



Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Health  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

13 July 2021

**DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR**

No. 2021- 0297

**TO : UNDERSECRETARIES OF HEALTH; ASSISTANT SECRETARIES OF HEALTH; DIRECTORS OF CENTERS FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT (CHDs); THE MINISTER OF HEALTH-BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO (MOH-BARMM); THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION; THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL NUTRITION COUNCIL; EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF SPECIALTY HOSPITALS; CHIEFS OF MEDICAL CENTERS, HOSPITALS AND SANITARIA; OTHER GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE HEALTH FACILITIES; AND ALL OTHERS CONCERNED**

**SUBJECT : Observance of August 2021 as National Breastfeeding Awareness Month with the Theme “Tulong-Tulong sa Pagpapasuso sa First 1,000 Days!”**

**I. RATIONALE**

Pursuant to Republic Act 10028, Expanded Breastfeeding Promotion Act of 2009<sup>1</sup>, August 2021 is declared as **National Breastfeeding Awareness Month** to raise awareness on the importance of breastfeeding and further its promotion as a highly beneficial public health intervention for mothers and children.

For 2021, in tangent with the World Breastfeeding Week Theme “Protect Breastfeeding: A Shared Responsibility<sup>2</sup>,” the DOH leads the celebration of August 2021 as National Breastfeeding Awareness Month with the theme “**Tulong-Tulong sa Pagpapasuso sa First 1,000 Days!**”

The celebration commemorates 10 years of the Breastfeeding TSEK! (Tama, Sapat, Eklusibo/Correct, Enough, and Exclusive) Campaign and the importance of collaboration, with focus on empowerment of governments, communities, and community-based mother support groups who advocate breastfeeding and safe, sustainable Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices among their peers, social groups, local communities, and even their local governments. Aside from government efforts, supportive advocacy interventions from communities that ensure access to health and nutrition information are in place, so as public health efforts on communicating adequate and sustainable feeding practices are not

<sup>1</sup> CHAPTER IV. INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND RE-EDUCATION DRIVE Section 11. A new Section 16 is hereby added to read as follows: “SEC. 16. Breastfeeding Awareness Month. – To raise awareness on the importance of and to further promote breastfeeding, the month of August in each and every year throughout the Philippines shall be known as “Breastfeeding Awareness Month.”

<sup>2</sup> Theme for World Breastfeeding Week 2021. <https://worldbreastfeedingweek.org/>

diminished or undermined.

The Breastfeeding TSEK Campaign was a campaign created and launched by the DOH with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO). The campaign sought to encourage mothers to practice exclusive breastfeeding for six months as well as to educate them about proper breastfeeding and its numerous health benefits. It also aims at advocating adequate support from family, employers, health care providers, and the community to enable mothers to exclusively breastfeed their babies.

We have now framed our thinking that with proper health and nutrition interventions for the family, protecting, promoting, and supporting breastfeeding is a collaborative endeavor between the government and the people it serves. Increasing demand for more protection, promotion, and support of breastfeeding and proper IYCF practices is a shared responsibility between health service providers and families. As breastfeeding practices benefit from effective and efficient advocacy campaigns in health facilities, homes, workplaces, and communities—it is clear that there is strength in multisector collaboration in terms of programming, implementation, information, and market regulation, and monitoring the Philippines's breastfeeding program, with active participation from mothers and caregivers.

