



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES BREASTFEEDING INITIATIVE STRIVES TO CREATE BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS**

STOCKTON (August 29, 2017) - As National Breastfeeding Month draws to a close, the San Joaquin County Public Health Services Breastfeeding Initiative reflects on its role in helping to increase breastfeeding rates in the county in the last few years. In a recent evaluation of the program, conducted through First 5 San Joaquin covering from 2008 to 2016, the Breastfeeding Initiative's work demonstrated its ability to facilitate opportunities for learning and collaboration among health care staff and providers within our county's hospitals and health centers. This has resulted in increased service coordination and the implementation of evidence based policies and practices that promote and support breastfeeding.

"The Breastfeeding Initiative has done great work with hospitals and clinics to improve the breastfeeding support system in San Joaquin County," states Tammy Evans, Director, San Joaquin County Public Health Services.

One key change facilitated by the Breastfeeding Initiative is the increase in recognized Baby-Friendly hospitals in the county. When the Breastfeeding Initiative began in 2008, no hospitals in the county had achieved this designation. San Joaquin County now has three Baby-Friendly designated hospitals that handle over two thirds (67%) of all county births. By becoming Baby-Friendly, these hospitals show commitment to maintaining and carrying out policies which help mothers initiate breastfeeding and increase its duration.

With our hospitals' dedication to implementing strong breastfeeding policies, we have seen the county's in-hospital exclusive breastfeeding rate increase from 43 percent in 2010 to 60 percent in 2016. There has also been an increase in service coordination between facilities. All hospitals coordinate their lactation support group schedules, allowing moms to access a group on any day of the week regardless of where they delivered. All hospitals also have established protocols for referring clients to WIC.

Breastfeeding has many benefits for moms and babies alike. They include bonding for mothers and infants, improved health outcomes, and economic benefits. Breastmilk protects babies from illnesses like asthma, respiratory infections, and childhood obesity. Breastfeeding also reduces risks of diabetes, ovarian cancer, and certain types of breast cancer in mothers. Furthermore, breastfed babies typically require fewer medical visits and hospitalizations, resulting in lower medical care costs for infants who are exclusively breastfed compared to those who are not.

First 5 San Joaquin's investment in the Breastfeeding Initiative has helped focus the county on systems change to create environments which support mothers in breastfeeding. In doing so, more mothers and babies have the opportunity to experience the benefits of breastfeeding. While there continues to be ways for the Breastfeeding Initiative to improve upon its work, the dedication and collaboration of medical providers and staff throughout San Joaquin County has already spurred notable positive change in the breastfeeding support system and the breastfeeding rates of women in the county.

To learn more about the Public Health Services Breastfeeding Initiative or about breastfeeding support and other resources, please visit the San Joaquin County Public Health Services website:  
[www.sjcphs.org/healthed/health\\_education\\_community\\_resources.aspx#breastfeeding](http://www.sjcphs.org/healthed/health_education_community_resources.aspx#breastfeeding)

**Attachment:** Breastfeeding Initiative Fact Sheet

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# First 5 San Joaquin Breastfeeding Initiative

May 2017 Fact Sheet

The benefits of breastfeeding are well documented. They include bonding for babies and mothers, improved short- and long-term health outcomes, and economic benefits. To increase breastfeeding initiation and duration the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched a Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative that recognizes hospitals that implement the Initiative's *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*.

First 5 San Joaquin invests in a Breastfeeding Initiative that funds a Breastfeeding Coordinator to support hospitals to implement Baby-Friendly policies. The Coordinator works with the Breastfeeding Task Forces of all San Joaquin hospitals with maternity units, coordinates staff development and training opportunities (including trainings for obstetric, family medicine, and pediatric office staff members), and facilitates monthly Breastfeeding Consortium meetings.

This fact sheet presents key findings from an evaluation of the Breastfeeding Initiative from 2008 to 2016.

