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* (referred to as the *Ten Steps*), 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 currently designated by Baby-Friendly, USA may complete the Abbreviated Application to receive a five-star North Carolina Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation.

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

- Provide maternity care services in North Carolina.
- Have implemented one or more of the *Ten Steps* or be actively working toward implementation. Stars are awarded only for steps that have been implemented and are supported by the required documentation.
- 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 practices outlined in the *Ten Steps*, an evidence-based framework associated with improved breastfeeding initiation, exclusivity, and duration.

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.
- Receive public recognition for your organization's commitment to breastfeeding-supportive maternity care.
- Demonstrate measurable progress toward creating a supportive environment where all families can make informed infant feeding decisions.

- 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, blank 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 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 additional information is needed, the State Breastfeeding Coordinator will contact the facility to arrange a conference call to review the committee's findings and clarify the requested documentation.

Following the call, the facility will have two weeks to submit the requested materials. The review committee will make its final determination within 30 days of receiving the additional documentation. No further clarification will be requested following resubmission.

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
NC Department of Health and Human Services Attn: NC Maternity Center Breastfeeding Friendly Designation Division of Child and Family Well-Being (DCFW) Community Nutrition Services Section, Room 08830, 8th Floor 1914 Mail Service Center 1910 Human Services Lane Raleigh, NC 27699-1914

Contact for Questions

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