



Strengthening Breastfeeding Initiatives for Local Health Departments

Community of Practice

June 11th, 2026
1:00 - 2:30 pm ET

Agenda



NACCHO Announcements



**Presentation from
Augusta University Research Institute**



Peer Learning, Networking, and Discussion



Q&A and Next Steps

Zoom Logistics

- **This session is being recorded.** After the call, the recording will be shared with all members of the CoP.
- **Please submit questions using the Q&A feature on Zoom.** Questions will be addressed during the session as applicable, and at the end of the session.
- **For follow-up questions or other inquiries, please email breastfeeding@naccho.org**

Collective CoP Goals

Increased knowledge of the CoC in Breastfeeding Support Blueprint



Identified new opportunities for peer collaboration



LHDs gain ideas, resources, and partnerships to enhance breastfeeding support, outreach, and sustainability efforts

Increased confidence in ability to implement Blueprint strategies



Icebreaker



In the chat, please share:

- **Your Name**
- **Local Health Department and Role**
- **List a partner you enjoy working with and why**

ABOUT NACCHO

“The Voice of Local Public Health”

The **National Association of County and City Health Officials** represents over **3,300 local health department (LHDs)** across the United States. Our mission is to **improve the health of communities** by **strengthening** and **advocating** for local health departments.

LHDs work with **community partners** to protect and **promote health and wellbeing** for all people in their communities.

Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health Team



Tucker O'Donnell, MPH
Director of MCAH



Talei Moore
Senior Program Analyst



Elana Filipos
Senior Program Analyst



Trent Johnson
Program Analyst

Recap from Last Meeting

- **Guest presentation from Black Mothers' Breastfeeding Association (BMBFA)**
- **Isha Johnson and Rachael Wigley discussed CoC Blueprint recommendations surrounding Workforce Capacity and Infrastructure Gaps**

Recap from Last Meeting

www.BMBFA.org/publications

Publications & Resources

Workforce Development in Action



Led by BMBFA with support from the Southeast Michigan Perinatal Quality Improvement Coalition and HealthConnect One, this guide is a game plan for expanding the doula workforce and integrating doulas into healthcare systems.



This brief, developed in partnership with BMBFA, Focus: HOPE, Miigwech Inc., and Health Equity Resources and Strategies (HERS) is a bold new liberatory funding model for doula sustainability within communities.



BMBFA, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Focus: HOPE, Miigwech Inc., and Health Equity Resources and Strategies (HERS) created this toolkit as a must-have roadmap for doulas to enroll, bill, and thrive in Medicaid.

DEEPER CONNECTION: STRATEGIES → BLUEPRINT IN PRACTICE

How Each Strategy Advances the CoC Blueprint

1 Rec. 5

Workforce Development

Increase community capacity for consistent, evidence-based breastfeeding support

- Training BFPCs, doulas, and CHWs
- Cross-training for consistent messaging
- Building a contextually aligned workforce pipeline

2 Rec 1, 2, 3, 5, 6

Community-Based Support

Create supportive environments for breastfeeding

- Neighborhood lactation hubs (Brilliant Detroit)
- Breastfeeding clubs & peer support spaces
- Services embedded in trusted, non-clinical settings

3 Recs. 3 & 4

Continuity of Care

Build coordinated systems + shared communication pathways

- Warm handoffs between clinical & community providers
- PearSuite for documentation & follow-up
- Structured referral workflows and tracking

4 Recs. 1, 3, 7

Partnerships

Integrate breastfeeding into systems + lead community change

- Henry Ford Health clinical partnerships
- Detroit Health Department alignment
- Cross-sector collaboration via Triple Crown
- Multi-system coordination & convening

Cross-Cutting Insight: No single strategy fulfills the Blueprint alone. Continuity of care is achieved through integration across all four areas working together.

Presentation Dates



February 26

**Breastfeeding Family
Friendly Communities**

Community-Centered
Planning and Involvement



April 23

**Black Mothers
Breastfeeding Association**

Workforce Capacity and
Infrastructure Gaps



June 11

**Augusta University
Research Institute**

Partnerships Development
and Sustainability

Respond to the Partnership Poll!

