North-East Toronto Community Breastfeeding Support

Best Start preconference February 2016
Remington Health Centre

Project Objectives:

- Development of collaborative sustainable model
- Development of peer-professional model
- Peers provide important support especially to those who face barriers to accessing services and have lower rates of breastfeeding (Best Start)
- The Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) recognizes the value of peer support for breastfeeding mothers

What is a Peer-Professional Breastfeeding Support Model?

PEER MODEL ELEMENTS:
- Support offered by women who have breastfed, are usually from socio-economic backgrounds similar to the women they support, and who have received minimal training to support breastfeeding women (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)
- A low-cost, non-medical intervention
- Access to experienced breastfeeding mothers
- Many different educational, ethno-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds (La Leche League, 2010)
- Diverse communities and communities with high immigration trends benefit from peer support
- Peers provide important support especially to those who face barriers to accessing services and have lower rates of breastfeeding (Best Start)

PROFESSIONAL MODEL ELEMENTS:
- Health professionals provide research-based evidence breastfeeding support
- Support for complex breastfeeding cases, one-on-one as needed
- Provide health, breastfeeding information and referrals to other community resources
Highlights: Peer Support

- Important to understand populations with lower rates of breastfeeding: peers with lived experience can connect with other mothers.
- Peer support creates a breastfeeding culture that normalizes breastfeeding: in public, in discussion, with other support people.
- Peer support promotes health equity by improving access to breastfeeding help (WHO, 2003).

Setting up breastfeeding support

- What is already in existence?
  - Established communities
  - Current meetings in schools, housing buildings
  - Community agencies
- Rooted in breastfeeding support, but from what background?
  - Mother-to-mother peer support
  - "Expert"-led professional support
  - Interdisciplinary breastfeeding support (cost effective)
- Peer-to-professional support

Types of support

- One-on-one or group
- Drop-in or planned meetings
- Online
- Telephone support

Partners & Stakeholders: 3 agency partnership

- Flemingdon Health Centre
  - Health Promotion Lead
  - Lactation Consultant
  - Student/Volunteers
- Toronto Public Health
  - Public Health Nurse
  - Lactation Promotion Specialist
- Victoria Village HUB
  - Working Women Community Centre
  - Aisling Discoveries (CPNP)
Collaboration with partners

- Partner agencies had equal commitment & buy-in
- Establishment of Steer Committee - frequent meetings & check ins
- Referrals made from WWCC, TPH, FHC
- Clients also self-referred
- Opportunity for client follow-up
- Sustainability plan discussed continuously

Community stakeholder buy-in

- Launch 'n Learn - in service for staff
- Posters, diversity represented
- Knowledgeable staff at first point of contact

Launch n Learn Sessions:

- Total of 25 staff and volunteers from partner agencies attended in-service during the duration of the project. In-service was designed as an interactive workshop to achieve the following:
  - Inform self of benefits of breastfeeding
  - Coach staff to support and promote a supportive breastfeeding environment.

- Feedback: “The workshop was very informative. I think it will help us to support the families to breastfeed. Thank you.”

- Pre and post test evaluations completed to assess change
Program structure

- Older children? Are space, supervision, childcare appropriate?
- Ample space: chairs as well as floor space
- Access to community resources and information to take home
- Translation/interpretation support
- Space for mothers to connect without staff/leaders
- Opportunities for more one-to-one support when needed; factual information
- Access to PHNs (prenatal and breastfeeding) and Lactation Consultant, who can offer follow up support as well as referrals as appropriate.

Peer support offers a sense of belonging to mothers.

Victoria Village drop-in

- Women encouraged to attend during pregnancy
- Program runs immediately following the prenatal program (Aisling Discoveries, TPH, VV Hub)
- Crossover period of 30 minutes whereby prenatal and breastfeeding support group participants have snack/lunch together
- Mothers can hear ideas and suggestions from several other women
- Families able to ask questions in a safe and supportive environment

Better breastfeeding outcomes: women who attended prenatal breastfeeding classes had significantly increased breastfeeding at 6 months (Best Start, 2014)

Program Profile: April to December 2015

- Registered a total of 37 participants
  - 26 client visits
  - 21 visiting prenatal clients
- Total of 36 sessions - one drop in session is held each week
- 2 community residents trained as peers
Feedback collected between August- November 2015 indicates that 54% of respondents report behaviour change and as a result doing something different with their children as a result of attending the drop-in program. The following is a list of examples of behavioural changes reported by parents:

- Not keeping a feeding schedule and instead breastfeeding on demand
- Breastfeeding directly, seated, with no use of bottle
- More playing, dancing and singing
- Increasing physical touch with baby (more skin to skin contact)
- Breastfeeding in public (environmentally)

**Program Profile: April to December 2015**

- Group meetings help form a breastfeeding community
- Mothers’ mother support has been shown to increase breastfeeding exclusivity and duration
- Clients expressed interest in taking on leadership roles
- Mothers attending group expressed interest in receiving more formal “training” to acknowledge ownership of group
- La Leche League leadership
- Best Start Peer Breastfeeding volunteers
- Professional support available to further support development & sustainability of the group

**Sustainability plan: professional-peer model**

- Continuation of case/support
- Community engagement strategies, such as enrolling in training of peers, offer the potential for leadership
- During programming/events, facilitate access to other resources (campaigns, groups, other organizations)
- Ensure parents are clear on how they can get involved, discuss the numerous types of peer support
- Capacity development and training

**Beyond the drop-in**

- Continuation of case/support
- Community engagement strategies, such as enrolling in training of peers, offer the potential for leadership
- During programming/events, facilitate access to other resources (campaigns, groups, other organizations)
- Ensure parents are clear on how they can get involved, discuss the numerous types of peer support
- Capacity development and training
Thank you!
Questions...Comments...Feedback