

Celebrating Breastfeeding with MCHB Grantees

A Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Breastfeeding Success Story

MIECHV home visitors support healthy pregnancy practices, provide information on topics such as breastfeeding, and connect families to services and resources in their community like Certified Lactation Counselors (CLC). Check out the story below to learn about how home visitors helped Keralyn on her pregnancy and breastfeeding journey.



Keralyn's Breastfeeding Journey

Rarely does pregnancy and breastfeeding go according to textbooks, so expecting some bumps in the road can be a good rule. The case that follows is about a bumpy ride – a very bumpy ride – and a client with the tenacity to stay on track with breastfeeding, because she knew its value and because she had her Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) team behind her every step of the way.

Keralyn was in a high-risk pregnancy with gestational diabetes, anemia, and some concerns about risks for pre-eclampsia as well. She had a devoted high-risk OB-team, and she followed all of their advice. Her baby was born healthy and full term.

She began breastfeeding right away, even after a C-section, but she was concerned about milk supply. She diligently pumped and fed frequently, with her NFP nurse's support, to get the milk supply up. She also had some pain and problems with latching. Her NFP nurse provided support as they worked towards a successful resolution to those issues. Suddenly, Keralyn was re-hospitalized for complications and her milk supply tanked. Once again, she pushed hard to get that milk supply back up.

Her baby was thriving beautifully. Keralyn needed to get back to work and she found those night-time feedings exhausting. She found a solution with a night-time weaning strategy, with the father of the baby helping a lot in this plan. She was able to maintain her breast milk supply even through her transition back to work. This turned out to be beneficial for a few reasons -- 1) she really needed to sleep to succeed at her day job as a childcare worker and 2) her baby was headed to day care, with an abundance of new germs, so having that breast milk in the mix meant her baby had that additional level of immune support. Keralyn was relieved and pleased to see her baby go through her first colds and flus, with a minimum of concern, knowing her baby's immune system was in top shape.

Her NFP nurse commented numerous times on the Keralyn's skills and perseverance in her breastfeeding goals, and Keralyn would state "you know, I'm really good at this!" This led to a conversation about Keralyn getting the Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) credential.

She applied for a grant for the course and is now working her way through the content. Soon she will be prepared to share her expertise in the community to help more moms on their breastfeeding journeys. Her NFP nurse notes, **"It is your bumps in the road that will make you a better Lactation Counselor, because you know how to overcome those obstacles!"**



Her NFP nurse asked Keralyn for a reflection for this article:

"Breastfeeding is nature's health plan. It's not only about love and bonding. Even when you feel like you're failing, you aren't. The support I received from my NFP nurse made breastfeeding a success for me. I'm still thriving to this day with breastfeeding my now 17-month-old. **The support I received also inspired me to acquire my CLC certification so I can return the support I received to others in need of it.**"

- Client story submitted by New York MIECHV Program

Learn More

To learn more about HRSA's MIECHV program, visit:

<https://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs-impact/programs/home-visiting>

For additional details on how HRSA supports moms on their breastfeeding journeys, visit:

<https://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs-impact/focus-areas/maternal-health/mchb-supports-breastfeeding>