Partnerships Development and Sustainability

**Dr. Marlo Vernon, Jennifer Plueger, Marquetta Thomas, Chameka Robinson,
and Terry Bowen**

Augusta University Research Institute and Albany Area Primary Health Care



Hello & Welcome - About Our Team



Team Members and Partners

- Augusta University Research Institute / School of Public Health
 - Dr. Marlo Vernon-Director
 - Marquetta Thomas- Educator
 - Jennifer Plueger- Coordinator
- Albany Area Primary Health Care
 - Chameka Robinson- Social Worker
 - Terry Bowen- Clinic Supervisor
- In partnership with Dougherty County WIC





From Services to Systems

Applying Public Health & Implementation Science to
Breastfeeding Continuity of Care

THE MILKS PIPELINE

A REAL-WORLD SYSTEMS INTEGRATION MODEL

Mothers Informed Lactation Knowledge & Support

What You'll Leave With

Three levels of learning – from understanding to action.

1

Comprehension

"I understand continuity of care and implementation science."

2

Interpretation

"I can identify fragmentation in my own system."

3

Application

"I can begin designing solutions using these principles."



A Story You Already Know

A mother receives breastfeeding encouragement at her health department or clinic prenatal visit. In the hospital, she gets different guidance. At discharge, she's handed a paper referral to WIC. By the pediatric visit, she has stopped breastfeeding.

- ❏ **The problem wasn't motivation. The problem was a lack of coordination between the health department/clinics, hospital, and WIC.**

INTERACTIVE POLL #1

What's the biggest breakdown you see?

Where Does Continuity Break Down?

CoC Blueprint Recommendation 2: Create environments that proactively promote, protect, and support breastfeeding

Before we talk solutions, let's diagnose.

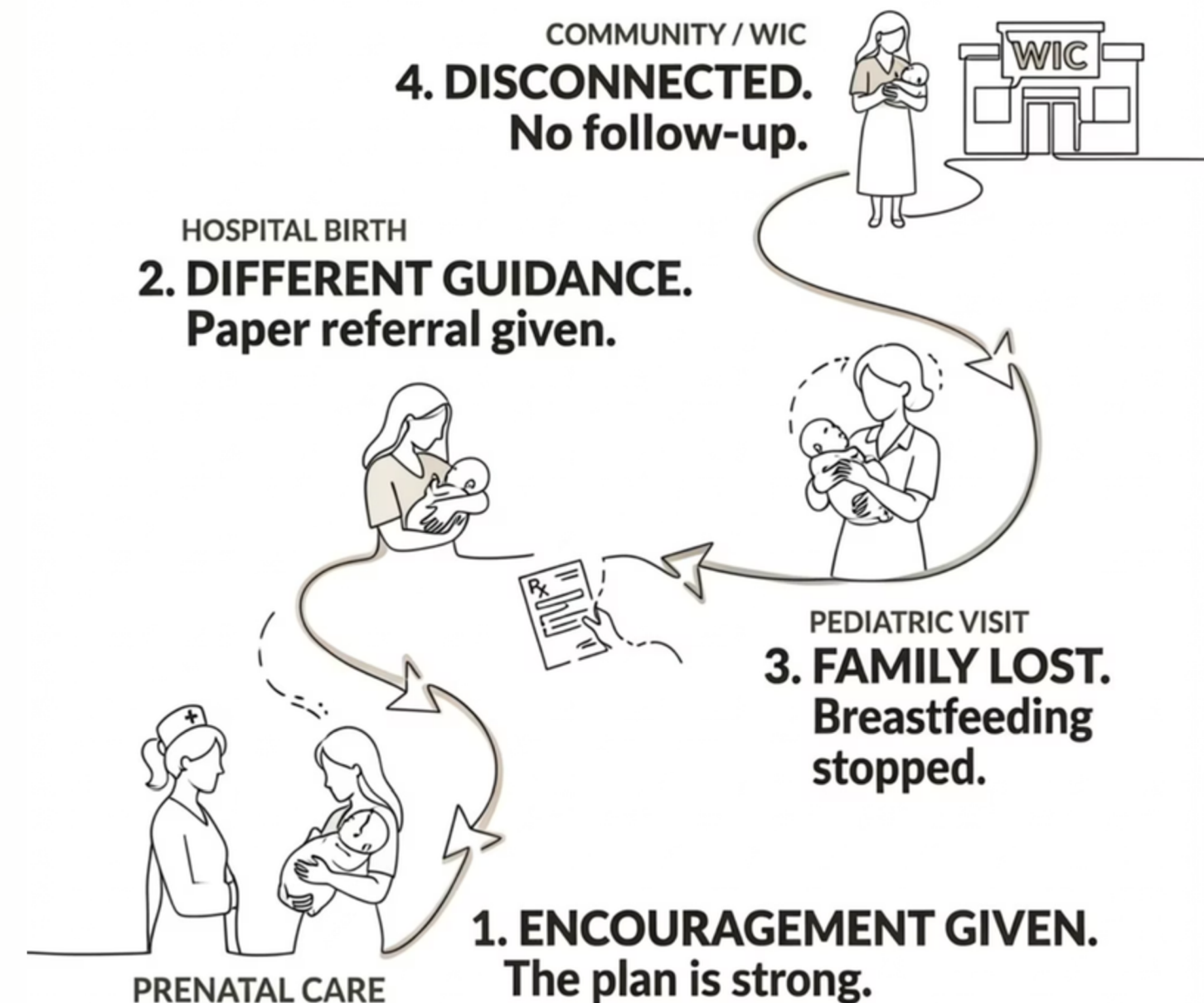
Ask yourself:

