

BFREE Newsletter

BREASTFEEDING RESILIENCY, ENGAGEMENT, AND EMPOWERMENT

"EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BREASTFEED EVERY STEP OF THE WAY"

IN THIS ISSUE

Connecting With Our
Spanish-Speaking
Community PG. 2

Recent and
Upcoming Events PG. 3

Success
Spotlight PG. 4

Correction Law and
Statistics PG. 5

An Unjust Cycle of
Punishment PG. 6

Spotlight on New
Hour- LI PG. 7

Mother's
Perspective PG. 9

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear BFREE Coalition & Community Members,

Happy fall from the BFREE Team! We hope you and your families are continuing to stay safe as we go into cooler weather. We are especially pleased to present the October issue of our newsletter.

We are highlighting the breastfeeding experiences of incarcerated mothers, who face added barriers in finding breastfeeding support, often due to the inaccessibility of resources, or due to a lack of knowledge about their individual needs among professionals in the prison industry. We are grateful to all of the mothers and organization advocates who shared their stories and experiences in this issue.

First, we highlight efforts to connect with our Spanish-speaking and Black breastfeeding populations. Next, we spotlight CCMC Glen Cove Pediatric Practice for achieving Breastfeeding Friendly recognition. Then, Amanda Acevedo from New Hour-LI, a Long Island nonprofit organization that supports current and formerly incarcerated women, their children and families. She calls attention to the need for more breastfeeding resources, psychological support, and lactation support offered to mothers in prison or jail (i.e., prison is a long-term facility for convicted inmates of serious crimes; jail is a short-term facility for people awaiting trial or held for minor crimes). Next, we asked Amanda about her experiences with breastfeeding mothers as a reentry specialist and some of the experiences of the mothers she worked with. Her interview calls attention to the need to reduce the gap between incarcerated mothers and breastfeeding support.

Lastly, we are so excited to share our Mother's Perspective videos. These four videos offer information and insight into the lives of incarcerated mothers and their babies.

As always, we are sincerely appreciative to all of this edition's contributors, to the entire BFREE Steering Committee for its active engagement and sage advice, and to each of you, our many collaborators, for your collective passion in support of breastfeeding.

Please email us at BFREE@northwell.edu to share feedback and any potential contribution ideas for future newsletters!

Sincerely,



Henry Bernstein, DO, MHCM, FAAP
Principal Investigator
Creating Breastfeeding Friendly Communities



*The BFREE Team understands that the language around breastfeeding can be very gendered and risks alienating marginalized populations. While we are encouraging more inclusive language, such as "parents" over "mothers", "partners" over "fathers", and "human milk" over "breast milk", we also wanted to stay true to the voices that generously contributed to this newsletter. We hope to continue educating ourselves and expand the inclusivity of our work to promote healthy infant feeding for all parents.

Connecting With Our Spanish-Speaking Community

The BFREE Team remains grateful to Yezenia Chaparro (CBC), Paola Duarte (CLC), Sandy McCabe (IBCLC), and Fadhylla Saballos-Tercero (IBCLC) for participating in our ongoing Spanish Baby Cafés to promote services that are culturally and linguistically competent. We would also like to thank our new Subcommittee for Spanish-Speaking Communities for recommending this valuable initiative and for working tirelessly to advocate for the community! The BFREE Team established this cross-collaborative subcommittee last November to actively engage our community members, partners, and stakeholders in an effort to improve our outreach strategies and cultural competence toward Latinx communities. Finally, we continue to spotlight Sandy McCabe and Lizeth Villa as well as Dr. Christian Suri for participating in radio show interviews about breastfeeding in Spanish with La Fiesta 98.5! We are grateful for their valuable insight and for our partnership with La Fiesta 98.5, which expands our capacity to promote healthy infant feeding among Latinx communities across Long Island. If you would like to listen to their interviews, please click on their names.

This work is supported by a NYSDOH “Creating Breastfeeding Friendly Communities” grant, which aims to expand community-based breastfeeding partnerships and reduce disparities in the rates of breastfeeding across New York State. Congratulations to all for being recognized for your hard work, and we thank you so much for collaborating with our team!

Subcommittee for Spanish-Speaking Communities

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Check out our website for more resources: <https://www.bfreecoalition.org>

Visit us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/BFREE.Coalition/>

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Creating
Breastfeeding Friendly
Communities



Cohen Children's
Medical Center
Northwell Health™

Recent and Upcoming Events

To access the video, click the linked image below:



In honor of Black Breastfeeding Week this past month, the BFREE Team and the Bridgehampton Child Care and Recreational Center (BHCCRC) hosted a panel discussion about breastfeeding stories and advice. Our expert panel shared excellent advice and stories. Our team's presentation included information about the benefits of breastfeeding and how to access breastfeeding support. To access our presentation, please click [here](#).

