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## **Aberdeen Supports the Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Initiative**

PIERRE, S.D. – Aberdeen is the most recent South Dakota community to encourage local businesses to support breastfeeding customers and employees by taking an online breastfeeding-friendly business pledge.

The Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Initiative was piloted in the Brookings community in March with support from the South Dakota Department of Health. The program was met with such widespread interest that advocates, supporters and community leaders in Aberdeen were inspired to follow suit including Avera St. Luke’s Hospital, Sanford Aberdeen Medical Center, Department of Health’s Brown County Community Health & WIC Office, Aberdeen Area Chamber of Commerce, Aberdeen Family YMCA, SDSU and Presentation College.

Mitchell, Hot Springs, Belle Fourche and Huron have also expressed interest in the initiative and are now canvassing businesses in their communities.

The initiative supports the Department of Health’s 2015-2020 strategic plan goal to increase the proportion of mothers who breastfeed their babies at least six months.

“Breastfeeding has numerous health benefits to mother and baby, but it is also good for business. Breastfeeding mothers are more likely to patronize businesses where they feel comfortable and breastfeeding moms miss work less often and report higher work satisfaction and productivity,” said Megan Hlavacek, healthy foods coordinator for the department.

The Department of Health supplies training and support materials to advocates in each community, who in turn coordinate on-site visits to area businesses, asking them to support their customers and employees by taking the pledge.

“When a business takes the Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Pledge they are saying they will provide an environment where mothers can enjoy a welcoming attitude from staff, management and other patrons while breastfeeding. They will accommodate employees by allowing appropriate time and space necessary to pump. ‘*Breastfeeding Welcome Here*’ window clings are placed in public entrances showing their committed to mothers, children and families in their community,” said Megan Erickson, nutrition field specialist for SDSU Extension in Aberdeen.

A Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Recognition Event will be held at the Aberdeen Recreation and Cultural Center on Oct. 6 at 4 p.m. to recognize the Aberdeen businesses that have already stepped up and taken the pledge.

Visit [www.healthysd.gov/breastfeeding](http://www.healthysd.gov/breastfeeding) to learn more about the initiative or take the pledge.