



# What steps can Gallatin County WIC take to normalize breastfeeding on the MSU-Bozeman campus?

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## INTRODUCTION

- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded program that provides resources for working families, moms and/or dads, pregnant mothers, foster parents, and legal guardian with children up to 5 years of age. WIC participants have access to free food benefits for fruits, vegetables, bread, milk, eggs and other health choices, nutritional tips, and recipes, nutrition and breastfeeding education and counseling, free health screenings and referrals to other health and social services. To be qualified for WIC benefits, an applicant's household must be income-eligible (less than 185% of the Federal Poverty income guidelines). Also families with SNAP, Medicaid, or TANF are eligible to apply for the WIC program
- According to Dr. Regina M. Benjamin, US Surgeon General, "Breastfeeding continues to be one of the most highly effective preventive measures a mother can take to protect the health of her infant and herself." Breastfeeding education and support is one of the key components of the nutrition services that the WIC Program provides to the participants. However, mothers who cannot or choose not to breastfeed can find support through the program. The WIC Program has achieved and will continue to achieve many accomplishments in promoting and supporting breastfeeding.

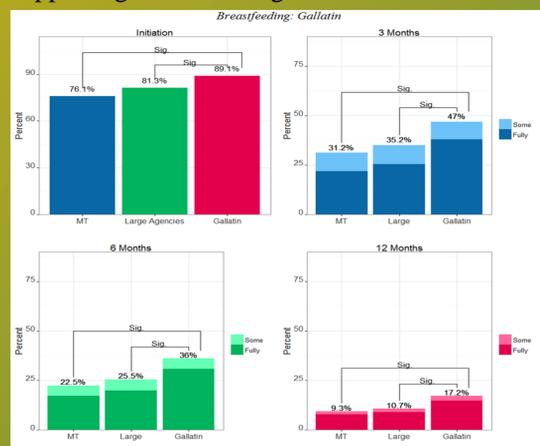


Figure 1. Plots showing the percentage of MT WIC infants born between 2010-2014, that were breastfed at 3,6, or 12 months

- Healthy Gallatin WIC has identified the need to raise breastfeeding awareness on MSU's campus. In her research project, "How can Gallatin County WIC better engage Montana State University students to increase participation in the program?", Danielle Braget identified MSU and Gallatin WIC needs. For this research project, my goal is to help Gallatin WIC implement a breastfeeding program that will benefit MSU's students.

## METHODS

- I selected 14 halls on campus to look for any available breastfeeding rooms: Leon Johnson, Hamilton, Jake Jabs, Herrick, Lewis, Roberts, Reid, EPS, Gaines, Cheever, Wilson, Linfield, Howard, Traphagen and the Library.
- I gathered some information from Danielle Braget's research project and analyzed data from Montana WIC annual evaluation reports.
- I consulted MSU's breastfeeding policy and The Family Advocate Program Facilitator Guide (ADVANCE Project TRACS)
- I consulted with staff on campus:
  - Kasia Maison-Franklin, Human Resources Officer- MSU ADA coordinator
  - Marianne Borough, Office of Student engagement ASMSU
  - Marci Torres, Office of Health Advancement

## RESULTS

- Data from a survey from a previous research project: "How can Gallatin County WIC better engage Montana State University students to increase participation in the program?" by Danielle Braget have showed that 56% of the respondents were familiar with WIC, and 44% of them did not know or were not sure what WIC provided

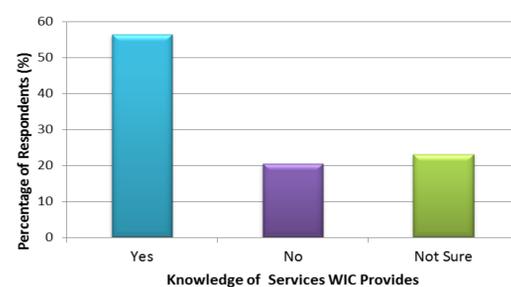


Figure 2. Residents of Family Graduate Housing knowledge of WIC services.

- Montana State University (MSU) has some resources available for breastfeeding mothers

A. Of the 14 buildings, only 4 halls have available breastfeeding rooms. Each building has 1 available Family Care Room.

- 3rd floor Leon Johnson
- Hamilton Hall Room 123
- Jake Jabs Hall Room 440
- Strand Union Building (SUB) lower level across from the bookstore.

B. MSU has a breastfeeding policy in place for faculty and, staff.

C. MSU's Family Advocate Program was created in 2009 and ensures that family care-giving supports are consistent and accessible to faculty and students.

## DISCUSSION

- Although 56% of Family Graduate Housing residents knew about WIC services and benefits, 44% of the residents were unaware of WIC services. These results open areas of opportunity for improvements within the Gallatin WIC clinic.
- Based on the limited number of breastfeeding rooms on campus and with MSU's annual growth in student body, there appears to be a lack of identifiable breastfeeding accommodations. Studies show that access to rooms that accommodate breastfeeding is important to encourage breastfeeding. According to USDA, "An intangible benefit of a breastfeeding room is the availability of information on breastfeeding and the informal support system between prospective and continuing breastfeeding mothers."
- MSU Human Resources through Legal Counsel has implemented a breastfeeding policy for employees, however, the policy does not clearly state that students are included. Having a clear breastfeeding policy that incorporates students' rights to breastfeed and express breastmilk is essential.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Studies show that the health benefits of breastfeeding for both the mother and the child are significant.
- Although MSU has taken steps to become breastfeeding-friendly, more actions need to be taken in order to normalize breastfeeding on the MSU-Bozeman campus. Successful in promoting and educating about breastfeeding, Healthy Gallatin WIC should:
  - Work closely with Associated Students of Montana State University (ASMSU) to create and adopt a breastfeeding policy for students.
  - Work closely with MSU's Department of Health and Human Development to create and implement and breastfeeding outreach program on campus.
  - Recruit students to start a baby-bistro club on campus

## FUTURE WORK

- Implement a WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program on campus to promote and educate students about breastfeeding.
- Reactivate the WIC clinic on campus with the involvement of The Student Health Service.
- Evaluate the Family Care rooms for suitability.

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