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## **Saint Mary's Hospital Begins New Breastfeeding Program**

**WATERBURY, Conn. (March 27, 2019)** As a member hospital of Trinity Health Of New England, Saint Mary's, is the beneficiary of the "Breastfeeding: Heritage and Pride" (BHP) program for low-income patients, as part of a \$2.1 million dollar grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to Saint Francis Hospital. The BHP program has been in operation at Saint Francis since 2015, and due to the success of the program, funding was provided to expand the program to include all Trinity Health Of New England hospitals.

BHP is an evidence based model developed and operated by the Hispanic Health Council and evaluated in partnership with the University of Connecticut. The program recruits, trains and hires women from low-income neighborhoods who have successfully breastfed their own infants for at least six months. The intensive training prepares these women to become breastfeeding peer counselors.

Michelle Jose, RN, international board certified lactation consultant for Saint Mary's Hospital says, "Research shows that intensive peer counseling increases the initiation and duration of breastfeeding and is successful in populations that have historically low rates of 6-month and 12-month breastfeeding."

Decades of studies have also proven that breastfeeding has major health benefits for mothers and babies. Breast milk provides optimal nutrition for babies, with the exact amount of nutrients necessary, it is easily digestible and readily available. It is loaded with antibodies that help fight

viruses and bacteria. Breastfeeding can positively affect the baby's brain development and reduce the risk of future behavioral and learning issues. Research also shows that breast-fed babies are less likely to be overweight or obese in childhood, are less likely to develop childhood cancers and diabetes and have lower LDL cholesterol and lower blood pressure in childhood.

For the mother, breastfeeding is linked to a reduced risk of breast and ovarian cancer. Breastfeeding moms are less likely to develop postpartum depression. Breastfeeding also saves time and money.

Peer counselors from "Breastfeeding: Heritage and Pride" begin working with expectant mothers during their pregnancy, helping to educate them on the health and emotional benefits of breastfeeding for infants and mothers. Peer counselors will receive referrals from physicians with Naugatuck Valley Women's Health Specialists and the Staywell Health Center.

After the babies are born, the peer counselors will visit the mother at Saint Mary's Hospital and assist the IBCLC in helping the mother initiate breastfeeding.

When the mothers and their babies return home, the peer counselors will make home visits to ensure that the breast-feeding is going well, to assist with any issues or problems that arise and to offer continued encouragement to the new mother. The peer counselors are also available by cell phone to answer questions or to help solve any emergent problems.

Trinity Health Of New England's member hospitals are committed to working toward becoming a Baby Friendly Hospital System. To that end, the health system continues to promote and support evidence based initiatives that benefit all patients, including the smallest and most vulnerable.

### **About Saint Mary's Hospital**

Saint Mary's Hospital is a Catholic, not-for-profit, acute care, community teaching hospital that has served Greater Waterbury since 1909. In 2016, Saint Mary's Hospital became part of Trinity Health Of New England, an integrated health care delivery system that is a member of Trinity Health, Livonia, Michigan, one of the largest multi-institutional Catholic health care delivery systems in the nation serving communities in 22 states. Licensed for 347 beds, Saint Mary's is designated as a Level II Trauma Center, offers award-winning cardiac and stroke care and houses the region's only pediatric emergency care unit. As the leading provider of surgical services in Greater Waterbury, Saint Mary's was the first to introduce the daVinci® Robotic Surgery System. The hospital's satellites and affiliates extend from Waterbury to Wolcott, Cheshire, Naugatuck, Southbury, Prospect and Watertown. Visit [stmh.org](http://stmh.org) for more information and follow us on Facebook at SaintMarysHospitalCT, Instagram and Twitter at @SaintMarysCT.

### **About The Hispanic Health Council**

The Hispanic Health Council (HHC) is a nationally recognized community-based organization that operates statewide in Connecticut. HHC works to improve the health and social well-being of Latinos and other diverse communities through community-based research, evidence-based direct services, provider training and policy advocacy. Since its inception, the organization has developed, evaluated, replicated and

disseminated community health worker models to support health promotion and chronic disease management. The Breastfeeding: Heritage and Pride Program is one of those models. HHC also has decades of experience developing and utilizing successful techniques for engagement of high-risk, hard to reach populations, and culturally relevant educational materials and social marketing campaigns targeting individuals and communities with low health literacy. HHC serves over 20,000 individual across the state annually. For more information, visit [www.hispanichealth.com](http://www.hispanichealth.com).

### **About the W.K. Kellogg Foundation**

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal pioneer Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work, and life.

The Kellogg Foundation is based in Battle Creek, Michigan, and works throughout the United State and internationally, as well as with sovereign tribes. Special emphasis is paid to priority places where there are high concentrations of poverty and where children face significant barriers to success. WKKF priority places in the U.S. are in Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico, and New Orleans; and internationally, are in Mexico and Haiti. For more information, visit [www.wkkf.org](http://www.wkkf.org).