



Indian Health Service

Native American Women's Health Expo and Launch of IHS Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative

October 26, 2011

Remarks

by

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Good morning. I am Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, Director of the Indian Health Service (IHS). I am very pleased to be a part of this celebration of the launch of our IHS Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative here today at the Phoenix Indian Medical Center. The theme today is "Latch onto the Future," and this theme perfectly describes the important role breastfeeding plays in our communities.

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative is a global program launched in 1991 by the United Nation's Children's Fund and the World Health Organization to implement practices that protect, promote, and support breastfeeding. Since that time, it has grown to include more than 20,000 hospitals in 156 countries. It is the gold standard for significantly increasing breastfeeding initiation and duration rates. It offers ten steps to enable facilities and communities to support women who breastfeed. Hospitals that demonstrate adherence to these 10 steps receive the designation of "Baby-Friendly."

IHS is working to make all IHS hospitals Baby-Friendly and to encourage all tribally managed hospitals to join us in this important effort. This initiative is an important part of the First Lady's *Let's Move in Indian Country* initiative, which is a part of her *Let's Move* program that is designed to eliminate childhood obesity within a generation by promoting physical activity and teaching people how to take control of their health and the health of their children. Our first launch of the IHS Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative was in Shiprock, New Mexico, a few months ago. I am so excited to be here with you today for this launch in the Phoenix Area.

We are very excited about this initiative, which will help us improve the health of our American Indian and Alaska Native communities. This initiative is a quality improvement activity

The text is the basis of Dr. Roubideaux's oral remarks at the Native American Women's Health Expo and Launch of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative in the Phoenix Area on October 26, 2011. It should be used with the understanding that some material may have been added or omitted during presentation.

that we believe will increase breastfeeding rates through improved maternal support for starting and continuing breastfeeding. It promotes breastfeeding as the healthiest infant feeding practice.

Our goal is to certify 14 federal IHS obstetric facilities as Baby-Friendly Hospitals by 2012 and to encourage our 12 tribal obstetric facilities to adopt this initiative. A Baby-Friendly Hospital is one that supports breastfeeding and provides mothers with the information and support they need to become confident and skilled at breastfeeding their babies.

I cannot emphasize how critical breastfeeding is for both babies and mothers. It supports infant growth and development, and protects both the infant's and mother's health. Infants who are breastfed have lower rates of obesity, type 2 diabetes, asthma, ear infections, and diarrhea. There are many benefits to the mother as well. Women who breastfeed have lower incidences of cancer – including breast, uterine, ovarian, and endometrial cancer. They have improved emotional health, decreased insulin requirements, and decreased risk of osteoporosis.

Studies have shown that breastfeeding may significantly reduce the number of American Indian and Alaska Native preschool children who are overweight or obese. Only 21 percent of Native breastfed children ages 3 to 4 were overweight compared to 52 percent of children who were formula fed.

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative helps us make progress on our agency's third priority, to improve the quality of and access to care. It is a part of our ongoing efforts to reduce obesity in Indian Country. It helps support our Healthy Weight for Life initiative that unifies all our efforts to promote a healthy weight among American Indians and Alaska Natives across the lifespan. We have a website and action guides with evidence-based, proven approaches to help fight the obesity epidemic that is threatening the health and well-being of our communities. While progress has been made, overweight and obesity continue to cause high rates of chronic disease. Taking action now is vital.

The IHS Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative helps us use one of these evidence-based strategies to address the obesity epidemic. Breastfeeding can reduce childhood obesity, which puts our next generation at increased risk for poor health and quality of life. Overweight children are more likely to become obese as adults. Our efforts with the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative will help promote breastfeeding, reduce childhood and adult obesity, and help ensure a healthier and happier future for generations to come.

I understand that the Phoenix Area is doing wonderful things already to promote breastfeeding at the three regional health care facilities with obstetric services that are participating in this initiative. The three sites with us today are the Phoenix Indian Medical Center, the Hopi Health Care Center, and the Whiteriver Service Unit. You can learn about their services at the educational displays here today. I appreciate all the staff members who traveled a long way to be a part of this event.

I know that programs are collaborating and providing outreach and development to community and tribal programs such as the Women, Infant, and Children state plans; tribal health departments; and tribal breastfeeding programs.

For example, the San Lucy District is developing a Baby-Friendly facility and will include Baby-Friendly information as a part of their health education program plan next year. Our public health nurses are very active in their communities, and they may even develop modules for community members to become lay lactation counselors.

A Baby-Friendly Hospital offers breastfeeding mothers the information, confidence and skills needed to start and continue breastfeeding their babies. There are four phases to the process: discovery, development, dissemination, and designation. The Phoenix Area hospitals are currently in

the development phase and have many ongoing activities. I am pleased that they are working together, sharing policies and ideas and holding regular conference calls as they achieve the steps towards certification. Today is your chance to learn more about their commitment to encouraging breastfeeding as a part of our national IHS Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative here in the Phoenix Area.

Again, I am very pleased to be a part of this celebration and launch today. I encourage all of you to enjoy the health expo and to stop by the educational booths to learn more about breastfeeding and other critical health topics. By promoting breastfeeding, we improve the health of our communities. Thanks to everyone who helped make this event a success, and I look forward to hearing about your progress in achieving certification as a Baby-Friendly Hospital. I am certain your hard work and dedication will help us improve the health of our future generations. Thank you.