

Building the Continuum of Breastfeeding Care

Altura Centers for Health

(Formerly Tulare Community Health Centers)

Since January 2014, as a result of collaboration between First 5, Tulare County WIC, Tulare Regional Medical Center and Kaweah Delta and Sierra View Hospitals, Altura Centers for Health, the community clinic, has taken significant steps to ensure strong breastfeeding support as part of regular patient care. Like hospitals, community clinics can implement a number of practices that make breastfeeding part of the culture of care. Together these important community health organizations can provide a strong safety net for breastfeeding support and expect to see improved breastfeeding and health outcomes.

Altura Centers for Health (ACH)

Michelle DeLeon, a long-time employee of Tulare County WIC, is now the staff Altura Lactation Consultant, supported by First 5 funds. She has been employing multiple strategies and processes to establish a culture of support for, and acceptance of, effective breastfeeding support.

- She is getting to know the medical staff and offering breastfeeding educational opportunities.
- Altura clinics provide the Comprehensive Perinatal Services Program (CPSP) and Michelle is experiencing the strength of the team-based care and valuable opportunities to use lactation and nutrition staff.
- Many clinics have multiple departments and sites, and Michelle is studying how to coordinate scheduling for moms and babies and in multiple sites.

This case summary provides an overview of the accomplishments and plans, for a clinic beginning its journey to embrace comprehensive breastfeeding support, as related to the recently released (2016), *9 Steps to Breastfeeding Friendly: Guidelines for Community Health Centers and Outpatient Care Settings*.

Step 1 Policy and Protocols

While the Infant feeding policy is not yet developed, staff intend to meet and discuss this need.

Step 2: Staff Education and Evaluation

The CPSP health educators have become Certified Lactation Educator Counselors (CLEC), a course that is offered by Gini Baker, RN, MPH, IBCLC, through UC San Diego Extension. Breastfeeding in-services are being developed for staff.

Step 3: Patient Education

Patients in the CPSP Program receive evidenced-based prenatal and postpartum education for breastfeeding at identified visits and trimesters. This information covers many topics, including the benefits of breastfeeding, early skin-to-skin contact, developmental changes, manual expression, and planning for the mother's individual needs to initiate and maintain breastfeeding. For those mothers who decide or need to use bottles, including formula, proper education is provided. Staff document education in the patient's chart in the Electronic Health Record (EHR)

Step 4: Clinical Services

Michelle De Leon, as the staff Lactation Consultant, IBCLC, provides prenatal and postpartum support for all clinic patients. Patients are seen at least once prenatally and as many times as needed postnatally.

All Altura patients are scheduled for a postpartum visit within 6 weeks after delivery. During the postpartum visit, if it is discovered the mother needs breastfeeding assistance, a visit is scheduled to see Michelle as soon as possible. Or the mother can schedule a visit immediately post-hospital discharge, if she has concerns.

In addition to Michelle, the CPSP clinic staff will assist with lactation support during the mother's time as a patient in the CPSP program, approximately 2 months, and for assistance after that as long as breastfeeding continues.

At Tulare Regional Medical Center, Michelle meets new mothers who are Altura patients and explains the clinic postpartum lactation services. If the baby will be a patient at an Altura Center for Health, she schedules the baby's newborn visit with an Altura pediatrician, when the mom and baby will also follow up with Michelle for breastfeeding assistance. Establishing that early connection encourages mothers to not only come to the newborn visit, but also their own postpartum check, often a medical visit a new mother skips.

Step 5: Clinic Environment

Formula is not routinely given to patients, unless there is a medical need. Formula samples and coupons are stored in a locked supply room. No formula samples or advertisements are allowed to be visible to patients, including coupons.

Breastfeeding Welcome Here stickers are clearly posted on the doors of all clinic locations. Mothers are welcome to breastfeed wherever they choose. If they ask for a more private space, an exam room is made available.

The pediatric waiting room has a breastfeeding poster, and there is a framed breastfeeding picture in each exam room in Pediatrics and the Women's Center. The Dental Clinic also has framed breastfeeding art in the waiting area.

As a CPSP program, the educational materials are reviewed and approved as being evidenced-based.

Step 6: Community Resources

Tulare county health providers and breastfeeding specialists have been committed for several years now to building strong support for mothers and infants, from the first prenatal visit and until mothers and babies wean.

Tulare County WIC has a long history of providing integrated support for mothers, with all staff receiving 20 hours training in the first year and 7 hours annually, and providing IBCLC support for complex cases. WIC staff work collaboratively with local hospitals to provide postpartum support.

Kaweah Delta Hospital provides WIC pumps for NICU baby moms on weekends when WIC is closed, and faxes referral to WIC after deliveries.

Staff at Sierra Vista Hospital and Tulare Regional Medical Center (TRMC) has been implementing multiple maternity care policies and practices that support bonding and breastfeeding, with TRMC in the Baby Friendly Hospital designation process.

Step 7: Workplace Lactation Accommodation

The policy Supporting Breastfeeding Employees, initiated in January 2015, allows accommodation for mothers to pump their milk upon return to work.

In clinic locations, employee are allowed to use an unoccupied exam room to express milk. In other locations, an unoccupied office may be used or the closest unoccupied exam room, with additional pump time made available.

Employees are welcome as any other patient to receive lactation support. During this visit, Michelle can assist in ordering an electric breast pump through the insurance company.

Step 8: Financial Sustainability

Michelle is gaining an understanding of billing and reimbursement, and the challenges and opportunities of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) and managed care to ensure sustainability.

Step 9: Quality Improvement and Impact Evaluation

A Breastfeeding Update is given at Quality Assurance/Program Improvement (QA/PI) meetings with staff.

In less than a year, Michelle and her colleagues have accomplished much, including improving outcomes. Using their Electronic Medical Records (EHR) they have worked on the details of capturing data, such as training Medical Assistants to consistently ask the breastfeeding questions not only at the newborn, but also well baby visits. **The data is encouraging with initiation rates at the newborn visit in January being 19% and in August 50%!**