

DC BREASTFEEDING COALITION, INC.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 23, 2010

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DC BREASTFEEDING COALITION RECOGNIZES BREASTFEEDING-FRIENDLY HOSPITALS

Washington, DC—The DC Breastfeeding Coalition (DCBFC) held award ceremonies during March 2010 to honor the most breastfeeding-friendly maternity facilities from 2009. The facilities chosen were those that made the most improvements to their website, policies and practices during the DC Breastfeeding Friendly Hospital Initiative (DCBFHI). The three facilities already recognized were Georgetown University Hospital, Providence Hospital, and Howard University Hospital. Arrangements are being made to honor Washington Hospital Center in the near future.

The DCBFC launched the DCBFHI during World Breastfeeding Week 2008. The project was funded by the Office of Women's Health of the Department of Health & Human Services. Each of the eight maternity service facilities in the District agreed to participate. The DCBFC reviewed each facility's written breastfeeding policy, interviewed individuals within each facility about the breastfeeding practices and policies of the organization and conducted an in-depth survey of each facility's web site. Georgetown was recognized as the most breastfeeding-friendly on each of the three components of the survey after the baseline evaluations in February 2009. Results were reviewed with each participating facility to assist them in developing a strategic plan to improve their breastfeeding-friendliness. The facilities were re-evaluated following the intervention beginning in August 2009 to assess any changes from baseline.

The Coalition was proud to honor Georgetown University Hospital (GUH) for scoring the highest on all three components of the DCBFHI baseline and follow-up surveys. GUH's lactation program received recognition for their successful achievement in implementing policies and practices that are supportive to breastfeeding and providing an accessible website with useful information regarding breastfeeding. GUH has also applied to become the first DC hospital to achieve Baby-Friendly designation. They received a Baby Friendly Certificate of Intent on March 19, 2010.

Howard University Hospital received the Most Improved Breastfeeding-Friendly Practices award. Providence Hospital was recognized for having the Most Improved Breastfeeding-Friendly Website. Washington Hospital Center will be recognized for having the Most Improved Breastfeeding-Friendly Policies. "These four hospitals are to be commended for the commitment they've shown to reducing barriers to successful initiation of breastfeeding," says Sahira Long, MD, President of the Coalition. "Mothers who get off to a good start while in the hospital tend to breastfeed longer," says Dr. Long.

The tools used in the survey were developed based on criteria as outlined by UNICEF/WHO in the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding for Hospitals. The Ten Steps have been proven to increase breastfeeding rates and duration nationally in keeping with the Surgeon Generals Healthy People 2010 goals.

The DCBFC will continue to be available to assist participating birthing facilities in continued improvement. It is the Coalition's goal to encourage breastfeeding policies and practices that support, promote, and protect breastfeeding and to assist all area hospitals and birthing centers to set short and long term goals towards increasing their breastfeeding friendliness.

The DC Breastfeeding Coalition, established in 2004, is a non-profit organization (www.dcbfc.org) dedicated to enhancing the health of families in the District through improved breastfeeding initiation and duration rates. It is the Coalitions' goal to promote environments that establish human lactation as a societal norm.

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