



Health and
Human Services

Revised June 2025

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Disclaimer

Other than any statutory and regulatory requirements included in this guidance document, the contents of this strategic plan do not have the force or effect of law and are not meant to bind the public. This guidance document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or department and agency policies. This document is intended as a resource to maximize breastfeeding support and improve breastfeeding rates among all mothers in the state.

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Message from the Director

Dear Iowans,

Maternal and child health are key priorities for the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and we are committed to being responsive, knowledgeable, and consistent in identifying evidence-based resources and best practice solutions to support maternal health outcomes, which includes a coordinated, multifaceted approach to promoting and protecting breastfeeding. The Iowa Breastfeeding Strategic Plan for 2023-2026 lays the foundation for how we, along with statewide stakeholders, will work to support Iowa families in choosing breastfeeding.

In 2020 and 2021, lawmakers discussed supporting statewide methods to implement consistent messaging, stronger referral systems, improved utilization of programs, and continuity of care related to breastfeeding and to position breastfeeding as the best choice for mother and baby. While ultimately no strategy was enacted by the legislature, the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) saw this interest as a call to action and we have worked in partnership to develop this plan for supporting breastfeeding in our state.

To gain a broad understanding of current breastfeeding practices and policies, and establish community partnerships as well as stakeholder capacity, HHS interviewed twenty statewide stakeholders. That feedback was compiled in a Landscape Opportunity Analysis report and established the framework for the statewide plan. With the final four goals established, small workgroups consisting of state partners worked to assign objectives, strategies, and activities to each goal.

This plan has my strong endorsement, and I'm confident that with the commitment of our partners, we can maximize breastfeeding support and improve breastfeeding rates among all mothers in the state.

Sincerely,



Kelly Garcia
Director, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services

Strategic Planning Team Members

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Strategic Planning Partner

Collective - a Certified B Corporation that helps state and local stakeholders coordinate to improve maternal and child health outcomes by focusing on access to care, evidence-based maternity care practices, and consistent messaging.

The Iowa Breastfeeding Strategic Plan was developed with the involvement of the following organizations:

**Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and
Neonatal Nurses, Iowa Section**

Common Good Iowa

Iowa HHS, Bureau of Family Health

Iowa HHS, Childhood Obesity Prevention

Iowa HHS, Healthy Child Care Iowa Program

Iowa HHS, SNAP-Ed

Iowa HHS, Statewide Perinatal Care Program

Iowa HHS, Title V & Title X

**Iowa HHS, Title V Community-Based Doula
Project for African American Families**

Iowa HHS, Women, Infants, and Children

Iowa Academy of Family Physicians

Iowa Black Doula Collective

Iowa Breastfeeding Coalition

Iowa Department of Administrative Services

Iowa Department of Education

Iowa Finance Authority

Iowa Hospital Association

Iowa SIDS Foundation

Iowa Total Care

Introduction

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has developed a breastfeeding strategic plan that will maximize breastfeeding support and improve breastfeeding rates among all mothers in the state. The breastfeeding strategic plan includes steps to build collaborative partnerships and local coalitions that follow updated evidence-based best practices, policies, and procedures in supporting breastfeeding as the preferred infant feeding method.

Overview of the Process

In 2021, a diverse group of state partners representing various sectors of influence, including health systems, communities, workplaces, policymakers, public health, and specific populations, was identified as critical to understanding the landscape of breastfeeding support and needs specific to their respective environments and experiences. Through group and individual discussion with partners that included childcare providers, healthcare professionals, insurance representatives, doulas, lactation consultants, worksite employees, associations, and groups advocating for best practices related to maternal and child health, there was a better understanding of the current breastfeeding support and resources available and the gaps that exist.

The 2023-2026 Iowa Breastfeeding Strategic Plan outlines goals, strategies, and assessments that provide decision-making guidance for resource allocation and prioritization of goals and strategies.

Each goal outlined in the plan has a dedicated workgroup, consisting of state and local-level stakeholders who are committed to ensuring their work supports the overall plan. The workgroup will develop partnerships, identify funding sources, and implement action steps.

Development Timeline

May 2021

State Partner Strategic Plan Kick-Off Meeting

June – August 2021

State Landscape Scan: Held one-on-one partner meetings to gather information on individual program priorities and needs.

August 2021

Local Landscape Scan: Local community input survey conducted.

October 2021

Landscape Opportunity Analysis: Compiled information from State & Local Landscape Scans.

October 2021

Landscape Opportunity Analysis and Priority Area Review Meeting

December 2021

Priority areas developed.

January – April 2022

Goals, objectives and strategies drafted.

May – July 2022

Workgroup finalized goals, objectives, and strategies. Activities and action steps drafted.

August – September 2022

Strategic Plan review and approval.