**\$830,000**

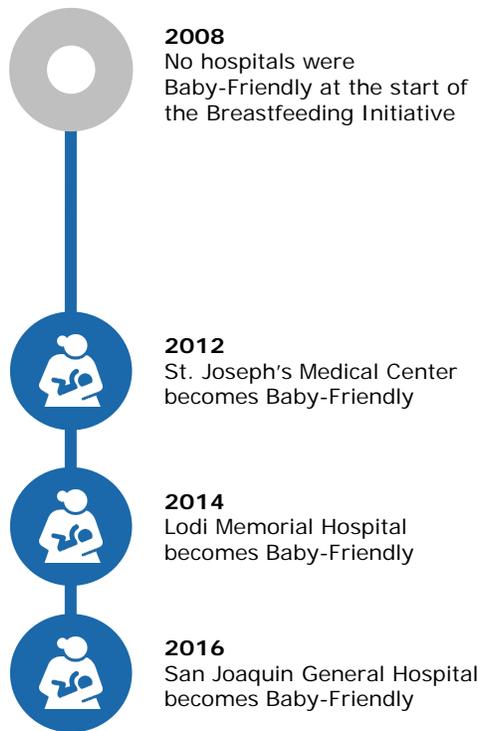

 First 5 San Joaquin's investment in the San Joaquin County Public Health Services Breastfeeding Initiative since 2008

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**Funding supports:**

- Breastfeeding Initiative Coordinator
- Continuing education scholarships
- Monthly Breastfeeding Consortium meetings
- Technical assistance and training







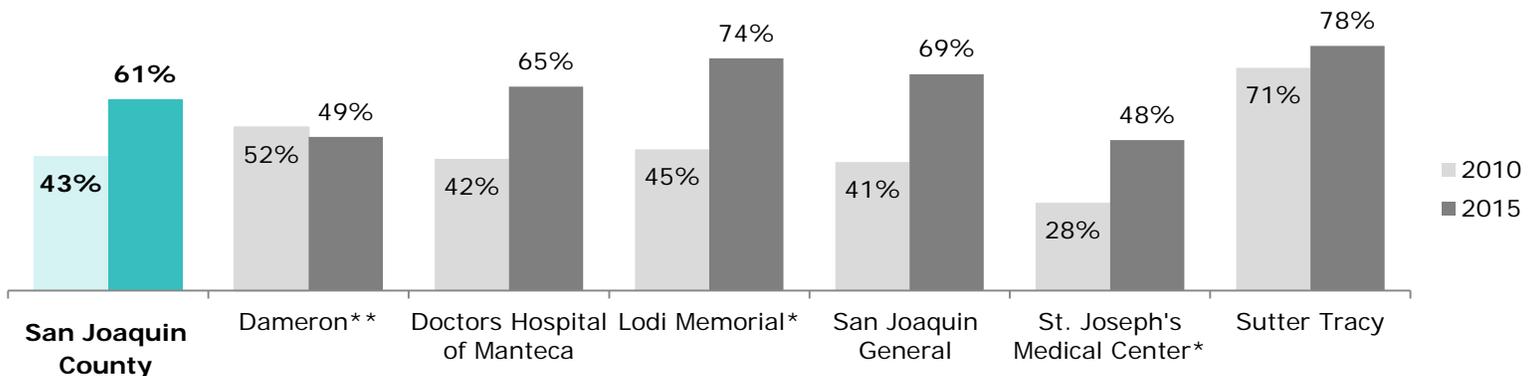
**67%** of San Joaquin County births occur in a Baby-Friendly facility (compared to 34% in California, and 13% nationwide)<sup>1</sup>

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**74%** of all Medi-Cal births in San Joaquin County occur in Baby-Friendly Hospitals<sup>2</sup>

