Webinar Questions

CDC-USBC Bi-Monthly Coalitions Webinar

Mom2Mom Global and Breastfeeding in Combat Boots: Breastfeeding Support for Active Military Personnel and Families

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• How much education is given to families on healthy nutrition and obesity prevention?

In our peer mentor trainings, Facebook groups, and national social media presence, we touch on and share literature about the links between breastfeeding and obesity prevention. Healthy nutrition for lactating parents is a very common concern from active duty parents who need to meet military physical fitness standards, so we have quite a bit of information about nutrition and exercise on Breastfeeding in Combat Boots. One of our suggested monthly topics for local chapter meet ups is postpartum fitness, and chapter education directors may share evidence-based information about nutrition and exercise for lactating parents, and that breastfeeding babies/children is linked to lower obesity rates later in life.

• Are your board members FULLY volunteer or do they get paid? or stipends? travel stipends?

Our organization is 100% volunteer. We do not receive any monetary compensation. This year, for the first time, the organization has raised enough funds to be able to reimburse nearly all our board members who travel to represent us at conferences for 100% of their costs.

• What percentage of military moms breastfeed and how does that compare to the national average?

According to this study in 2017, military breastfeeding rates are similar to civilians when it comes to initiation, but military personnel have lower duration rates. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28137541

I haven’t found any published studies measuring breastfeeding initiation or duration rates for military spouses. This study in 2015 found that racial disparities in breastfeeding military servicemembers are only 1% less than in the civilian population, which was defined as statistically significant. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10995-014-1524-x

There is an unpublished study coming out late 2018/early 2019 that has shown a statistically significant rise in breastfeeding duration rates in active duty military since 12 weeks paid maternity leave was established in 2015. When this study is published, we will definitely be sharing.

• Would love to hear more about how you got the doctors and hospitals to be tuned in and supportive of the breastfeeding needs of your families.
This varies greatly from one community to another! Within military treatment facilities, there is frequent staff turnover, which has worked in favor of breastfeeding in a couple of ways. 1. Some MTF staff are enthusiastic breastfeeding supporters, and bring their training and experience from other hospitals, including Baby-Friendly Hospitals, into new duty stations. These staff are often champions for breastfeeding-friendly policies and best practices within the MTFs, and sometimes start peer support groups or work closely with existing community support, like Mom2Mom chapters. 2. MTFs, and all military facilities, provide several systems for customer feedback, including interactive surveys, Commanders' town hall meetings, patient advocates, and ombudsmen. Often, hospital commanders/administrators are evaluated based on patient satisfaction, so what is important to the community affects their job ratings. By harnessing the power of common concerns, our chapters can often provide specific feedback on problems, and suggest solutions that lead to greater patient satisfaction. 3. MTFs operate on a principle affectionately nicknamed “military inertia”: "The way we do things now is the way we have always done things, and the way they will always be done, unless someone orders us to do them differently." This can be a frustrating hurdle to overcome when attempting to affect change, but it also means that once breastfeeding-friendly policies and practices are put into place, the expectation is that they will continue to be followed, and when new staff come in and are oriented, they are taught these policies and practices—and then take that knowledge with them to their next duty station (see #1).