

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARD


2014
Emerging Light**Two Rivers Family Health Team - Newborn Support Program****What's best for baby: encouraging breastfeeding in Waterloo**

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Members of the Two Rivers Family Health Team in Waterloo region were concerned with the lack of breastfeeding support in their area; local programs had been cut back or dropped entirely in recent years, and by 2009, only 38 per cent of newborns were exclusively breastfed until they were six months old.

In response, Two Rivers created the Newborn Support Program — an initiative that won an Emerging Bright Light Award from the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario. The award was created to encourage remarkable progress by a group that had not been nominated before, yet produced high-level work.

The newborn program starts before birth with comprehensive prenatal breastfeeding assessments, the program brings mothers and newborns into its clinic after they're discharged from hospital. There are also classes, including a prenatal breastfeeding class, another on introducing babies to solid foods, and one on connecting with baby. The team also has a board-certified lactation consultants to help with breastfeeding problems.

To reinforce the importance of breastfeeding for everyone on the team, a number of tools have been built into the team's electronic medical records. They include forms for pre-natal assessment and follow-up once the baby arrives, and a system for capturing key breastfeeding-related data — including when it starts and its duration and exclusivity.

The effort put into the newborn program paid off: by 2013-2014, 54 per cent of babies the team care for were being exclusively breast fed to the age of six months, a 16-per-cent increase.

Recently, the team has been collaborating with local organizations to expand the Newborn Support Program to the greater community, and is listed as a local support in the Region of Waterloo New Parents Resource Guide. To build a sense of support in the community, Two Rivers has also developed a breastfeeding-friendly policy and promotional materials and signs to highlight commitment to it.

Two Rivers is also working to share its success with other providers. The lactation consultants and physicians have presented their work at numerous venues, including AFHTO's 2011 Conference. The team is also advising Ontario's Best Start program on its Baby-Friendly Initiative.