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

### **A. Communication Objective**

1. That the Philippine government has laws that support breastfeeding and IYCF education, information, and services as part of primary care services.
2. That breastfeeding, although a natural act, is a learned act from the community—and while health care workers are main influencers for mothers and their families to breastfeed: the battleground to sustain breastfeeding through supportive behaviors and environments are found in households and community peer groups.
3. That breastfeeding is a public health intervention, similar to vaccines and healthy food to prevent illness and malnutrition—especially stunting in children.
4. That the community should be more aware and supportive of the following:
  - a. The Early Essential Newborn Care Protocol/*Unang Yakap* is an important intervention for the protection of immediate postpartum women and their newborn, especially with skin-to-skin contact, breastfeeding initiation, and non-separation of the mother and child.
  - b. Breastfeeding is TAMA, SAPAT, at ESKKLUSIBO as the first food of newborns aged 0-6 months, and continues to have benefits from 6 months onwards, when complemented with safe, nutritious, adequate, and diverse food.
  - c. COVID vaccines are safe for mid- to late-term pregnant women and breastfeeding/lactating women, and are beneficial to both the mother and child.

### **B. Behavioral Objective**

1. That there is increased awareness on the following—
  - a. Safe and sustainable IYCF practices as the most efficient way to feed

newborn, infants, and young children, starting with exclusive breastfeeding that is TAMA, SAPAT, at EKSCLUSIBO from 0 until the child turns six (6) months, and continued with complementary feeding from their 6 months old until they turn three (3) years old, and the most ideal intervention to curb malnutrition, especially stunting.

- b. Quality antenatal and postpartum care—which includes preparation for breastfeeding and safe, sustainable, educated IYCF practices after birth, Early Essential Newborn Care (EENC)/Unang Yakap, vaccinations, and modern family planning—supports breastfeeding through provision of evidence-based, pertinent information as the first intervention in supporting breastfeeding among mothers.
  - c. Unang Yakap as the gold standard for immediate post-partum care for newborns—and serves as a very important intervention in supporting breastfeeding.
  - d. COVID vaccines are safe for mid- to late-term pregnant women and breastfeeding/lactating women, and are beneficial to both the mother and child.
  - e. Breastfeeding is also a modern natural family planning method, in the form of Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM), but only if certain categories are followed—and that there are other breastfeeding-safe modern family planning options.
2. That communities that implement lactation policies, put up lactation stations/lactation-friendly spaces in communal spaces and evacuation centers (during disasters and emergencies), are important supportive structures
  3. That the health and welfare systems see that mother support groups have been visible yet unsupported workers in this service delivery system. Mother support groups have to be engaged as the most reliable, educated community partners of DOH, who enhance investments in continuing the capacity of our facility and community health workers in providing support to mothers and their families in IYCF, during normal and—most critically—during times of disaster.

### **III. IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES**

- A. DOH, through the Disease Prevention and Control Bureau (DPCB), in partnership with the Health Promotions Bureau (HPB), the National Nutrition Council (NNC), and various national government agencies, non-government organizations, civil society organizations, and professional organizations, shall lead the national celebration of August 2021 as National Breastfeeding Awareness Month.
- B. All concerned agencies and local government units are enjoined to spearhead activities for the observance of August 2021 as National Breastfeeding Awareness Month. Discretionary activities may include, but not limited to:
  1. Celebration of the National Breastfeeding Awareness Month in hospitals, primary care health facilities, and local government units (LGUs) observing minimum public health standard;
  2. Breastfeeding education and promotion activities such as mother's classes in communities; and
  3. IYCF demand generation and IYCF service provision (antenatal and post-partum breastfeeding and IYCF counselling) in all health facilities and other points of contact in LGUs.

