

BFHI Implementation in Canada

The BFHI at the global level

WHO and UNICEF launched the BFHI in 1991, in an effort to motivate facilities providing maternity care to implement the Ten Steps for Successful Breastfeeding (the Ten Steps). The Ten Steps were developed by WHO and UNICEF in 1989, as a package of policies and procedures to support breastfeeding. Facilities that documented their full adherence to the Ten Steps and compliance to the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and the relevant resolutions from the World Health Assembly (WHA), could be designated as “Baby-Friendly”. In 2003, the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding (GSIYCF) urged all facilities to implement the Ten Steps as well as the Innocenti Declaration at its 15th anniversary in 2005. The global criteria from the Ten Steps were recognized as the minimum requirement for all facilities expanding to the community health services. The BFHI was updated to reflect the new evidence and re-launched in 2009, now including Mother-Friendly practices and community health facilities. Since 2015, a global indicator of the percentage of births happening in designated hospitals is part of the Global Monitoring Framework for Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition done by countries and reported at WHA meetings. Almost all countries have implemented the BFHI to some point in time and to some extent. However, coverage within most countries has remained low. This prompted the assessment of the current status of the BFHI among all member states and an extensive review of the literature of the evidence surrounding the BFHI (WHO/UNICEF, 2018, p.9-10).

This led to the 2018 Revised Implementation Guideline which is in its very early implementation stages across the world, as many questions and lack of global tools remain a challenge. International interest groups are working with WHO and UNICEF to facilitate the implementation in the different countries.

BFI in Canada

In Canada, the BFHI is called BFI, Baby-Friendly Initiative to reflect the continuum of care in our country. Similar to other industrialized countries where BFI includes hospitals, birthing centers and community health facilities, and because of the importance of prenatal and postnatal support to mothers in light of shortened hospitalization after birth, the BFI is implemented in all Canadian facilities providing maternity and newborn/child care. Like in other industrialized countries which have implemented the BFI, the BCC will continue to adapt the language of the global standards for hospitals to the reality of the community healthcare services.

In Canada, the Ten Steps and the Code are detailed in the BCC BFI 10 Steps and WHO Code Outcome Indicators for Hospitals and Community Health Services to describe the implementation of the international standards in the Canadian context. As BFI is a continuous quality improvement program, the indicators are reviewed regularly following changes at the international or national level or when there is a need for clarification. The latest bilingual version of the Canadian Implementation Guidance Indicators is on the BCC website for members and public awareness of the thoroughness of the assessment process (www.breastfeedingcanada.ca).

Reference: WHO/UNICEF (2018). *Implementation Guidance. Protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding in facilities providing maternity and newborn services: The revised Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative*. Geneva: WHO.