Where do families get lost between your health department, clinics, and WIC?

Where does the messaging change?

Where do referrals fail?

Where does communication break down?



Why Good Programs Fail to Connect

Implementation science isn't theory – it's a diagnostic tool. Breastfeeding programs in your health department, clinics, and WIC struggle not because of knowledge gaps or resources alone, but because of **systems alignment problems**.

CFIR: A Practical Lens

CFIR helps us understand the *conditions* that make implementation succeed or fail – not just what services exist, but *how they connect*.

Outer Setting

What families experience

Inner Setting

How your health department, clinics, and WIC organizations actually function

Individuals

What staff know and believe

Intervention

What tools and processes exist

Process

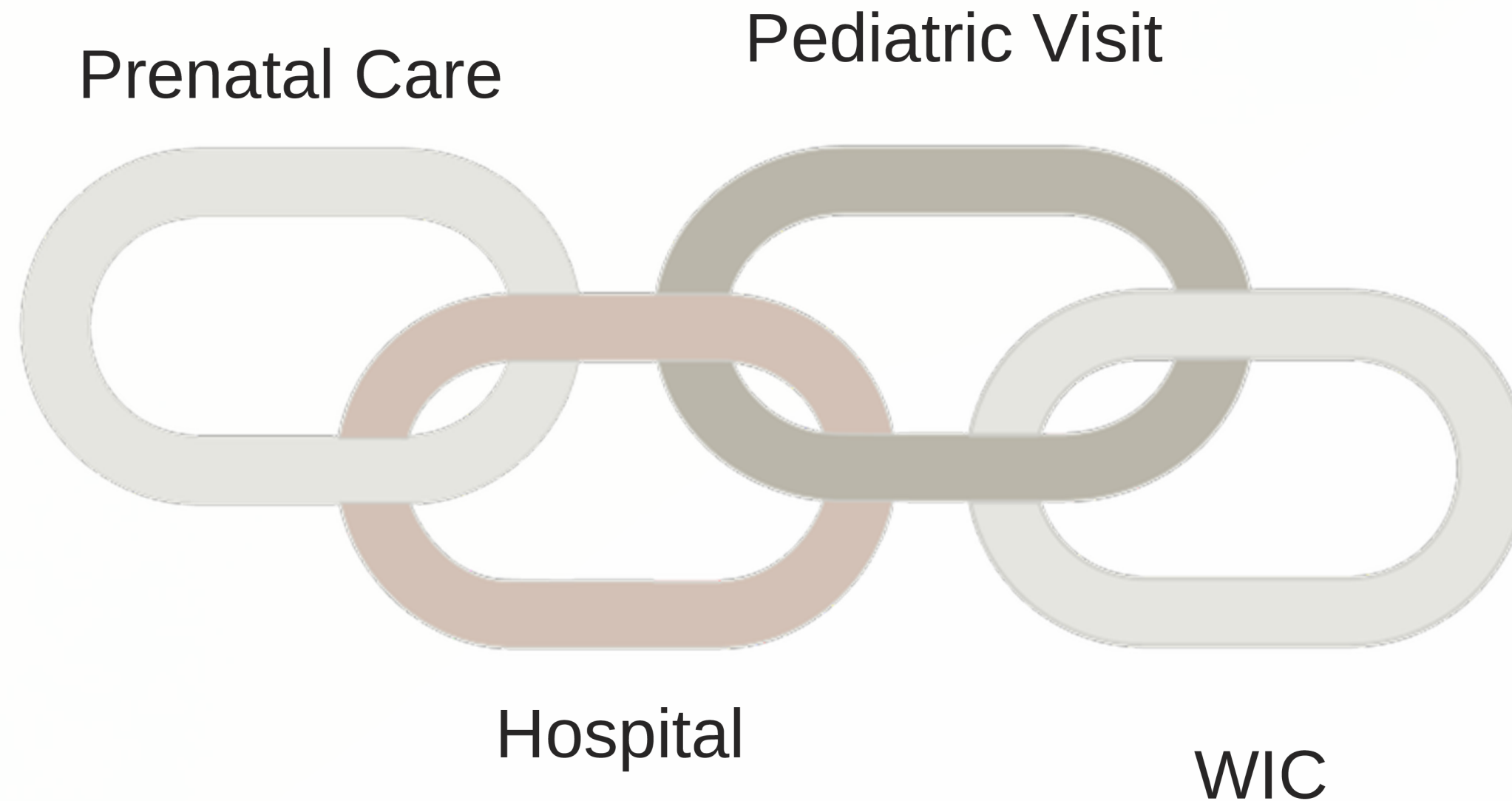
How change actually happens

INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #2

Which of these domains creates the most barriers in YOUR setting? And Why?

- Outer
- Inner
- Individuals
- Intervention
- Process

MILKS Pipeline: Redesigning How Services Connect



The MILKS Pipeline does not add more services – it redesigns how your health department, clinics, and WIC work together. The point is continuous coordination between agencies, with communication, handoffs, and data flowing across every stage.

Recommendation 3: Transfer of Care Accountability and Referral Systems.

Implementation Moves That Drive Continuity

Each MILKS strategy shows how your health department, clinics, and WIC can work together to address specific breakdown points.

Problem	Strategy	System Effect
