



STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Corning Tower The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza Albany, New York 12237

Richard F. Daines, M.D.
Commissioner

Wendy E. Saunders
Executive Deputy Commissioner

August 25, 2009

Dear Hospital Administrator:

This letter is to alert hospitals to the continued importance of breastfeeding, to highlight **new quality measures** that the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) will be implementing **to promote exclusive breastfeeding**, and to remind you of New York State **regulatory requirements** regarding breastfeeding.

The NYSDOH has long supported breastfeeding as the preferred infant feeding method. Breastfeeding is an evidence-based practice which has been shown to improve infant growth and development, and is associated with reductions in sudden infant death syndrome, childhood leukemia, the incidence of common childhood illnesses, such as otitis media, atopic dermatitis, gastroenteritis and pneumonia, and chronic conditions, such as obesity and type 1 and type 2 diabetes mellitus.

The continued importance of breastfeeding is reflected in the national *Healthy People 2010* goals to increase exclusive breastfeeding rates. These goals are to increase the percentage of mothers who exclusively breastfeed their infant through 3 months of age to 40 percent and increase those who breastfeed exclusively through 6 months of age to 17 percent. The Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) has revised the Perinatal Care measures to include the percentage of newborn infants who receive exclusive breast milk feeding beginning with April 1, 2010, discharges (excluding infants admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)).

To help hospitals meet these goals, the NYSDOH will begin **providing each maternity hospital with its most recent* aggregate data on hospital-specific breastfeeding practices as reported on the NYSDOH** birth certificate supplement or the NYC DOHMH birth certificate medical report. Currently, hospitals indicate whether infants are being fed only breast milk; only formula; or both breast milk and formula. The percent of infants (not admitted to the NICU or transferred) in each of these three categories will be reported to each hospital. These data will also be used to calculate two additional measures:

Any Breastfeeding

Percent of infants fed any breast milk (includes infants who are fed exclusively breast milk and infants who are fed both formula and breast milk).

Formula Supplementation of Breastfed Infants

Among infants fed any breast milk, the percent that are also supplemented with formula.

This information should assist hospitals both in assessing their performance in supporting exclusive breast milk feeding and in evaluating the quality of the data submitted by the institution. Regional Perinatal Centers will also be provided with these data and will assist hospitals on an ongoing basis in improving their rates of exclusive breastfeeding.

Starting next year, the NYSDOH will add the feeding measures noted above to the maternity information leaflet available to the public on the Department's website:
<http://www.nyhealth.gov/facilities/hospital/maternity>.

Beginning May 1, 2010, hospitals located outside New York City will be required to include their performance on these measures in the Maternity Information Leaflet specified in PHL § 2803 (j). Hospitals in New York City, which did not include these measures on the birth certificate until 2008 will be required to include their performance on these measures in the Maternity Information Leaflet beginning January 1, 2011.

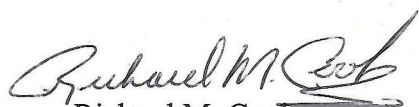
As a reminder, Title 10 of New York's Codes, Rules and Regulations (NYCRR), Part 405.21, Perinatal Services, requires hospitals to encourage breastfeeding through the following provisions:

- at all times there must be available at least one staff member qualified to assist and encourage breastfeeding;
- standing orders for anti-lactation drugs are prohibited;
- the newborn is to be placed with the mother for breastfeeding immediately following delivery, unless contraindicated;
- supplemental feedings to breastfed newborns are restricted unless medically indicated;
- "on-demand" breastfeeding is to be supported; and
- discharge packs of infant formula are to be distributed ONLY upon a specific order by the attending practitioner or at the request of the mother.

Monitoring these measures and providing this information will assist hospitals in supporting the goals of increasing exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life.

Thank you in advance for working with us to support implementation of this critical public health initiative.

Sincerely,



Richard M. Cook
Deputy Commissioner
Office of Health Systems Management



Guthrie Birkhead, MD, MPH,
Deputy Commissioner
Office of Public Health

* Hospitals outside of New York City will be provided information beginning with 2007 data, while hospitals located in New York City will receive information beginning with 2008 data, when available. Data from infants admitted to the NICU or transferred to or from other hospitals are excluded from these summary measures.