

## **Investments in Health I: Achieving Health Equity**

**Weight of the Nation Conference  
Washington, D.C.  
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Produced by the Alabama Department of Public Health  
Video Communications and Distance Learning Division

## **What has been done?**

## **Navajo Nation Breastfeeding Coalition**

**Navajo Tribal Council**



2008 Navajo Nation  
Healthy Start Act

**Fort Defiance BF Task  
Force Members**



Amanda Singer, Ora  
Nez, Roberta Duncan

## **Healthy Start Act**

### **Social Determinants**

- **Healthy Food**
- **Education of policy makers,  
businesses, employees, mothers**
- **Freedom from discrimination**
- **Social relationships**

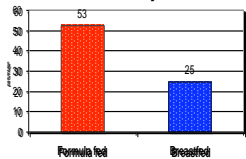
## Healthy Food

## Why Is Breastfeeding Important Today?

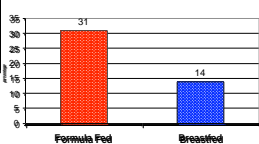
- Mother's milk is the traditional food for our babies
- Breastfeeding protects babies from illness
- Bonding - Breastfeeding keeps moms and babies connected
- Breastfeeding protects mother's health
- Breastfeeding saves money

## Breastfed Babies Have Less Sickness

Ear Infections 0-6 months (Duffy et al, 1997)

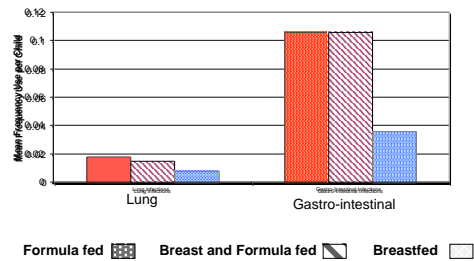


Diarrhea in first year (Dewey et al, 1995)



## Breastfed Babies Spend Less Time In Hospitals

Hospital stays by feeding choice (Ball et al, 1999)

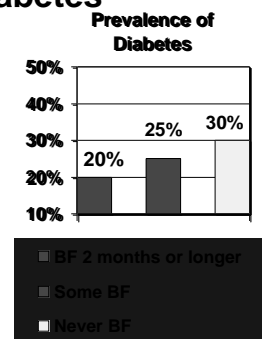


## Breastfeeding Has Benefits For Adults Too

- Type 2 diabetes occurs at higher rates in American Indian/Alaska Native communities than the general population
- Type 2 diabetes occurs less in adults who were breastfed

## Breastfeeding Reduces Risk Of Diabetes

- Among Pima Indians being BF  $\geq 2$  months related to less risk for developing diabetes by 40 years of age



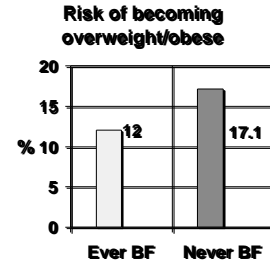
## Mothers Who Breastfeed Have Less Risk Of Type 2 Diabetes

- A recent study of over 250,000 nurses showed that for every year of breastfeeding moms have 15% less risk of type 2 diabetes

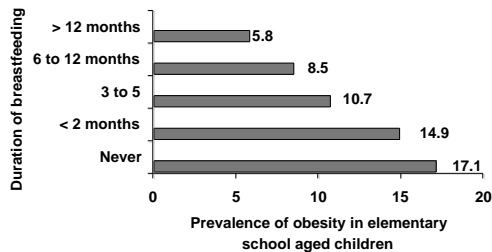


## Breastfeeding May Reduce Risk Of Overweight/Obesity Among Young Children

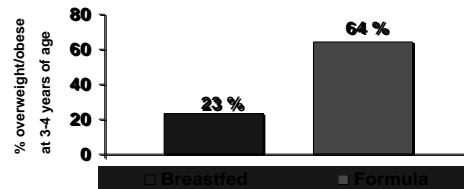
- Almost 10,000 school age children in Germany



## ...And The Risk Was Less With More Time Breastfed

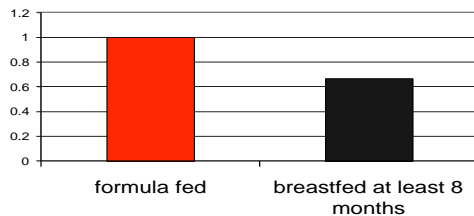


## Overweight/Obesity Prevalence Among Children Ages 3 - 4 Years By Their Feeding Choice At 6 Months Of Age



PIMC/ITCA Evaluation, 1999

## Breastfeeding Longer Means Leaner Lives Later



- CDC estimates 1/3 risk reduction of obesity when babies are breastfed at least 8 months.

Good Education

**Our children will grow up healthy when they grow up lean.**



**Breastfeeding can help!**



## **Freedom from Discrimination**

- **Returning to work can stop mothers from breastfeeding**



- **But it doesn't have to**

## **Social Relationships**

**When a mother nurses her baby, she is giving that child her name, her story and her life's song.**



**strong in  
mind and spirit**

**A nursed baby will  
grow to be  
body,**

*Annie Kahn from Round Rock,  
Traditional Wisdom*

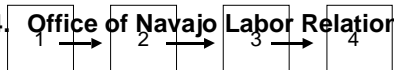
## What barriers are still present?

### How will the law be enforced?

- Department of Personnel Management will write the worksite breastfeeding policy
- Department of Justice will work in partnership to make the process work; hear grievances of employees
- Navajo Nation Labor Commission is authorized to conduct hearings involving allegations of violations of the Act.
- Office of Navajo Labor Relations will monitor & enforce compliance in accordance to the Navajo Preference in Employment Act

### Making the process work

1. Department of Personnel Management
2. Department of Justice
3. Navajo Nation Labor Commission
4. Office of Navajo Labor Relations



## What key strategies need to be supported to achieve health equity for all?

### Now, others agree with the Elders Mother's milk is important for our children

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- US Dept of Agriculture – WIC
- US Food and Drug Administration
- US Indian Health Services
- US National Institutes of Health
- US Office of the Surgeon General

### The Business Case for Breastfeeding

Navajo Nation  
Breastfeeding  
Coalition



## **2000 U.S. Census**

- **The population of the Navajo Nation is 180,462 with a median age of 24.0 years**
- **Among Navajo families, 42.9% live below the poverty level, with an average annual per capita income of \$7,269**

