



North Carolina Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation

Introduction

The **North Carolina Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation (NC MCBFD)** initiative recognizes maternity centers that take measurable steps to promote, protect, and support breastfeeding within their facilities.

The designation uses a **five-star system**, awarding one star for every two steps achieved from the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, as defined by the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.

Baby-Friendly USA (BFUSA) is the national authority overseeing the **Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative** in the United States and designates facilities that fully implement all Ten Steps. In contrast, the North Carolina initiative encourages maternity centers to work toward breastfeeding-friendly practices one step at a time—acknowledging and celebrating incremental progress and sustained commitment.

Note: Facilities that have achieved Baby-Friendly designation from BFUSA may submit an abbreviated application to receive a five-star NC MCBFD designation.

The Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all healthcare staff.
2. Train all healthcare staff in the skills necessary to implement the policy.
3. Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.
4. Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within one hour of birth.
5. Show mothers how to breastfeed and how to maintain lactation, even if separated from their infants.
6. Give newborns no food or drink other than breast milk, unless medically indicated.
7. Practice “rooming-in” – allow mothers and infants to remain together 24 hours a day.
8. Encourage breastfeeding on demand.
9. Give no artificial teats or pacifiers (also called bottle nipples) to breastfeeding infants.
10. Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them upon discharge.

Each of the Ten Steps is described in the application. Following each description are related questions, many of which require supporting documentation. Examples and options are provided throughout to guide applicants in meeting documentation requirements.

How NC MCBFD Differs from BFUSA’s Baby-Friendly Designation

The Baby-Friendly® Hospital Initiative, administered by Baby-Friendly USA, evaluates facilities based on the WHO/UNICEF Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, requiring full adherence through rigorous on-site assessments by external reviewers.



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In contrast, the NC MCBFD evaluates facilities using multiple evidence-based sources, including:

- **Baby-Friendly® Hospital Initiative guidelines**
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) mPINC Survey** (Maternity Practices in Infant Nutrition and Care)
- **Other evidence-based practices** as determined by the NC MCBFD Review Committee

NC MCBFD criteria are tailored to practices that can be objectively verified through self-assessment and documentation review. This approach ensures alignment with best practices, allows flexibility for emerging evidence, and focuses on measurable standards.

By combining national standards with validated survey indicators, NC MCBFD offers an accessible, scalable pathway for facilities to strengthen breastfeeding support—even if they are not yet prepared for full external validation required by Baby-Friendly® designation.

Note: While NC MCBFD offers accessible, evidence-based recognition of progress toward breastfeeding-friendly practices, Baby-Friendly® designation remains the gold standard for facilities achieving full implementation of the WHO/UNICEF Ten Steps.

Facilities achieving a five-star NC MCBFD designation have demonstrated strong commitment to the Ten Steps; however, this recognition does not confer Baby-Friendly® status or verify full compliance with Baby-Friendly® criteria.

Facilities seeking Baby-Friendly® designation must work directly with Baby-Friendly USA to meet all standards and complete the required external assessment.

Benefits of Participation

The NC MCBFD offers maternity centers an accessible pathway to improve breastfeeding support while gaining public recognition. Key benefits include:

- **Self-Assessment and Incremental Recognition:** Maternity centers complete a structured self-assessment and earn one star for every two steps achieved toward implementing the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*.
- **No Fees:** There are no application or designation fees, making participation accessible to all maternity centers.
- **State-Led, Locally Focused:** NC MCBFD promotes continuous quality improvement and healthy competition among North Carolina facilities.
- **Public Recognition and Free Marketing:** Designated maternity centers receive statewide recognition and community promotion as leaders in breastfeeding support.
- **No On-Site Visits:** Verification is based on self-assessment and submitted documentation, eliminating the need for formal site visits.
- **Improved Health Outcomes:** Participation supports better breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity rates and enhances patient satisfaction.

For more information, see the North Carolina Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Website [here](#).