- C. All activities for the celebration of the National Breastfeeding Awareness Month shall observe the minimum public health standards for the prevention of COVID-19 and infection and prevention protocol mandated locally.
- D. All concerned agencies and LGUs are enjoined to adopt and implement the Communication Package for the National Breastfeeding Awareness Month celebration. This package contains prototypes of streamers and banners, social media card series, announcement cards, slide deck template, and infographics. It can be accessed through this link: <http://bit.ly/BFAwarenessCommPack>.
- E. The Key Messages are provided in ANNEX 1. These shall be used in communication and/or policy outputs related to the National Breastfeeding Awareness Month.
- F. Specific Activities
1. The DOH shall be hosting a series of virtual national interactive public and technical activities that shall deliver key messages of the 2021 National Breastfeeding Awareness Month Celebration, to deliver the objectives of the celebration, provided in ANNEX 2. CHDs, public and private hospitals, LGUs, NGOs, CSOs, and academic and/or professional organizations are all invited to join. A registration link shall be provided for each activity.
    - a. **Public Interactive Activities** are directed towards mothers and the general public as the target audience.
    - b. **Technical Interactive Activities** are directed towards health facilities and health workers as the target audience.
    - c. The singular **Community Event** serves as the culmination activity for the National Breastfeeding Awareness Month, targeting both the general public and health systems.
  2. CHDs, in partnership with LGUs, shall be in charge of leading regional celebration of August 2021 as National Breastfeeding Awareness Month, following the behavioral and communication objectives provided in section II.
- G. The following are intended target audiences for National Breastfeeding Awareness Month activities—
1. Health, Nutrition, and Welfare Program Managers in local government units
  2. Women of reproductive age (WRAs)
  3. Pregnant women, Women about to give birth, Postpartum women
  4. Immediate family members of WRAs, pregnant women, women about to give birth, postpartum women
  5. Caregivers of newborn children, infants, and young children—especially grandparents
  6. Facility-based and community health workers
  7. Online and offline community support groups for mothers and families with children
- H. The DOH, CHDs, and partner agencies may enter into various institutional arrangements in relation to the implementation of the National Breastfeeding Awareness Month.
- I. All programs, strategies, and activities to be undertaken by DOH, CHDs, and partner agencies in the implementation of the National Breastfeeding Awareness

Month shall be sourced from their respective annual approved budget. Agencies shall work together to ensure adequate funding for the key strategies of the National Breastfeeding Awareness Month.

- J. DOH and the NNC shall ensure the dissemination of this Department Circular to all its Regional Offices, partner agencies including NGOs, CSOs, and implementing partners.

**IV. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE**

If any part, section, or provision of this Department Circular is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provision not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

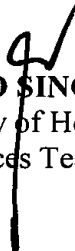
**V. REPEALING CLAUSE**

All orders, rules, regulations, and other related issuances inconsistent with or contrary to this Department Circular are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly. All other provisions of existing issuances which are not affected by this Department Circular shall remain valid and in effect.

**VI. EFFECTIVITY**

This Department Circular shall take effect immediately upon approval.

By the Authority of the Secretary of Health:

  
**MARIA ROSARIO SINGH-VERGEIRE, MD, MPH, CESO IV**  
OIC, Undersecretary of Health  
Public Health Services Team

**ANNEX 1. August 2021 National Breastfeeding Awareness Month: Key Messages**

Message	Goal
1. Breast milk is TAMA, SAPAT, at EKSKLUSIBO from 0 until the child turns six (6) months, and continued with complementary feeding from their 6 months old until they turn three (3) years old, and the most ideal intervention to curb malnutrition, especially stunting.	Mothers to be knowledgeable of the benefits of breastmilk as complete food for children 0 to 6 months, and is important to complementary feeding with safe, nutritious, adequate, and diverse food from 6 months onwards.
2. Breastfeeding is a natural, but learned act	Women and their families learn that there are ways to prepare oneself—during pregnancy and immediate postpartum—for breastfeeding.
3. All women can breastfeed with adequate support from their family, trusted health professionals, peers, and breastfeeding support groups.	Women and their families learn that they can get active support from health facilities and their workplaces/communities through health workers and support groups.
4. The community must get together to support women to breastfeed.	Families, communities, and workplaces (both formal and informal) to learn ways how they can support women and their families to breastfeed
5. The Philippine Milk Code Exists to ensure that unadulterated breastfeeding education is available to the public and that there is minimal to no commercial marketing interference in the first food systems for newborns, infants, and young children.	The general public to learn about the Philippine Milk Code.
6. RA 10028, or the Expanded Breastfeeding Act of 2009, mandates formal and informal workplaces to build supportive workplaces for breastfeeding, starting from policies to physical spaces.	Breastfeeding mothers and families to be knowledgeable of their entitlements at work and communities.
7. The general public is a key actor in maintaining compliance to Milk Code and RA 10028.	The general public to learn about their role in vigilance in the government’s implementation of the PH Milk Code and RA 10028.
8. Breastfeeding is also a modern natural family planning method, in the form of Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM), but only if certain categories are followed—and that there are other breastfeeding-safe modern family planning options.	That women and the general public become knowledgeable of how LAM works, and other breastfeeding-safe family planning options.

