

# ENSURE SUPPORT FOR BREASTFEEDING FAMILIES: Health Plan Coverage of Counseling, Education, & Supplies



## The Problem:

After the birth of their baby, many families depend on lactation support and counseling as well as supplies such as breast pumps to establish and sustain breastfeeding. Unfortunately, many do not have access to the breastfeeding support they need and deserve to make informed decisions. Stark racial inequities in breastfeeding initiation, duration and exclusivity outcomes persist as low-income and families of color, especially African American families, are disproportionately affected by unsupportive policies, systems, and practices that impede their ability to breastfeed. Families who encounter **barriers early on are less likely to continue to breastfeed without assistance**. Most breastfeeding-related problems, if identified and treated early, need not pose a threat to successful continuation. Meanwhile, in the absence of paid family leave, many mothers will **return to work or school and need an electric breast pump** to quickly and efficiently express breast milk during breaks to ensure that they have adequate milk for a caregiver to feed their child during separations as well as to maintain their milk supply.

## The Solutions:

- **Maintain Health Plan Coverage of Preventive Services Without Cost-Sharing**

Section 2713 of the Public Health Service Act requires health plans to provide benefits for certain preventive services. **Breastfeeding falls within two areas:** 1) Evidence-based items or services with an A/B grade from **U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF)**; and 2) evidence-informed **preventive care/screening for women** under HRSA guidelines (includes comprehensive lactation support services, including counseling, education, and equipment and supplies). It is critical that preventive services requirements continue to cover breastfeeding support, supplies, and counseling.

## Demonstrated Effectiveness & Support

The USPSTF has found that primary care interventions to support breastfeeding increase breastfeeding rates, giving this service a B grade. This recommendation specifically includes **professional support, peer support, and formal education** during pregnancy and through the early life of the child. In addition, major medical associations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and American Academy of Family Physicians call for the provision of breastfeeding education and support and appropriate breast pumps.

A recent study in North Carolina estimated an annual cost of \$4.77 million for Medicaid coverage of lactation counseling, with an **associated savings of \$7 million from the prevention of three diseases** and conditions impacted by breastfeeding. A similar study in Kansas estimated an annual cost of \$2.1 million for the Medicaid coverage, with an associated savings of \$3 million from the prevention of four diseases and conditions.

**Please maintain health plan coverage of preventive services without cost-sharing, and align Medicaid coverage to ensure equitable access for all.**

**U.S. Breastfeeding Committee • [www.USBreastfeeding.org](http://www.USBreastfeeding.org)**

