



News Release

For immediate release: March 17, 2016

(16-027)

Contact: [Dave Johnson](#), Strategic Communications Office

360.236.4072 / 360.545.2944

State program recognizes birth centers that support breastfeeding

Department of Health expands voluntary, recognition program to free standing birth centers.

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Health will expand its Breastfeeding Friendly Washington program to include free standing birth centers beginning March 21.

“We are thrilled to expand the recognition program to include [birth centers](#) and recognize the role they play in creating the [healthiest next generation](#),” said Secretary of Health John Wiesman.

A birth center is an independent, licensed health care facility that is staffed by midwives and provides prenatal, birth and postpartum care to low-risk deliveries.

“Washington birth centers are delighted to participate in this program as it beautifully mirrors our midwifery model of care,” said Valerie Sasson, president of the [Midwives Association of Washington](#).

Parents can find a breastfeeding friendly facility at the department’s [website](#).

Similar to hospitals, birth centers can apply for recognition at three different levels– Gold, Silver, and Bronze – depending on where the facility is in making changes to support breastfeeding.

Breastfed babies are less likely to develop asthma, and it protects them from illnesses and infections such as diarrhea, ear infections and pneumonia. It also reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Mothers also benefit from breastfeeding. Studies show a decreased risk of breast and ovarian cancers, Type 2 diabetes and postpartum depression in mothers who breastfeed.

The department’s [web site](#) is your source for a *healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

###