



**The Implementation and Evaluation of the
Baby-Friendly™ Initiative in Canada**

Final Project Report

1999 - 2002

**The Breastfeeding Committee for Canada
The National Authority for the WHO/UNICEF
Baby-Friendly™ Hospital Initiative in Canada**

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SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this three year project was to facilitate and evaluate the implementation of the Baby-Friendly™ Initiative (BFI) in Canada. This international initiative established by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) protects, promotes, and supports breastfeeding and ascribes to practices providing optimal care to childbearing women and their infants and families. Two primary goals were to develop the structures and mechanisms for promoting, assessing, and designating hospitals as Baby-Friendly and for developing partnerships that would facilitate promotion and implementation of BFI in their jurisdictions. The sponsoring partner of this project was the Breastfeeding Committee of Canada (BCC), the National Authority for BFI, and partners were provincial and territorial BFI breastfeeding committees/coalitions and the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP).

To establish the BFI in Canada a National Coordinator was hired, the process for hospital assessment and designation was delineated, and documents for BFI promotion and the assessment process were developed, printed, and distributed at meetings held throughout Canada and posted on the BCC website. Databases were developed to identify BFI assessors, to document BFI promotional and informational meetings held across Canada, and to identify hospitals working towards and designated as Baby-Friendly™. One hospital was designated as Baby-Friendly™ in July 1999 and 49 hospitals have indicated an interest in or are at some stage of changing maternity practices to meet BFI requirements.

Sixty-two BFI presentations were held in 12 of 13 provinces and territories between 1999 and 2001. These meetings helped to establish BFI committees or government BFI representatives in some provinces and territories and to facilitate the work of BFI implementation by committees that had previously been established. Generation of BFI activities in provinces and territories have escalated since the project began in 1999. A national provincial-territorial committee with members from all provinces and territories and representation on the BCC Board of Directors was created at the conclusion of this project.

CPNP and the BCC continued work that had been started before the beginning of this project to develop a shared vision about breastfeeding. Although it was determined that BFI implementation was not appropriate for current CPNP projects since their projects are based on identified community needs, the organizations support the work of each other and will partner in the future as opportunities present themselves.

Additional accomplishments of the project are: established infrastructure and processes to implement BFI assessments and designation; increased awareness and knowledge about BFI throughout Canada; increased numbers of hospitals working towards BFI designation; initial development of documents and process for BFI designation of community health services; and availability of BFI documents on the BCC website.

Recommendations of the project include: lobby governments at all levels to facilitate, support, and financially contribute to maintain a National BFI Coordinator and the developed BFI structures and processes; continue promotion of BFI in hospitals and

community health services; hold comprehensive education workshops for BFI assessors; expand the BCC website; refine and expand databases for annual monitoring of BFI activities; and facilitate collaboration between provinces and territories to develop consistency in collecting data on infant feeding practices and to share strategies for BFI implementation.