Priority Areas

State and local landscape scans identified key priorities to inform the strategic plan goals, objectives, and strategies. All information was compiled into a Landscape Opportunity Analysis and Priority Summary.

State Landscape Scan

The State Landscape Scan discovers what's currently happening at the state level and what opportunities for program and policy alignment are available. During facilitated meetings with twenty state-level organizations and programs, partners shared information about existing programs, policies, priority areas, local networks, reach, data sources, training and funding. The information gathered was utilized to complete a cross-program analysis and inform recommendations for next steps. The results of these conversations are included in the [Iowa Landscape Opportunity Analysis](#).

Local Landscape Scan

The Local Landscape Scan provides the opportunity to hear local perspectives early in the planning process to ensure a complete picture of communities' needs and organizations' interests are incorporated into state-level decision-making. Surveys were disseminated to participating state-level organizations' local networks to collect information on local needs, priorities, successes and challenges. Seventeen local communities participated in the survey. [Read the complete Iowa Local Landscape Scan](#).

Landscape Opportunity Analysis

The Landscape Opportunity Analysis compiles the information from the State Landscape Scan and Local Landscape Scan to provide an awareness of existing programs and initiatives, needs, and opportunities for alignment and development of new initiatives. The analysis includes recommendations on opportunities for program alignment, collaborative planning, initiative focus area(s), solutions (bundled tools, training, and activities), community voice integration, and funding. Read the complete [Iowa Landscape Opportunity Analysis](#).

Priority Summary

The top priority areas indicated in the state landscape and local landscape scan include the following:

- ▶ Improved Access to Care
- ▶ Creating Stronger Community-Clinical Linkages
- ▶ Local Organization Collaboration
- ▶ Improved Insurance Coverage for Breastfeeding Support
- ▶ State Program Collaboration Support
- ▶ Increased Breastfeeding Training for Medical Residents, Providers, and other Medical Professionals
- ▶ State and Local Program Coordination
- ▶ Central Database for Breastfeeding Resources
- ▶ Developing Breastfeeding Designations (i.e., worksite, childcare, etc.)
- ▶ Increased Support for Doula Programming
- ▶ Paid Family Medical Leave Legislation

Strengths, Areas for Improvement and Opportunities

Strengths	Improvement Areas	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Iowa WIC programs' breastfeeding support and service availability. ▪ Continuity of care models. ▪ Dedication by various organizations in the community to improve breastfeeding rates. ▪ Breast pump coverage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving access to lactation services and resources in rural areas. ▪ Providing opportunities for those pursuing lactation professional credentials ▪ Breastfeeding education for providers and continued education for lactation professionals. ▪ Referral systems and awareness of lactation services available. ▪ Medicaid and private insurance coverage for lactation services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and strengthen community partnerships. ▪ Engage with policymakers to improve lactation service coverage. ▪ Utilize state partnerships to improve referral systems and access to care. ▪ Engage a wide audience to ensure comprehensive program development

Read the complete [Iowa Priority Summary](#).

Strategic Plan

The Iowa Breastfeeding Strategic Plan prioritizes building collaborative partnerships to improve maternal-child health program coordination; improving access to adequate and quality lactation services; increasing community-based support; and improving awareness, support, and access to donor breast milk. Iowa HHS will continue to grow partners and ensure community involvement to work toward accomplishing these priority areas.

Goal 1: Build collaborative partnerships to improve coordination of maternal and child health breastfeeding programs.

Objective 1.1: Develop a statewide referral system to improve access to maternal and child health breastfeeding services.

Strategy 1.1.1: Develop a referral process with at least two state partner organizations and programs to make referrals to the WIC Program and Title V Program for breastfeeding support services.

Activities:

- Identify at least two state partner organizations and programs to begin aligning referral processes.
- Develop aligned referral processes and policies at the state level.
- Disseminate information on new referral policies and procedures locally.

Strategy 1.1.2: Develop a referral process between human services and public health programs that is implemented within Health and Human Services Field Offices.

Activities:

- Review human service and public health programing referral processes and procedures that would be applicable for HHS Field Office referrals and create a core list of referral opportunities.
- Engage HHS Field Offices and provide training on new referral opportunities.
- Provide Community Partnership Technical Assistance to Iowa HHS Field Offices to support implementation.

Objective 1.2: Build collaborative partnerships and improve coordination in 5 local communities in Iowa.

Strategy 1.2.1: Provide Community Partnership Technical Assistance in five local communities each year.

Activities:

- Target local communities to identify the greatest breastfeeding needs
- Contract with Coffective to provide Community Partnership Technical Assistance utilizing WIC Operational Adjustment funds.

Strategy 1.2.2: Develop a two-year, three-community collaborative that mobilizes funding into rural communities to address barriers to accessing adequate breastfeeding services.