Join us for BFREE Baby Cafés!

Tuesdays

1:30-3pm (English): <http://bit.ly/sshbabycafe>

6-7pm (Spanish): <http://bit.ly/bfreebabycafe>

7-8pm (English): <http://bit.ly/bfreebabycafe>

Thursdays

10-11am (Spanish): <http://bit.ly/bfreebabycafe>

11am-12pm (English): <http://bit.ly/bfreebabycafe>

Prenatal Classes (Caring for Two)

1st Thursday of Every Month

10am-12pm

(English, Spanish translation available)

<http://bit.ly/bfreebabycafe>

To learn more about the BFREE Team please click below:



[BFREE Website](#)



[BFREE Facebook](#)

Success Spotlight

The BFREE Team is happy to celebrate CCMC Glen Cove Pediatric Practice for achieving Breastfeeding Friendly recognition! We would like to thank our site champion Dr. Mena for putting in a great amount of effort to support her employees and members of the community during these difficult times.

We would also like to spotlight Kids Place Daycare in Suffolk county. Though we were unable to collaborate in-person, we worked with Angelica Pitty-Beitia, the director of the day care, via Zoom to initiate and complete the breastfeeding designation process. We would also like to thank the Child Care Council of Suffolk and Division of Nutrition - Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for their help and unending support of the BFREE Team! A list of child care centers and day care homes that are Breastfeeding Friendly and participate in CACFP in New York State can be found at:

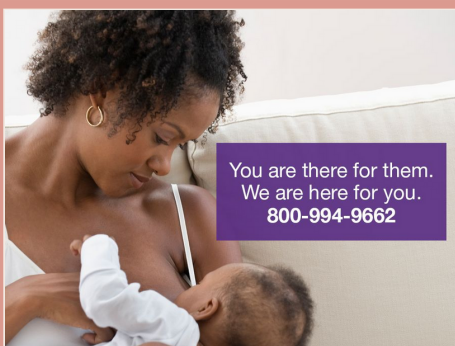
https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/cacfp/breastfeeding_homes/



Pictured is Dr. Mena from CCMC Glen Cove Pediatric Practice holding the Breastfeeding Friendly certificate!



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You are there for them.
We are here for you.
800-994-9662

**Office on Women's Health
National Breastfeeding
Helpline: 1-800-994-9662**

Call anytime M-F 9am-6pm to talk with a health information specialist in English or Spanish

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Correction Law & Statistics

New York Consolidated Laws,
Correction Law - COR § 611 - Subdivision 1

No restraints can be used when a woman is in labor, admitted to a hospital, institution or clinic for delivery, or recovering after giving birth.

² 111,000 women are incarcerated in state and local prisons; 3-4% are pregnant when entering prison.

¹ Only one quarter of US states offer Mother-Baby Units in correctional facilities; these are common in other nations.

New York Consolidated Laws,
Correction Law - COR § 611 - Subdivision 1

If a pregnant woman at a local correctional facility is about to give birth, such a woman will be provided comfortable accommodations, maintenance and medical care elsewhere under supervision.

New York Consolidated Laws,
Correction Law - COR § 611 - Subdivision 2

A child may return with its mother to the correctional facility the mother is located at unless the mother is physically unfit to care for the child.

² Women who discussed breastfeeding with their doulas were 7x more likely to initiate breastfeeding than women who did not.

References

1. Friedman, S. H., Kaempf, A., & Kauffman, S. (2020). The Realities of Pregnancy and Mothering While Incarcerated. *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 48(3), 365–375. <https://doi.org/10.29158/JAAPL.003924-20>

2. Shlafer, R. J., Davis, L., Hindt, L. A., Goshin, L. S., & Gerrity, E. (2018). Intention and Initiation of Breastfeeding Among Women Who Are Incarcerated. *Nursing for Women's Health*, 22(1), 64–78. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nwh.2017.12.004>

New York Consolidated Laws,
Correction Law - COR § 611 - Subdivision 3

A nursing or non-nursing child may remain in the correctional facility with its mother for up to one year of age.

