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World Breast-feeding Week: Supporting Breast-feeding – Together

The Comanche County Health Department joins the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) in promoting World Breast-feeding Week August 1st through 7th. This year's theme focuses on the importance of working together for the common good. In order to meet breast-feeding duration goals, it is important for mothers to receive support from their community, health care providers, child care providers and employers, as well as their friends and family.

The benefits of breast-feeding extend through infancy and childhood and even into adulthood. Studies have shown that breast-feeding provides children with the nutrients they need to help with development and building a strong immune system. Breast-feeding not only provides nutrition for the baby but has long-lasting positive effects for the mother as well.

The Comanche County Health Department will be providing education to promote the benefits of breast-feeding and improve the overall health of both the newborn children and their mothers.

Based on the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) data from 2014, 85 percent of Oklahoma mothers began breast-feeding their babies after birth. While most new mothers start out breast-feeding, many do not exclusively breast-feed for six months or continue for up to two years of age as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

"We want to help in building a brighter future for all Oklahomans so we are encouraging all of our new mothers to breast-feed their babies for as long as possible," said Brandie O'Connor, the Comanche County Health Department Administrative Health Director. "Their ability to provide these nutrients to their babies is crucial for a healthy start."

Data provided in The Oklahoma Toddler Survey (TOTS) from 2012 to 2015 indicates that although the numbers are gradually improving, only 36 percent of mothers were breast-feeding at six months and 19 percent of mothers were breast-feeding at 12 months or more. This does not meet the national Healthy People 2020 breast-feeding objectives aimed to increase the proportion of infants who are breast-fed at six months to nearly 61 percent and at one year to 34 percent.

"Breast-feeding not only provides nutrition for the baby but has long-lasting positive effects for the mother as well," said Rosanne Smith, breastfeeding coordinator, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Service. "WIC views breast-feeding as a priority and hopes to set an example for community support of breast-feeding mothers."

For breastfeeding support and information, call the Comanche County Health Department at 580-248-5890 or the Oklahoma Breastfeeding Hotline toll free at 1-877-271-MILK (6455) or visit the Oklahoma breastfeeding website at <http://bis.health.ok.gov>.