

# North Carolina Maternity Center Breastfeeding Friendly Designation

# **Standard Application**

## **Purpose of the State-Level Designation**

The North Carolina Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation recognizes maternity centers that actively promote, protect, and support breastfeeding within their organization.

The program uses a five-star rating system, with one star awarded for every two steps implemented from the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF.

Facilities are strongly encouraged to form a multi-disciplinary project team to collaborate on the completion of their application.

## **Eligible Facilities**

The standard application is for maternity centers that do not currently hold a Baby-Friendly® designation from Baby-Friendly USA.

While achievement of Baby-Friendly® designation is encouraged, it is not required. This is a separate, state-level designation that honors incremental progress in the *Ten Steps*. Facilities do not need to be actively pursuing Baby-Friendly designation now or in the future to apply.

Facilities that are already Baby-Friendly® designated should instead complete the <u>Abbreviated Application</u>, which offers a streamlined process and automatically qualifies the facility for a five stars.

To be eligible for the North Carolina Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation, facilities must:

- Provide maternity care services in North Carolina.
- Have implemented or be in the process of implementing one or more of the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding.
- Designate a staff member to serve as the facility's point of contact throughout the application process.
- Submit all materials by the stated deadlines.

# Why Your Facility Should Apply

Participating in the North Carolina Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation program demonstrates your facility's commitment to providing high-quality, evidence-based maternity care that promotes optimal health for mothers, infants, and families.

The designation recognizes facilities that implement the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*, a globally validated framework shown to increase breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity — key factors linked to improved maternal and infant health outcomes.

By pursuing this state-level recognition, your facility will:

- Strengthen alignment with the North Carolina Perinatal Health Strategic Plan (2022–2027), Healthy People 2030 goals and the U.S. Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding, which emphasize expanding maternity care practices that protect, promote, and support breastfeeding.
- Reinforce your organization's reputation as a leader in maternal and infant health within your community.
- Demonstrate measurable progress toward creating a supportive environment where all families can make informed infant feeding decisions.



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Applying for the designation provides an opportunity for reflection, quality improvement, and statewide recognition of your facility's efforts to advance North Carolina's public health goals.

## **Application Preparation**

Facilities are encouraged to:

- Review the North Carolina Maternity Center Breastfeeding Friendly Application here.
- Form a multidisciplinary team (e.g., nursing, lactation, quality improvement, and administration) to complete the application.
- Gather supporting documentation such as policies, staff training records, and patient education materials.
- Verify that all documentation reflects current practices.

## **Required Supporting Documentation**

The supporting documentation required varies by Step and is outlined in the application. It does **not** include any patient-identifiable information. Examples of acceptable documentation include but are not limited to: Facility breastfeeding policies and protocols, staff training logs or curricula, patient education handouts, aggregated data demonstrating implementation, charting templates, and infant formula contracts (if the facility is paying a fair market rate for formula).

# **Application Instructions**

• Complete the NC Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation Application: here.

# **Application Review Process**

- Application Deadlines: April 30 & October 31 each year.
- **Submission Requirements:** All required sections of the application must be fully completed to be considered for review.
- **Review Process:** Applications are reviewed by a multi-disciplinary team review team appointed by the NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child and Family Well-Being.
- Confirmation: Facilities will receive an email confirmation of receipt within 10 days of submission.
- Submission Tip: Do not include sheet protectors with your application or supporting materials.
- Ongoing Progress: Facilities are encouraged to resubmit as they implement additional steps to earn more stars.

## **Application Submission Timeline**

Applications are reviewed following each submission deadline. Facilities will be contacted according to the following schedule:

- April 30 submissions: Initial contact by June 30
- October 31 submissions: Initial contact by December 31

**Note:** Due to scheduling conflicts, the review committee may occasionally meet later than the initial contact date. Facilities will be notified if any delays occur.

#### **Requests for Additional Information**

If the review committee determines that additional information is needed, the State Breastfeeding Coordinator will contact the facility to schedule a conference call. This call provides an opportunity to review feedback and clarify what additional materials are needed.



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#### Following the call:

- Facilities have two weeks to submit the requested revisions or documentation.
- After resubmission, no further clarification will be requested.
- The submitted materials will be reviewed, and eligibility for designation will be determined.
- The State has 30 days from receipt of additional documentation to complete the review and issue a final determination.

## **Notification and Recognition**

Final designation decisions will be communicated via email and mail.

Facilities awarded stars will receive:

- A certificate suitable for framing
- Public recognition on the websites of the Division of Child and Family Well-Being and the Community Nutrition Services Section

#### **Designation Duration and Renewal**

Designations are valid for three years from the date of award. Facilities may reapply at any time to increase their star rating or to renew an expiring designation.

If a facility earns additional stars during its current designation period, the three-year term remains based on the original award date and is not extended.

# **Application Submission**

• **Submit one original hard copy** of the completed application with the signed cover sheet and all supporting documentation to one of the following addresses:

U.S. Mail	Federal Express/UPS
NCDHHS Division of Child and Family Wellbeing NC Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation Community Nutrition Services Section 1915 Health Services Way 1914 Mail Services Center Raleigh, NC 27699-1914	NCDHHS Division of Child and Family Wellbeing NC Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation Community Nutrition Services Section 1915 Health Services Way Raleigh, NC 27607

#### **Contact for Questions**

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