To read more about New York Consolidated Laws,
Correction Law - COR § 611 click [here](#)

An Unjust Cycle of Punishment: Barriers to Breastfeeding while Incarcerated

By: Amanda Acevedo holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a master's degree in social work. She is currently a Reentry Specialist at New Hour for Women and Children- Long Island.

Historically, jails and prisons have not appropriately addressed the reproductive health needs of incarcerated women. Over the last four decades the number of incarcerated women has increased significantly. While accessibility to gynecological and obstetric care has improved somewhat, there remains a significant gap; particularly when it comes to supporting breastfeeding moms behind bars.

Mothers behind bars are not awarded the same breastfeeding support as mothers in the community. Typically, once a mother gives birth and returns to jail she does not have access to a lactation consultant or any medical professional who might walk her through breastfeeding a newborn. Instead, she returns to a nursery where she remains under constant supervision, even during her most intimate moments with her baby.

Women in the community have the right to an electric breast pump, a lactation consultant, and access to their labor and delivery team long after their baby has been born. In contrast, incarcerated mothers are left to navigate the physical, physiological and emotional hurdles that often come with breastfeeding. From engorgement, to cracked nipples to dysregulated hormones that are still recovering from labor, all while incarcerated.

It is important that mothers behind bars be provided with the proper resources necessary for a successful breastfeeding journey. This includes access to lactation information, a working breast pump, and a private area to nurse and/or pump. Mothers behind bars also deserve the freedom to choose to exclusively pump if this is what works best for them and their baby. And if this is the case, they should have access to a freezer and milk storage bags.

Not affording mothers behind bars access to the resources necessary to successfully breastfeed only perpetuates the cycle of unjust punishment and violence against women that is already so ingrained in our justice system. The notion that women do not deserve to have autonomy over their own bodies simply because they are incarcerated is unjust, misogynistic and harmful. Mothers behind bars have a right to be supported in their breastfeeding journeys.

Spotlight on New Hour-LI

Interviewee: Amanda Acevedo from New Hour for Women and Children- Long Island located in Brentwood

Tell us about your organization.

New Hour is a nonprofit agency. We're based in Brentwood. We work with justice impacted women. Typically, women that have served jail or prison time, but we also work with anyone who's ever come in contact with the justice system, so someone who's ever had to go to court, someone who's been pulled over and arrested but not detained. All of those women would be eligible to work with us. A big piece of our work is the programming that we provide in the Riverhead and Yaphank jails out in Suffolk and we've just recently expanded over into Nassau.

What type of resources does New Hour provide?

We provide programming in the areas of parenting, health, and wellness. And what we call return to community, and that's a group setting. We also offer one on one reentry planning with the women, helping them prepare for their release back into the community on a one on one basis. In addition to that we provide wraparound support, so the women are then welcomed into our offices and we continue that engagement, providing case management and referring them to the appropriate referral sources. Then we have several annual events that we hold on a regular basis. At the end of this month, we have our Back to School BBQ where we provide school supplies to the children of the women that we work with. We have a 15-week leadership and advocacy course that we offer. In addition to that there's lots of work that we do in the area of advocacy and getting certain legislation passed around criminal justice, women's justice, and social justice. So we keep very busy over here, to say the least.

What is the current support and resources offered to the women [in jails] that you work with who want to breastfeed?

The Yaphank facility does provide a nursery, so women who come into the jail pregnant can go there afterwards, as long as they're approved.

I think it depends on the nature of their conviction, but for the most part, in my experience, I've seen women be approved to stay there. If you have a woman who's looking at a longer sentence, who will eventually go upstate to serve prison time, they're entitled to up to one year with their child in the nursery. I've been here about three years now, and in that time I've seen one woman stay with her child that full year. Women do not have access to a lactation consultant within the jail. I would assume that because they still go out to a hospital to give birth, they're able to speak with one then, but that's not provided in the jail, unfortunately.

For the women that did stay with their newborns, do you know how the newborns were taken care of when the mother wasn't with them?

If the mother is in the nursery with the newborn, the newborn is always with the mom. It's almost like a dormitory style, I think it could hold up to five or six women. There are the beds that the women would sleep in and then the cribs. But every time that there's been a woman in there since I've been around it's only ever been one woman at a time.

Can you describe some stories?

That woman [the one that stayed with her child a full year], in particular, did not breastfeed. However, there have been a couple of other women who've also been in the nursery and tried to breastfeed. Unfortunately the experiences that we've seen have not been the most positive. One major complaint that the women have in trying to breastfeed in the nursery is the lack of privacy. If you could imagine, it's a big room with their beds and then their cribs and then there's a glass where the CO's sit right outside, and they're just watching you constantly because at the end of day, it is still a jail. So that's been the biggest complaint.

