

Supporting NICU Moms on their Breastfeeding Journey: The Stanislaus County Pump Loan Program



By Tiawny Williams
Staff Services Coordinator
Stanislaus County Health Services Agency, CA



Overview

The Stanislaus County Health Services Agency's (SCHSA) Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program received community feedback regarding their breastfeeding experiences in the neonatal intensive care units (NICU) at Doctor's Medical Center, the primary birthing hospital in Stanislaus County. Recognizing that the NICU presents additional challenges to sustaining breastfeeding, SCHSA aimed to address barriers affecting high-risk infants, with hospital staff supporting the initiative.

Addressing the Problem Through Policy

SCHSA served as the primary initiator and advocate for the project. Staff first approached the hospital to propose the Pump Loan Program, which was strongly supported by the hospital's International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs). SCHSA researched best practices for implementing a Pump Loan Program and developed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) tailored to the intended partnership. The process of drafting, negotiating, and finalizing the MOU involved extensive collaboration to define roles, responsibilities, and liability. A key milestone was finalizing and signing the MOU and the establishment of a sustainable workflow to support implementation.

Barriers encountered included identifying appropriate documentation methods, determining eligibility requirements for WIC participants, developing a shared

workflow between both agencies, and addressing issues related to liability, roles, responsibilities, and long-term sustainability to ensure program quality.



Partners Engaged

SCHSA and Doctor's Medical Center collaborated on the initiative, with SCHSA leading efforts to identify best practices, establish a workflow aligned to WIC's standard pump loan return process, and providing technical assistance and training to the IBCLCs at Doctor's Medical Center NICU. Doctor's Medical Center supported the program by educating hospital staff, verifying WIC participation, delivering patient/participant education and maintaining consistent documentation and

communication with SCHSA. Hospital staff also shared positive community feedback, highlighting the value of pump access for NICU families.

Policy Solution and Implementation

The MOU and internal policy established a coordinated approach that improves access, reduces delays, and supports continuous quality improvement—ultimately promoting healthier outcomes for mothers and infants.

Following the implementation of the MOU and internal policy, SCHSA and Doctor's Medical Center established consistent communication and weekly follow-ups to support accessibility and improve breastfeeding rates among NICU WIC participants at the Doctor's Medical Center. The Pump Loan Program also strengthened SCHSA's connection to its high-risk population within the hospital setting.



Lessons Learned

Policy implementation and workflow have progressed smoothly. An emerging challenge is the desire to expand the policy to include high-risk WIC participants beyond the NICU population. For others pursuing similar efforts, it is recommended to engage hospital leadership early to gain buy-in and understand clinic workflows, ensuring alignment and successful implementation of shared goals.

Resources

To learn more about SCHSA's partnership with Doctor's Medical Center, check out [this resource and their sample MOU template](#).

For additional examples of MOUs between Local Health Departments (LHDs) and hospitals, check out the following:

- Mississippi State Department of Health's MOU with Baby Friendly® Hospitals. Click [here](#).
- Sample MOU template between Hospital and LHD. Click [here](#).

Contact Information

Tiawny Williams

Staff Services Coordinator
Stanislaus County Health Services Agency
Women, Infants, and Children

Email: tiwilliams@SCHSAa.org Phone: 209.652.3033

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1201 I Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202.783.5550 • Fax: 202.783.1583

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