

Breastfeeding Mothers Receiving WIC

DESCRIPTION

Breastfeeding promotes long-term child health. Studies link breastfeeding to: improved child immunity, higher childhood intelligence, lower infant mortality, reduced dental problems, lower risk of obesity and less asthma.¹ Many benefits to mothers who breastfeed are documented as well. Breastfeeding rates are correlated with income.

HOW WE ARE DOING

The percentage of Ramsey County women receiving WIC who breastfeed has increased steadily since 2012. Breastfeeding initiation increased from 70.2 percent in 2012 to 78 percent in 2016, which is an 11 percent increase. The number of mothers who are still breastfeeding after three months increased from 41.3 percent to 46.8 percent, a 13 percent increase.² Gains in breastfeeding initiation are most prominent among those self-identifying as African-American. From 2012 to 2015, there was a change from 62.2 to 72 percent breastfeeding initiation, a 15 percent increase. Continuation for three months was less remarkable, but still increased. WIC peer counselors play a critical role in supporting women in their goals to breastfeed.

BENCHMARK INDICATOR

Healthy People 2020:

Increase the proportion of infants who have ever breastfed

U.S. Target: 81.9 percent

MN WIC Goal:

Increase the proportion of infants who are breastfed at three months

MN Target: 70 percent

DISPARITIES

Disparities in breastfeeding rates exist between racial and ethnic groups in Ramsey County. In 2015, the breastfeeding initiation rate among African-American women who reported their parents and/or grandparents were born in the U.S. was 72 percent. The rate for those identifying as Somali or Somali-American was 97.8 percent.³

WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING

Saint Paul-Ramsey County Public Health's WIC program uses peer support to increase breastfeeding among their clients. Women who are voluntarily assigned to a peer breastfeeding counselor while pregnant are more likely to initiate breastfeeding, and less likely to wean after delivery.⁴ Many breastfeeding peer counselors are from communities represented in Ramsey County's population: African-American, Hmong, Karen, Somali and Spanish-speaking women.

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Information to note

- Breastfeeding rates are correlated with income.
- Even though breastfeeding initiation among women receiving WIC increased, the percentage remains below the Healthy People 2020 target.
- Between 2012 and 2016, breastfeeding initiation among women receiving WIC increased 11%. Breastfeeding continuation after three months increased 13%.
- Among African-American women receiving WIC, there was a 15 % increase in breastfeeding initiation.

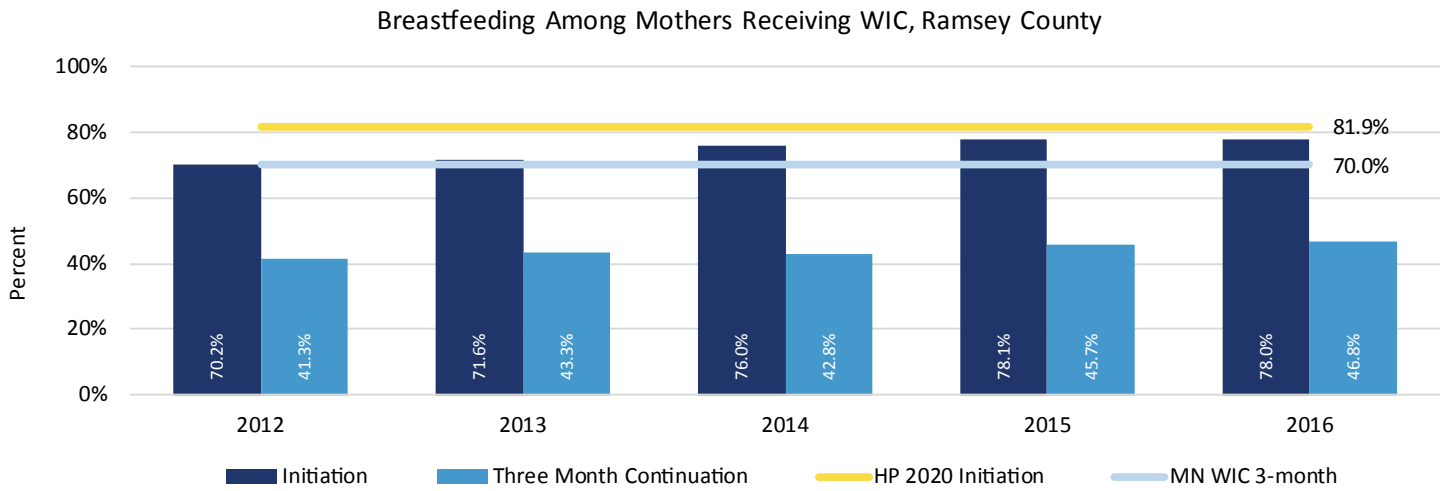
¹ Grummer-Strawn LM, Rollins N. Summarizing the health benefits of breastfeeding. *ACTA Paediatrica*. 2015. doi:10.1111/apa.13136.

² Breastfeeding Initiation and Duration at Two Weeks and Two, Three, Six and Twelve Months for Minnesota WIC Infants Born During Calendar Year 2016. Minnesota Department of Health WIC Program. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/wic/localagency/reports/bf/annual/2016bycounty.pdf> Accessed September 1, 2017.

³ Saint Paul-Ramsey County Public Health, WIC database. 2015.

⁴ Minnesota Department of Health, WIC Program. Memo, Research Article on the Effectiveness of Peer Counseling. August 2, 2017. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/wic/localagency/wedupdate/moyr/2017/topic/0802peer.pdf>. Accessed September 1, 2017.

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Source: Minnesota Department of Health, WIC Program.⁵

⁵ Minnesota Department of Health, WIC Program. WIC Information System.