About a year ago we did have one woman who was trying to breastfeed and brought this to our attention and we were able to provide a nursing cover for her so that she could feel a little more comfortable. Now, this was someone who spent a shorter sentence there, so we can't speak to the success of her breastfeeding journey. In the jail, there was also a woman who had complained of engorgement, so not having the proper resources to be able to relieve herself is another issue that we've encountered. More recently, there was a woman who had to have a C-section and came back to the jail but was not able to return to the nursery. She had to navigate how to pump while being in the general population, and that was another issue, and unfortunately it was something that was new to the jail, so they didn't know how to navigate that. And we had to advocate on her behalf and say, listen, this woman needs a breast pump, (a) to relieve herself, and (b) to be able to provide for her baby.

So, then, the women are not offered pumps, and you had to advocate for it to be offered?

Yes, that one case was with someone whose baby wasn't left with her in the nursery and she was really adamant about being able to breastfeed, so she wanted that pump. And because it wasn't something that had come up before, there were a couple of hoops that we had to jump through to be able to make that happen for her.

You mentioned the case where the woman had engorgement. Would she have access to medical help or a nurse to help her with that engorgement before it would lead to mastitis?

We had our director of programs at the time in the nursery providing programming to her. She made suggestions [such as] going to the warm shower, massaging your breasts, trying to manually express.

In addition to those barriers, are there other barriers that these moms face while they're breastfeeding? Do you want to give any more detail about that?

In the three years that I've been here, I think I know of three women who have been in the nursery. That's only because typically with county jail time, you tend to serve shorter sentences,

so that's not to say that there aren't pregnant women in the jail, because there are, but not all of them are staying the duration of their pregnancy up until they give birth. So, within those three women, one opted not to try to breastfeed. Another wanted to, but didn't feel comfortable because of the lack of privacy, with the COs right outside. And then the third -- the one that we provided the nursing cover for -- tried, but dealt with the engorgement [issue and] her baby was also throwing up the breast milk, so obviously there were some issues there. I don't know if it was colic, but there wasn't anyone there to help her with that either.

This third woman, how many months was she able to breastfeed for? And then, how many times was she able to breastfeed her child within a day?

This woman was back in 2019. She had very little time in the nursery. She had just given birth and was going to be released within the next week or two. The nurse did tell her that the gastrointestinal reaction was normal. Another issue that she faced was that after she gave birth, she had to go back and forth from the jail to the hospital a couple of times, so that was stressful as well. And she was supposed to be pumping every two hours, but she was not pumping at all because [the pump] wasn't provided, so there was the issue of the engorgement. There was also the issue of them not providing pads, so she was leaking, and they gave her four pads. This woman actually advocated for herself and had spoken to a sergeant in the jail and the sergeant basically told her that there was nothing that could be done, and said for her to remember where she was. Then again, this was two years ago, so we can be hopeful and hope that things are better now. I haven't had any other women in the nursery recently. The woman that did have the C-section was within the last year.

✦—————✦
To learn more about New Hour-LI please click below:

 [New Hour-LI Facebook](#)

 [New Hour-LI Instagram](#)

 [New Hour-LI webpage](#)

Mother's Perspective

While we try to reach out to breastfeeding mothers to share their stories for each newsletter issue, due to the privacy concerns of this population, we were unable to find any incarcerated or formerly incarcerated women to share their private stories. However, we are sharing these videos that follow the journeys of incarcerated mothers and their children. We hope you will take the time to listen to their powerful stories!

To access the video, click the linked image below:



Breastfeeding Uncovered: Redefining Your Journey:

Follow the stories of April and Savannah, two mothers serving time at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, speak about the bond they have developed with their children through breastfeeding.



Raised In Prison:

Studies have shown that keeping babies with their mothers, even behind bars, lowers the mother's reoffending rate. Listen to Lindsay, KerryAnn, and Crystal share the gift of having their babies with them in the nursery at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility.



Inside the Prison:

Pregnant people in prison have a high-risk pregnancy. Hear from Kerryann about her story of giving birth and caring for her child in a strong community while incarcerated at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility.



Pregnant and Incarcerated:

Hear from reporter Jenny Zhou and executive director of Hour Children, Sister Tesa on why mothers are being turned away at the nurseries in Bedford Hills and on Rikers Island and how Hour Children is increasing access for mothers.

