

**GEAUGA COUNTY WOMEN, INFANTS & CHILDREN PROGRAM**

July 28, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AUG 1 MARKS BEGINNING OF BREASTFEEDING AWARENESS MONTH**

August is Breastfeeding Awareness Month in Ohio and August 1-7 is World Breastfeeding Week (WBW). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that Ohio's 2009 Breastfeeding initiation rate of 58.5 percent ranks 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation, down from 44<sup>th</sup> in 2008. This year's WBW theme is *Breastfeeding - Just 10 Steps! The Baby-Friendly Way*. Health care facilities play a vital role in the establishment of breastfeeding. This theme offers the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) maternal and child health programs the opportunity to partner with local hospitals and other health care providers to institute the World Health Organization's (WHO) research-based *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*. These steps provide a supportive pathway enabling women to achieve their breastfeeding intentions and guiding the training of healthcare workers in breastfeeding support. Exclusive and overall breastfeeding rates are higher in women delivering in hospitals with policies in line with the ten steps. Worldwide there are over 20,000 baby-friendly designated maternity hospitals. In Ohio, currently, only three hospitals have received the baby - friendly designation; they are Mercy Hospital Anderson in Cincinnati, Mercy Hospital Fair-field in Fairfield, and Southview Hospital in Dayton.

While it is preferred that hospitals institute all *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*, if that is not possible, the following five steps have been identified as the most important:

- \* Infants are breastfed in the first hour after birth
- \* Infants stay in the same room as their mothers
- \* Infants are fed only breast milk and receive no supplementation
- \* No pacifier is used
- \* Staff gives mothers a telephone number to call for help with breastfeeding

"If a hospital can institute only one research-based step, that step should be to facilitate skin to skin holding by the mother for up to one hour right after birth," said ODH Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D. "This step would greatly increase bonding between mothers and babies and provide a supportive setting for natural, baby led breastfeeding."

A recent article in *Pediatrics* (the Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics) determined that if 80 percent of the U.S. families could comply with medical recommendations to breastfeed exclusively for 6 months, the United States would save \$10.5 billion per year and prevent an excess of 742 deaths, nearly all of which would be in infants.

"In light of the monetary and life saving benefits of breastfeeding, all elements of the community, including hospitals and other healthcare facilities, must cooperate and support breastfeeding," said Tammy Hawn RD,LD, CLC, the breastfeeding coordinator of Geauga County WIC Program. "Ultimately, our whole society benefits from having healthier mothers, babies and children when breastfeeding is promoted, protected and supported."

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** about breastfeeding in Geauga County please call the Help Me Grow Helpline at 1-800-755-GROW or the Geauga WIC Program at (440)-279-1936.