

October 10, 2003

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Chief Executive Officers
Health Authorities

Dear Chief Executive Officers:

Re: BC *Baby Friendly* Network

This letter is to introduce the BC *Baby Friendly* Network (Network) and to encourage health authorities to work with the Network to create an environment conducive to breastfeeding in BC.

The Network's mandate is to promote, protect and support breastfeeding throughout BC. In 1998, the Minister of Health and Minister for Children and Families designated the Network to be the implementation committee for the *WHO International Baby Friendly Initiative* in BC. In this role, the Network identifies health care organizations and communities interested in becoming *Baby Friendly*, and assists them in meeting the requirements for the *Baby Friendly* designation.

The Ministry of Health Planning recognizes that breastfeeding provides considerable health benefits to mothers and babies.

- Breastfeeding contributes to the healthy growth and psychosocial development of babies.
- Breast milk provides optimal nourishment for babies and boosts their immune systems, protecting them from gastrointestinal, respiratory and ear infections and lowering their risk for allergies.
- Breastfeeding reduces a women's risk of ovarian and breast cancers and osteoporosis.

However, the Ministry also realizes that women need the support of families, friends, health professionals and communities to initiate and sustain breastfeeding.

I encourage health authorities to work with the Network to pursue *Baby Friendly* designation for your health care organizations. This is an important opportunity for BC to become a leader in this international child health initiative

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For more information, contact Barbara Selwood, Chairperson, BC *Baby Friendly* Network by telephone at: (604) 507-5420, or Lisa Forster-Coull, Consultant, Child and Youth Health, Prevention and Wellness Planning Division, Ministry of Health Planning, by telephone at: (250) 952-1124.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Penny Ballem, MD
Deputy Minister

pc: Barbara Selwood, Manager, Health Services
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Child & Youth Health
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