Inconsistent messaging	Standardized workflows [Blueprint Rec 2,5]	Aligned counseling across settings
Passive referrals	Warm handoffs [Blueprint Rec 3]	Stronger continuity at transitions
WIC disconnected	Prenatal integration [Blueprint Rec 2, 3]	Earlier trust, earlier engagement
Provider uncertainty	Brief training modules [Blueprint Rec 5]	Improved confidence and consistency

Mini Systems Design Challenge

Pick one transition point in your health department, clinics, or WIC system that you want to redesign. Which of these is your biggest challenge?

Prenatal Care

Hospital Discharge

Pediatric Visit

Other

These challenges are strongest when the health department, clinics, and WIC work together to create smoother transitions, clearer communication, and more consistent support for families.

Mini Systems Design Challenge

If I could redesign just this ONE transition, what would I change?

For example:

- How referrals are made
- How information is shared between providers
- How families are handed off between settings
- How follow-up actually happens after discharge
- How support is activated when a mom is struggling

Mini Systems Design Challenge

What kind of system change would make the biggest difference?

For example:

- Change the workflow (how the work happens day-to-day)
- Strengthen connections between people (warm handoffs, coordination, new partners)
- Build staff skills and confidence (real-time support and training)
- Improve communication flow (so information follows the family)
- Track families across settings (shared visibility across partners)

You May Be Closer Than You Think

You're already doing Blueprint work. An implementation framework helps you recognize it, strengthen it, and apply it more intentionally!

