It Takes A Village: Empowering Grandmothers as Breastfeeding Supporters

4th Annual California Breastfeeding Summit

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Grandmothers are very Influential

- Mothers that have seen their mothers breastfeed are more likely to breastfeed
- Grandmothers / Mothers pass on their infant feeding practices to their daughters
- Grandmothers knowledge, support and confidence in breastfeeding is helpful in BF promotion
Have You Seen My Mother...Breastfeed?

• Women whose mothers did not BF them have different challenges
  – Grandmother may not value BF
  – She may feel condemnation for not BF
  – She may not understand how to support BF – new skill for mom, baby and grandma!

• Grandmothers may have cultural beliefs or myths that are not supportive of BF

• Acknowledge, Affirm, Educate!
Topics to Cover with Grandmas

- Benefits of breastfeeding / Risks of formula feeding
- BF 101 – How to know if Baby is getting enough?
- Nonnutritive bonding with infants – Baby Wearing, Reading, Singing
- Baby Behaviors
- Infant Massage
Topics to Cover with Grandmas (cont)

- Supporting your daughter / daughter-in-law vs taking over
- Helping Mom get rest – chores, stroller rides – what is mom’s expectation
- Handling Breast milk
- Breastfeeding Advocacy – Loving Support
Supportive Conversations

• She doesn’t like it
• He is not getting enough
• When do you feed him next
• I can give her a bottle so that you can get some rest.
• The baby will not bond with me if you nurse.

• Baby hasn’t yet figured out what to do with his tongue in latching.
Supportive Conversations

• BF was horrible for me!
• Are you still BF?
• No one is going to be able to help you with that baby nursing!
• Go in the back and BF!
• That looks nasty!
Respecting Differences

Understanding & respecting the grandmother’s beliefs & practices will...

- Gain her trust
- Begin a positive relationship
A More Excellent Way
Health Community
Breastfeeding Program

Monique Sims,
DrPH, MPH, RD, IBCLC
Chief Executive Officer,
A More Excellent Way Health
What is “A More Excellent Way*”

• An organization that aims to **promote wellness and reduce health disparities**.
• MEW engages health organizations, the community, and particularly churches, to provide health education, information and resources.

*“A More Excellent Way” refers to I Corinthians 12:31

But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I to you a more excellent way.
Background

• The birth outcomes of African American women are much poorer than for any other race.
• Formula fed infants are 1.5 times more likely to die than if breastfed.
• African American infants are twice as likely to die before their first birthday as other infants.
• African American mothers are 3 – 4 times as likely to die from labor and delivery complications as other mothers.
Churches as Partners

- Allen Temple Baptist Church, Oakland, CA
Activities

• Church Leadership training on health disparities in maternal child health, the importance of breastfeeding, and the MEW Intervention

• Church breastfeeding-friendly assessment and improvement

• Peer Counselor Training (Six 4-hour Saturday sessions)

• Community Baby Shower

• Monthly Peer Counselor continued training

• Mother-to-Mother monthly Support Group
Community Baby Showers

- Recruitment Strategy
- Community Education
- Health Workshops for Pregnant mother, father of baby, grandmother and siblings
- Health Fair Referrals and Linkages
- Breastfeeding Education to all Participants
2006: Revival Center Ministry, Vallejo
Outcomes/Successes

• 9 churches have participated
• 201 participants attended SOME of the Peer Counselor Training
• 93 Completed the Peer Counselor Training
• 581 Contacts by Peer Counselors
• 9 Community Baby Showers serving over 900 pregnant African American women and expectant fathers
Breastfeeding is... Part of My Heritage
Hilda and her Granddaughter Michaela. Michaela was breastfed until 2 and a half.
Grandma’s Tea

Empowering Grandmothers to support and encourage their Daughter’s to breastfeed

20 participants
Grandmothers Tea Project

The Grandmothers Tea project was designed to help provide knowledgeable support for breastfeeding women. Recognizing that the "grandmother" population has a huge influence on whether our moms successfully breastfeed, the Grandmothers Tea educates grandmothers in a friendly atmosphere, influencing their attitudes about breastfeeding and improving Illinois' breastfeeding rates.

As grandmothers in our community are sought out by new mothers for advice in infant and child-rearing issues, these grandmothers have the most up-to-date information on infant feeding practices.

The tea includes activities that focus on 3 major breastfeeding issues:

- Advantages of breastfeeding
- Myths women are told about breastfeeding
- Actions grandmothers can take to support breastfeeding women in their community

Designed to be adaptable to the learning needs of any community, the tea can include games, door prizes and refreshments.

The curriculum is very adaptable. Each section of the curriculum focuses on a particular subject and can be offered separately or presented in its entirety.

Grandmothers Tea Curriculum
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Adapted from Illinois State Breastfeeding Task Force
Grandmothers Tea Project

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1. Advantages of breastfeeding
2. Myths women are told about breastfeeding
3. Actions grandmothers can take to support breastfeeding women in their community

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A woman’s decision to breastfeed is strongly influenced by the beliefs and attitudes of her family and friends. Unfortunately, family and friends may discourage a mother from breastfeeding if it is not accepted within their culture. Often, when a mother is thinking about how to feed her baby, she values the advice of her partner the most, followed by the advice of her mother, family and friends, in fact she often values their advice more than the advice of health care professionals.

The baby’s grandmothers are also very influential because mothers who have recently given birth rely on them for support and advice.

Surgeon General’s Call to Action

Action 2. Develop programs to educate fathers and grandmothers about breastfeeding.
I will market breastfeeding to everyone.

“Grandmothers are happy and proud to bond together during the tea.”
“I learned how to be a better Grandmother to my Grandkids and Great Grandmother.”
“(I plan on) passing along the information to my daughter about breastfeeding.”

“(This) class was off the hook!”
“I will read more to my Great-Grandson, whom I see weekly.”
“That it’s a must my daughter breastfeed, at least for me.”
“The importance of breastfeeding and how I can be encouragement to my grand and great grandchildren.”
“To bond with both daughter and new grand-child. Encourage her to breastfeed!”
“I will encourage my daughter to breastfeed.”
AS IS THE MOTHER, 
SO IS HER DAUGHTER. 
Ezekiel 16:44
Thank you to the wonderful Grandma’s !!!
Questions / Discussion