<p>9. The Unang Yakap protocol and COVID vaccination for pregnant women is a key medical intervention in ensuring that newborns are protected against COVID, regardless of the status of the mother.</p>	<p>Mothers and families to be knowledgeable of the benefits of the Unang Yakap protocol and vaccination for pregnant women (and the general public) during the pandemic.</p>
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**ANNEX 2. August 2021 National Breastfeeding Awareness Month: Virtual National Interactive Public and Technical Activities**

ACTIVITY	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch</li> <li>• <b><u>PUBLIC INTERACTIVE SERIES</u></b> <b>08 August 2021</b> Vaccines and Pregnancy and Breastfeeding</li> </ul>	<p>COVID vaccines are safe for mid- to late-term pregnant women and breastfeeding/lactating women, and are beneficial to both the mother and child.</p> <p>Quality antenatal care—which includes preparation for breastfeeding and safe, sustainable, educated infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices after birth, Early Essential Newborn Care (EENC)/Unang Yakap, vaccinations, and modern family planning—supports breastfeeding through provision of evidence-based, pertinent information as the first intervention in supporting breastfeeding among mothers.</p>
<p><b><u>PUBLIC INTERACTIVE SERIES</u></b> <b>15 August 2021</b> TOPIC: Non-separation of Mothers and Babies is important during the Pandemic</p> <p><b><u>TECHNICAL INTERACTIVE SERIES</u></b> <b>19 August 2021</b> TOPIC: A Focused Discussion on the Unified COVID-19 Algorithms for the Care of Mothers and Children</p>	<p>Unang Yakap as the gold standard for immediate post-partum care for newborns—and serves as a very important intervention in supporting breastfeeding.</p>
<p><b><u>TECHNICAL INTERACTIVE SERIES</u></b> <b>12 August 2021</b> TOPIC: The Whos, Whys, and Hows of Establishing Human Milk Bank—a National Orientation on Human Milk Banking</p> <p><b><u>PUBLIC INTERACTIVE SERIES</u></b> <b>22 August 2021</b> TOPIC: Prenatal and postnatal preparations for breastfeeding with Mother Support Groups</p>	<p>Safe and sustainable IYCF practices as the most efficient way to feed newborn, infants, and young children, starting with exclusive breastfeeding that is TAMA, SAPAT, at EKSKLUSIBO from 0 until the child turns six (6) months, and continued with complementary feeding from their 6 months old until they turn three (3) years old, and the most ideal intervention to curb malnutrition, especially stunting.</p> <p>Communities that implement lactation policies, put up lactation stations/lactation-friendly spaces in communal spaces and evacuation centers (during disasters and emergencies), are important supportive structures.</p> <p>Breastfeeding is also a modern natural family planning method, in the form of Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM), but only if certain</p>



	categories are followed—and that there are other breastfeeding-safe modern family planning options.
<b><u>COMMUNITY EVENT</u></b> <b>29 August 2021</b> National Hakab Na! 2021 (Grand Breastfeeding Event)	Strengthen and promote the expansion of the Filipino network of breastfeeding and IYCF advocates in the public, private, and civil society organizations through a public demonstration through a unified celebration of the 2021 Breastfeeding Awareness Month for policymakers, implementers, advocates, and families.