

Supporting Families with Infants

A Guide for Food Distribution Sites

The work you do ensures that families have access to healthy foods, especially during challenging times. **Thank you!** Our youngest citizens—babies—are most vulnerable to food insecurity, and the Minnesota Breastfeeding Coalition (MBC) is committed to making sure they receive the healthiest first food possible.

Did you know that the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend breastmilk as the optimal food for infants, especially during emergencies? MBC wants to make sure that the parents who want to breastfeed have the support they need, even during crisis.

Can you help us?

Human milk is the healthiest food for infants—and the only food needed for their first 6 months, at which time solid foods are introduced and human milk continued for the first year and beyond

This is even more important for our Black, Brown, and Indigenous families who live with racism every day. Their babies face greater health risks, and breastmilk gives them lifelong health protections. Making sure your food pantry is supporting families who are breastfeeding is critical in helping *all* Minnesota families thrive! We are asking food pantries to **consider following these 3 simple steps:**

1. Request donations that support chest/breastfeeding families

When soliciting donations to the food pantry, request diapers, wipes, breast pumps, nursing pads, milk storage bags, pumping bras, prenatal vitamins, and baby-wearing carriers. Have a list of local resources and services from your public health or WIC agency,

2. Consider placement of resources for infants

Place breastfeeding supplies and information in a *more* prominent location than formula. Placing formula in a less visible location and providing it upon a family's request creates the opportunity for a conversation that can include information and resources if the family is also providing breastmilk to their infant.

3. Have a conversation

Simple questions help a family receive what they need and respect their infant feeding goals.

How old is your infant?

Babies over 12 months do not need formula and should be encouraged to eat table foods with the family

How has your under 12-month-old been feeding - breastfeeding, formula feeding, or both?

Chest/breastfeeding families: offer resources and supplies, but not free formula

Families providing both or recently breastfeeding: offer resources, supplies, and formula, and instructions for safe preparation of formula

Formula feeding families: offer formula and instructions for safe preparation of formula

Do not offer formula to pregnant families before baby comes, as this is one of the easiest ways to undercut families' chest/breastfeeding goals. Offer breastfeeding resources and supplies, as well as referrals to your local WIC agency and other support programs.