Activities:

- Review 2021 Iowa Landscape Opportunity Analysis, survey data, and statewide data to determine the greatest barriers to accessing breastfeeding services.
- Contract with Coffective to design and build a collaborative and identify funding sources.
- Write for grant opportunities to fund the collaborative.

Objective 1.3: Develop and enhance state organization and program partnerships.

Strategy 1.3.1: Improve state-level partnerships and collaboration between health and human service programs and at least three non-government sector organizations and programs.

Activities:

- Review the 2021 Iowa Landscape Opportunity Analysis to identify partnerships with the greatest need and impact.
- Contract with Coffective to utilize their sustainable partnership development model.
- Develop indicators that include quick wins and collaborative activity outputs to determine the benefit of the partnership

Strategy 1.3.2: Develop a statewide breastfeeding committee that meets quarterly.

Activities:

- Design committee's purpose and goals.
- Invite partners involved in the state breastfeeding strategic planning process.

Goal 2: Improve access to adequate and quality lactation services across Iowa.

Objective 2.1: Develop a resource that identifies available lactation support across Iowa and is accessible to all Iowans.

Strategy 2.1.1: Develop a Centralized Breastfeeding Database for breastfeeding resources and referrals.

Activities:

- Consult with Coffective to build a centralized database.
- Develop a presentation that introduces the database to state partners.
- Recruit all organizations and individuals serving prenatal women and breastfeeding dyads to enter information into the database.

Objective 2.2: Enhance culturally-congruent lactation services for all women across Iowa.

Strategy 2.2.1: Develop and distribute population-specific materials and services available on the centralized breastfeeding database.

Activities:

- Review existing needs assessments and gather information through surveys, focus groups, and listening sessions to determine needs in rural areas and for individual population groups.
- Identify resources utilized in other states to replicate and customize for Iowa.
- Identify key stakeholders to help develop materials (co-created between state and local individuals).

Strategy 2.2.2: Develop outreach and referral processes that increase awareness, support, and referrals to culturally congruent complementary support services for all Iowa women.

Activities:

- Partner with doula programs in Iowa to identify appropriate referral needs and processes.
- Partner with the Iowa Hospital Association to provide education to birthing hospital staff and doula services
- Provide education on complementary support services to other non-hospital organizations that serve families.

Strategy 2.2.3: Ensure all local WIC agency peer counseling staff reflect the population being served.

Activities:

- Review WIC caseload and determine priority WIC agencies.
- Develop best practices for ensuring WIC Peer Counselors reflect the population being served.
- Provide assistance to local WIC agencies on the implementation of the developed best practice regarding the peer counseling workforce.

Objective 2.3: Increase availability of quality breastfeeding training to clinical, community, and government organizations.

Strategy 2.3.1: Develop breastfeeding training for HHS Field Offices to provide them with an understanding of referrals to lactation services (done in conjunction with Objective 1.1).

Activities:

- Determine the appropriate level of breastfeeding information needed to establish a referral process (done in conjunction with Objective 1.1).

Strategy 2.3.2: Distribute information on breastfeeding training opportunities for medical professionals annually (residents, providers, others).

Activities:

- Develop a committee to review existing training options and curriculum development for areas of need.
- Disseminate training opportunities to local organizations.

Strategy 2.3.3: Provide breastfeeding training for community partners serving families. (Maternal health, home visiting, childcare, local public health, clinic staff)

Activities:

- Revise the Iowa Breastfeeding Coalition curriculum.

- Partner with state programs that have local networks that serve families to provide breastfeeding training opportunities.

Strategy 2.3.4: Incorporate strategies associated with trauma-informed care into all newly developed breastfeeding training offered by HHS.

Activities:

- HHS partners with mental health and trauma advocates to inform the development of a toolkit on the processes and content for newly developed and revised trainings.

Goal 3: Increase Community-Based Support for Breastfeeding

Objective 3.1: Increase the number of birthing hospitals in Iowa implementing baby-friendly, evidence-based maternity care practices.

Strategy 3.1.1: Develop an interim baby-friendly hospital designation.

Activities:

- Review other models from other states.
- Establish a team to develop a plan and process to develop a designation in Iowa.

Strategy 3.1.2: All birthing hospitals in Iowa include baby-friendly practices they are following in their profile in the Iowa Breastfeeding Database (created as a part of Objective 2.1).

Activities:

- Include outreach and tutorial information in newsletters and listservs that reach birthing hospitals.

Strategy 3.1.3: Provide information and training on baby-friendly practices for hospital staff.

Activities:

- Develop a list of all training opportunities and distribute to birthing hospitals through the Iowa Hospital Association and state program websites and databases.
- Present information at the Iowa Breastfeeding Conference.
- Identify which steps hospitals are practicing and set up peer support and learning opportunities.

