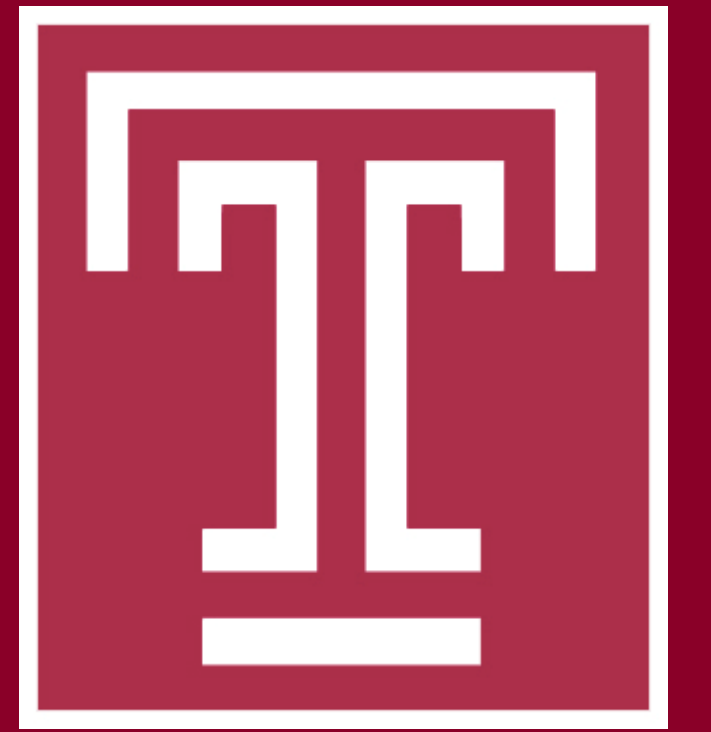


Enhancing Breastfeeding Practices through Community Engagement and Policy Support in Durham, NC

Julianne Williams, MPH HPM
Love Anderson, Breastfeeding Family Friendly Communities
Dr. Aaronson, Fieldwork Advisor



College of Public Health

College of Public Health

Abstract

- Breastfeeding/chestfeeding improves lifelong health for both infants and parents, but structural barriers disproportionately impact marginalized communities.
- Breastfeed Durham (est. 2018) is a health equity advocacy group that promotes first food justice through policy, education, and community engagement.
- Durham is a designated Breastfeeding Family Friendly Community, having fulfilled Step 1: Government Proclamation through the 2025–2035 Human Milk Feeding Strategic Plan.

Objectives

- This project supports Step 10, which encourages educational institutions (childcare, K–12, higher ed) to integrate breastfeeding/chestfeeding-friendly curricula and policies.
- **Purpose:** To evaluate community-based approaches in implementing Step 10 and expanding lactation-friendly practices across Durham’s education systems.

Methodology

- **Community & School Outreach:** Duke University, NCCU, Durham Tech, Durham Public Schools.
- **Community Partner Engagement:**
 - Shared toolkits, Title IX lactation protections, and policy models.
 - Introduced staff and faculty to **Bernadette Greene** for lactation space planning.
- **Data Collection:**
 - 6 qualitative interviews with community partners
 - 25 surveys to educators and staff on breastfeeding-friendly environments
 - Review of school policies and curricula
 - Observe Durham Tech Lactation space and wrote notes and gave to Love
 - Drop off curriculum bundles and books to Durham Tech and Durham Public Schools
- **Advocacy & Events:**
 - Story-sharing project and materials table for April 24 event with Durham Public Schools
 - Monthly newsletters with links for community members to share personal breastfeeding/pumping stories
 - Participated in SAFE Infant Feeding IYCFE Program & volunteered delivering & creating Emergency Bottle Sanitation Kits in Weaverville, NC

Results

As a primarily virtual volunteer, it wasn’t easy to build initial momentum. The dedication and deep community roots of my team, especially Love Anderson, enabled connection with schools, educators, and advocates. Their trust helped me gather meaningful data and support impactful work.

Institutional Outcomes:

- ✓ 242 preschools trained
- ✓ 115 preschools visited
- ✓ 56 mailed breastfeeding-friendly resource packets
- ✓ 42 new lactation spaces created
- ✓ 54 “Breastfeeding-Friendly” awards given

• **Education System Progress:**

- Preschool level: Step approved
- K–12 schools: Step 10 completed
- University level: Active development with policy advocacy and toolkit sharing at NCCU, Durham Tech, and Duke

• **Barriers Identified:**

- Lack of protected lactation breaks
- Inadequate lactation spaces
- Limited awareness among administrators

• **Community-Driven Solutions:**

- Increased institutional awareness
- Storytelling, peer engagement, and direct support (e.g., media collaboration and Title IX education) helped reduce stigma and shift school culture
- The public charge rule likely discouraged immigrant families from attending events or seeking support from Breastfeed Durham due to fear that using public services could jeopardize their immigration status.



Conclusion

- Step 10 implementation builds on Durham’s broader strategic efforts, including the 2025–2035 Human Milk Feeding Strategic Plan, signed into action by Dr. Rodney Jenkins on February 28, 2025.
- The work reflects how years of grassroots organizing, policy writing, and collaboration between community partners and public institutions lead to real systems change.
- Recommendations:
 - Integrate lactation education into health and family life curricula
 - Provide protected time and adequate space for lactating students and staff
 - Allocate funding for lactation spaces and staff education
 - Normalize lactation support by including it in staff/student handbooks and school policies
 - Engage families and community leaders in sharing stories and shaping policy
 - Aligning school policy with federal law (Title IX, FLSA, Title VII) is both a compliance issue and a moral obligation to support maternal and infant health.

References

The Pregnant Scholar (n.d.). Model Lactation Policy for Students. <https://thepregnantscholar.org/wp-content/uploads/Model-Lactation-Policy-for-Students.pdf>
UNC Policy on Lactation Accommodation. <https://policies.unc.edu>
Breastfeed Durham. <https://breastfeeddurham.org>
Break Time for Nursing Mothers Act (FLSA, 2010)
Title IX of Education Amendments (2023 Update)

Acknowledgments

With gratitude to Love Anderson, the Breastfeed Durham team, all community partners and educators who contributed their insights and time to this work. Special thanks to Dr. Aaronson and Temple University for their mentorship and support!

