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Cook County Department of Public Health Promotes Breastfeeding Benefits *Encourages Hospitals to be "Baby Friendly" during World Breastfeeding Week*

Chicago – The Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH), HealthConnect One (HC One) and the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (ICAAP) are promoting the benefits of breastfeeding during World Breastfeeding Week (August 1-7) by encouraging suburban Cook County hospitals with maternity facilities to adopt Baby-Friendly USA's *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*.

"Breastfeeding provides improved immunity, reduces childhood infections, and lowers childhood obesity by 22 percent," said Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D., MPH, chief operating officer, CCDPH. "Increasing breastfeeding education and the number of Baby Friendly hospitals can have an impact on generations to come."

As part of Breastfeeding Awareness Month, World Breastfeeding Week focuses on protecting, supporting and promoting breastfeeding around the world, and will be celebrated in 170 countries.

Often, a lack of information about breastfeeding, along with limited access to affordable breastfeeding support services, prevents women from breastfeeding. To help encourage breastfeeding and highlight its importance, HC One and ICAAP are working to assist hospitals implement Baby-Friendly steps to improve breastfeeding practices, through a grant from the suburban Cook County Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) Program, a joint project of CCDPH and the Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

"The health and nutritional benefits of breastfeeding are immeasurable and critically important in the early months of a baby's life," State Senator Toi Hutchinson said. "Anything we can do to support women who choose to breastfeed is good public policy."

"ICAAP recognizes the importance of breastfeeding for infant, child, and maternal health," said Krystal Revai, MD, MPH, FAAP, ICAAP Committee on Breastfeeding. "We are enlisting the involvement of our network of 1,900 pediatricians to improve breastfeeding support within physician practices. And by encouraging hospitals to adopt initiatives like the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*, we're helping to promote lasting change."

These *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding* outline practices to support breastfeeding at clinics, hospitals and public health agencies:

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all health care staff.
2. Train all health care staff in skills necessary to implement this 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 they are separated from their infants.
6. Give newborn infants 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 pacifiers or artificial nipples to breastfeeding infants.
10. Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinic.

About HealthConnect One (HC One)

HC One is a nationally recognized nonprofit training and technical assistance agency that uses innovative, community-based approaches to support direct-service providers in promoting the health of mothers, infants, and families. www.healthconnectone.org.

About the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (ICAAP)

ICAAP's mission is to promote the right of all children to live happy, safe, and healthy lives, to ensure children receive quality medical care from pediatricians – the most qualified physicians to deliver this care – and to assess and serve the needs of its membership. www.illinoisAAP.org.

For more information, please visit www.cookcountypublichealth.org.

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