- Local breastfeeding coalitions provide presentations of information at individual hospitals.

Objective 3.2: Improve access to breastfeeding support by offering classes and support groups.

Strategy 3.2.1: Identify current available classes and support groups.

Activities:

- In partnership with the Iowa Breastfeeding Coalition, survey local organizations.

Strategy 3.2.2: Develop a toolkit and share best practices and resources for implementation.

Activities:

- Research and glean from other states' community breastfeeding support services.
- Develop resources that include rural areas where support opportunities can be more challenging.
- Develop lessons learned shared by other local communities.

Strategy 3.2.3: Develop partnerships in local communities to support implementation, referral, and utilization of classes and support groups.

Activities:

- Recruit local breastfeeding coalitions to champion the implementation in the communities they serve.
- Contract with Coffective to provide Community Partnership Technical Assistance.
- Identify funding sources to provide shared education offerings across the state of Iowa for consistency of messaging between partners.

Objective 3.3: Develop a model for lactation centers within local public health.

Strategy 3.3.1: Explore lactation center models used in other states.

Activities:

- Complete an assessment of other states' lactation center models, including the learning process and logistics from a local lactation center.
- Assess other programs' services and how they may intersect with lactation center models.

Strategy 3.3.2: Develop state partnerships that support the development of the model.

Activities:

- Convene a workgroup that includes WIC, Title V, clinical, community group, and lactation consultant representation to determine a model that fits within existing lactation service opportunities.

Strategy 3.3.3: Identify reimbursement options for lactation services.

Activities:

- Develop options based on other states' successes and similar program reimbursement in Iowa to model after.

Strategy 3.3.4: Pilot lactation center model in one local public health department.

Activities:

- Identify the best location based on readiness and capacity.
- Collect data over a one-year pilot to show impact.
- Glean lessons learned to scale and replicate.

Objective 3.4: Develop breastfeeding-friendly designations to increase the number of breastfeeding-friendly spaces.

Strategy 3.4.1: Develop a designation for breastfeeding practices which could include worksites, childcare, and other locations.

Activities:

- Explore already established models that can be replicated in Iowa.
- Create a method to promote designated locations.

Strategy 3.4.2: Create awareness of the need for breastfeeding in the workplace.

Activities:

- Review other states' protections for breastfeeding in the workplace.
- Meet with the Iowa HHS legislative liaison about breastfeeding protections in the workplace.
- Inclusion of business associations in planning and development.
- Develop an awareness of protecting breastfeeding in the workplace.

Goal 4: Improve Awareness, Support and Access to Donor Breastmilk.

Objective 4.1: Obtain Medicaid, MCO, or private insurance payment for donor milk to ensure equitable distribution to infants at home.

Strategy 4.1.1: Conduct a review of at least two successful coverage models of other milk banking systems for infants at home.

Activities:

- Review existing bills in states with donor milk coverage for infants at home.

Strategy 4.1.2: Develop a proposal to present to Iowa Medicaid, MCOs, and private insurers.

Activities:

- Develop a committee that includes a diverse group of local and state individuals to develop a proposal that is informed by existing bills from other states and Iowa insurance plan coverage.

Strategy 4.1.3: Implement coverage of donor milk for infants at home.

Activities:

- Work with MCOs to implement coverage options and replicate with other areas of coverage.

Objective 4.2: Create an awareness and social marketing campaign to increase donor milk usage and donations of ounces dispensed from the previous year.

Strategy 4.2.1: Develop a media campaign for social media platforms, radio, and television.

Activities:

- Develop a workgroup that includes marketing departments from the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services and the University of Iowa Hospital.
- Obtain grant funding to determine appropriate planning needs.

Strategy 4.2.2: Develop a print outreach campaign.

Activities:

- Develop materials that can be utilized by local agencies to inform Iowa families.

Objective 4.3: Increase the availability of donor breastmilk across Iowa.

Strategy 4.3.1: Establish donor milk distribution sites.

Activities:

- Explore the food bank distribution of donor milk.
- Distribute the standard of procedure developed by Mother's Milk Bank of Iowa for donor milk distribution sites.
- Create awareness of the opportunity and option of becoming a distribution site to hospitals, healthcare clinics, WIC clinics, etc.

Strategy 4.3.2: Increase the number of milk collection depot sites.

Activities:

- Distribute the standard of procedure developed by the Mother's Milk Bank of Iowa for milk collection depot sites.
- Create awareness of the opportunity and option of becoming a milk collection site to hospitals, healthcare clinics, WIC clinics, etc.
- Outreach to WIC agencies to become milk collection depot sites.
- Launch and open new donor milk collection depot sites.

More Information

For more information, questions, or to contribute to the Iowa Breastfeeding Strategic Plan, contact Lexie Stoneking at lexie.stoneking@hhs.iowa.gov.