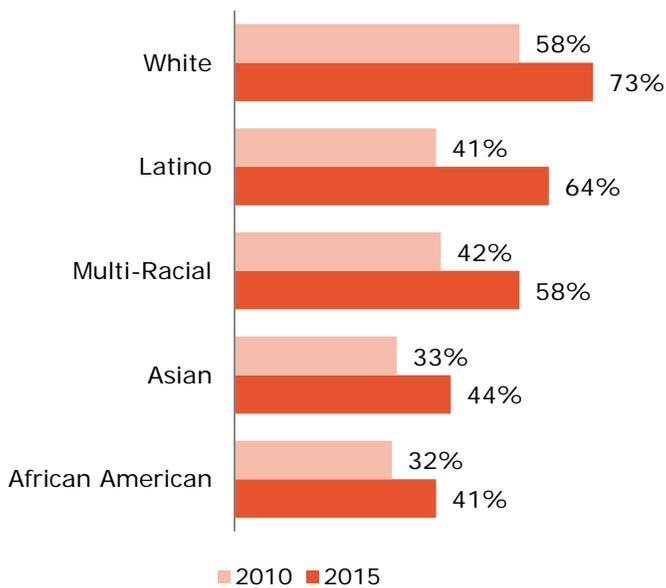
**In San Joaquin County, the in-hospital exclusive breastfeeding rate increased from 43 percent to 61 percent.<sup>3</sup>**



\*Indicates Baby-Friendly designation by 2015. San Joaquin General Hospital became Baby-Friendly in 2016.

\*\*Dameron Hospital closed its maternity services unit in 2016.

San Joaquin County—like the rest of California—continues to see racial and ethnic disparities in exclusive breastfeeding rates.<sup>3</sup>



Hospitals, health centers, and staff are using several strategies to reduce these breastfeeding disparities.



**Hold trainings** to address provider implicit biases

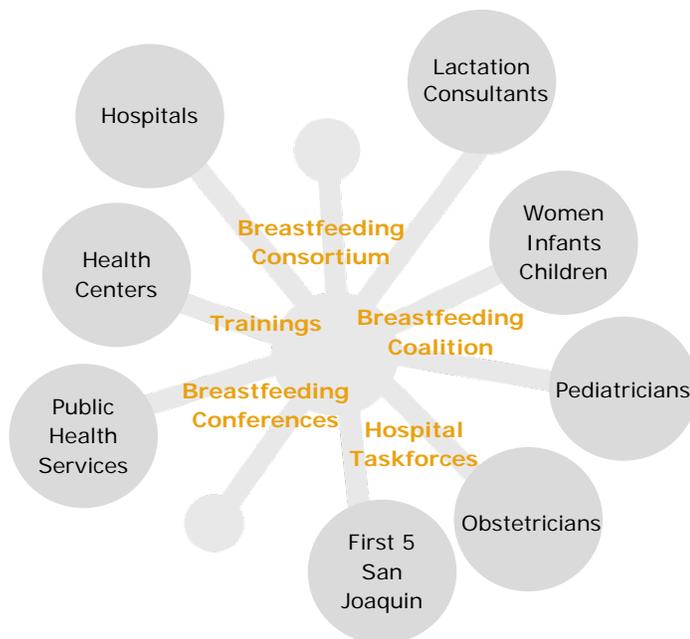


**Develop culturally-specific support** and materials to support women's diverse expectations about breastfeeding



**Diversify the workforce** to meet the needs of women with limited English proficiency

The network among breastfeeding stakeholders provides formal and informal learning opportunities, and has been recognized as key to breastfeeding successes in San Joaquin County.



“ We’ve made huge strides in exclusive breastfeeding rates... It’s because of the [Breastfeeding] Consortia that we got to where we got to, and continue to learn as we go. ”

- Breastfeeding stakeholder

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity. Available at [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/DNPAO/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/DNPAO/index.html).

<sup>2</sup> San Joaquin County Public Health Services Epidemiology Program. Percentage of hospital births to mothers on Medi-Cal. 2015 (preliminary).

<sup>3</sup> California Department of Public Health. In-Hospital Breastfeeding Initiation Rates, 2010 to 2015.

All photos courtesy of San Joaquin General Hospital.