01

Breastfeeding as a Community Health Improvement Strategy

You identified barriers and strengths in your system

02

Breastfeeding Policies, Systems and Environmental Changes

You talked about workflow redesign and creating more supportive systems

03

Transfer of Care Accountability and Referral Systems

You discussed referrals, warm handoffs, and coordination across partners

04

Community-Driven Breastfeeding Data Systems

You talked about tracking families and understanding what happens after referral

05

Workforce Education

You identified training needs

06

Family-Centered Care and Community-Based Approaches

You centered the family experience

07

Health Advocacy and the Local Breastfeeding Champion Role

You thought about who needs to be involved and at the table

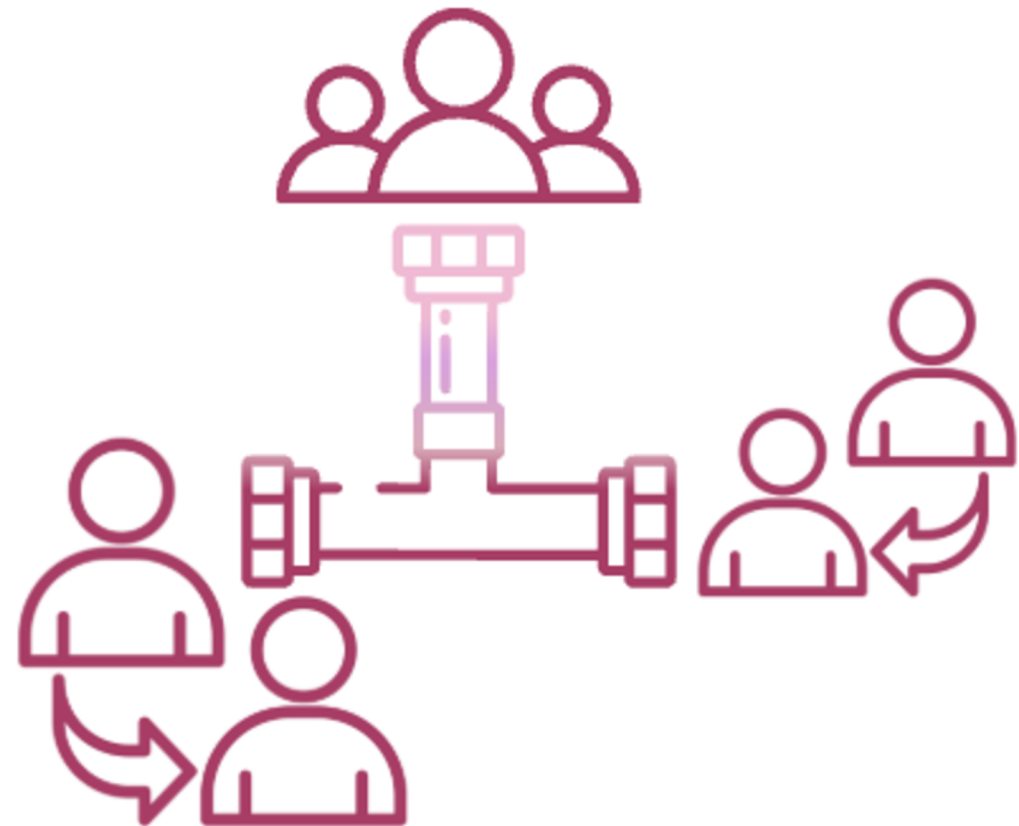
What Becomes Possible When Systems Align

When your health department, clinics, and WIC work as one coordinated system...

The Vision

The future of breastfeeding support is not more isolated programs. It is **connected health department, clinic, and WIC systems designed intentionally around continuity.**

When implementation infrastructure is in place, scaling happens through relationships — not just resources.



Integrated Referral Systems between health department, clinics, and WIC

Closed-loop communication replaces paper handoffs.

WIC as Embedded Care Team within health department and clinic infrastructure

WIC is infrastructure, not an external destination.

Public Health Systems Redesign through health department, clinic, and WIC collaboration

Implementation science as a transferable framework.



Your Next Move

Implementation science starts with a single question: **What condition is missing in my health department, clinics, or WIC system?**

Reflect

What is ONE implementation barrier you now see differently?

Identify

What is ONE systems change your health department, clinics, or WIC could begin tomorrow?

Connect

Who else in your health department, clinics, and WIC needs to be part of this redesign?



You are not just a service provider. You are implementation infrastructure.

Thank You + Let's Talk

Thank you for being here.

Thank you for the work you do every day in your health departments, clinics, and WIC agencies.

And thank you for being willing to think differently about how we support families.

Let's Talk...Q&A + Discussion

Implementation Science
Framework

Making Connections

Barriers & Strengths
Mapping

Let's Connect... Dr. Marlo Vernon mvernon@augusta.edu

Augusta University's School of Public Health, Department of Health Management, Economics, and Policy

<https://www.augusta.edu/sph/hmep/index.php>

Resources

- **Breastfeeding Systems Mapping Worksheet**
- **Mini Systems Design Challenge**

Check the chat!



Next Steps



Thank you!

CoP Final Assessment:

https://naccho.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b00dquBxNFb2Tr0

Other questions or inquiries, email:

breastfeeding@naccho.org