

Child care providers need more education, training on benefits of breastfeeding, human milk

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Newborns should be breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life with continued breastfeeding until at least 12 months, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. This can be hard when new breastfeeding families have to rely on child care facilities because of a need to return to work in a specified time. What kind of breastfeeding support, if any, can they rely on from the child care facility? This question interested a team of researchers from the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing (Penn Nursing).

The team - led by Diane Spatz, PhD, RN-BC, FAAN, Professor of Perinatal Nursing and the Helen M. Shearer Term Professor of Nutrition at Penn Nursing - investigated individual [child care](#) centers' attitudes and policies related to [breastfeeding](#) in two distinct areas in Philadelphia. Their research concluded that there is much room for improvement in educating and training child care providers and staff on the benefits of breastfeeding and human milk. The results have been published online in *The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing*.

The researchers, which included Emily Garth, BSN, and Abigail Messer, BSN, both graduates of Penn Nursing, collected data by compiling a list of [child care centers](#) - a total of 166 in all - in the areas of study (Center City, Philadelphia and West Philadelphia). They then conducted telephone surveys of the centers that met the inclusion criteria. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

A total of 47 centers completed the survey. Ninety-five percent of those responding centers indicated they would not feed an infant anything besides human milk unless specifically stated in a feeding plan.

Interestingly enough, only forty percent of those centers had staff trained in the benefits of breastfeeding and how to prepare and store human milk. That means sixty percent of the responding centers did not have staff that were adequately trained.

"We were surprised by our findings because of the high number of centers that indicated they would follow a [human-milk](#) feeding plan, but a large number of them didn't have staff that was properly trained on how to handle it," said Spatz. This study shows that widespread education of child care providers and staff is absolutely necessary to ensure adherence to breastfeeding support guidelines. It also aids in the proper dissemination of information about breastfeeding to families.

Provided by University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing

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