

REACH Success Story

Creating a Supportive Breastfeeding Environment for Asian American Communities in Southeast MI



At a Glance

The Eastern Michigan University (EMU) REACH Team improved the capacity for the local health system to provide culturally-sensitive breastfeeding services and provided geographic information systems (GIS)-assisted mapping to identify breastfeeding resources. In the process, the REACH Nutrition Team:

- 1) Collaborated with the Wayne County Healthy Communities (WCHC) Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) to provide breastfeeding training for the staff and develop policies supporting a breastfeeding-friendly environment.
- 2) Engaged the community to increase the capacity to promote breastfeeding in Asian American populations.
- 3) Conducted a virtual/in-person breastfeeding peer counselor training.

By: Alice Jo Rainville, PhD, RD, CHE, SNS, FAND

Public Health Challenge

- More than 1 in 4 Hamtramck, MI residents are Bangladeshi American and half of Hamtramck residents live in poverty.
- Exclusive breastfeeding remains low among Bangladeshi women; 76% of women surveyed by EMU REACH supplemented with baby formula.
- Baby formula is perceived as a status symbol by some Bangladeshi women.
- There are no Asian American breastfeeding peer counselors in the Metro Detroit area.

Approach

The EMU REACH Nutrition Team

- Engaged community of priority population to obtain data and feedback for their specific needs.
- Collaborated with WCHC-FQHC to provide breastfeeding training for their staff.
- Developed a proposal with the WCHC-FQHC and obtained funding from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) for Reducing Disparities in Breastfeeding through a Continuity of Care grant.
- Worked with WCHC-FQHC to develop policies supporting breastfeeding for FQHC employees and families.

"The peer counselors will be providing much-needed breastfeeding education and support to mothers in the Bangladeshi community. Unfortunately, baby formula is seen as a status symbol in the community and we need to change that."

- Rebeka Islam, Executive Director for Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote Michigan

Results

- The EMU REACH team hosted two community baby showers in 2019 that provided breastfeeding education, safe sleep, nutrition, and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program information to 29 women. Based on the data we gathered, 50% of women (14) had difficulty with breastfeeding and 41% (12) sought assistance with breastfeeding from their hospital, lactation consultants, pediatrician, and WIC staff.
- Our International Board Certified Lactation Consultant trained 12 staff members from the WCHC-FQHC how to support breastfeeding mothers in September, 2019.
- The EMU REACH team used our GIS expertise to create and disseminate a map of breastfeeding support locations.
- Policies supporting breastfeeding for WCHC-FQHC employees and families were approved on May 4, 2020.
- In June 2020, we conducted breastfeeding peer counselor training with 6 Chinese women, 3 Bangladeshi women, and 1 Middle Eastern woman trained.

Sustaining Success

- Peer counselors will form support groups for breastfeeding women.
- Trained peer counselors may attend a Breastfeeding Basics class with WIC to prepare to become a WIC peer counselor.
- Peer counselors' contact information will be shared by community partners, including the WCHC-FQHC, to women who need emergency help.

Find out more

- Activities related to EMU REACH can be found in the EMU Center for Health Disparities Innovations & Studies website:

<https://www.emich.edu/chdis/index.php>

- EMU REACH is made possible through the funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Contact

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Website

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>

CDC-info

<https://wwwn.cdc.gov/dcs/ContactUs/Form>

The findings and conclusions in this success story are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

**Center for Health Disparities
Innovations and Studies**

Creating Healthy
Asian American Communities
in Michigan



Eastern Michigan University

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