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Indian Health Service Press Release

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Contact: (301) 443-3593; newsroom@ihs.gov

IHS website: <http://www.ihs.gov>

All 13 IHS obstetric facilities designated as Baby-Friendly

In November, three Indian Health Service (IHS) hospitals — Northern Navajo Medical Center and Gallup Indian Medical Center in New Mexico and Blackfeet Community Hospital in Montana— received national designation as Baby-Friendly[®] facilities. The addition of these three facilities means that all IHS hospitals that provide obstetric services are now designated as Baby-Friendly and offer new mothers the information, confidence and skills they need to initiate and continue breastfeeding their babies.



Co-administered by the World Health Organization and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) is an evidence-based practice care model designed to protect and promote breastfeeding as the safest, healthiest way to nourish babies.

In May 2011, the IHS first launched its BFHI to encourage breastfeeding in IHS hospitals with obstetric services. The IHS BFHI is part of First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move! in Indian Country" campaign dedicated to reducing childhood obesity.

"I am pleased to announce that the IHS is a national leader in promoting breastfeeding and has set the standard for maternity care in many states. IHS facilities in North Dakota, South Dakota, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Arizona were all the first hospitals in their state to be designated," said Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, acting IHS director. "We are very proud of and grateful for the hard work of our health care personnel in helping make this historic achievement possible."

As part of the Baby-Friendly process, new mothers are educated about breastfeeding, beginning with their first prenatal visit, and hospital staff members are trained to support breastfeeding and teach new mothers how to nurse. As a result of this initiative, breastfeeding initiation rates at most of these IHS facilities are now consistently in the 90th percentile for breastfeeding, and exclusive breastfeeding rates have continued to climb. The IHS is also encouraging all tribally-managed facilities to work toward their Baby-Friendly designation.

For more information about the IHS BFHI, and to read the entire list of designated IHS hospitals, visit <http://www.ihs.gov/babyfriendly/>.

The IHS, an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives.