



July 31, 2017

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**HEALTHY START COALITION PROVIDES EDUCATION AND SUPPORT IN COMMUNITY  
TO ENCOURAGE BREASTFEEDING**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – As World Breastfeeding Week approaches, the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition has launched new opportunities for mothers and babies to get the support and education they need to successfully breastfeed. Breastfeeding is beneficial for baby and mom, promoting bonding between mother and baby, potentially leading to weight loss for mom and giving baby good nutrients to help build their immune system.

“Sustaining Breastfeeding Together” is the 2017 theme of World Breastfeeding Week, which is coordinated by the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) and recognized from August 1-7<sup>th</sup>. The WABA encourages for breastfeeding to not just be a woman’s issue or the sole responsibility of a woman - the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding is a collective societal responsibility shared by us all.

The Coalition now hosts weekly community breastfeeding support groups at several locations throughout Jacksonville:

- Tuesdays from 11:30 am until 1:00 pm at the Azalea Project
- Wednesdays at UF Health from 1:00 pm until 2:00 pm.
- Classes will soon be offered at the Highlander Apartments community.

Participants are encouraged to set their own breastfeeding goals and receive help and support to reach them. At the end of the course, the participants reflect on their goals to see how well they did. The participants also discuss new topics weekly from an evidence-based curriculum, are encouraged to share their stories with their peers and are offered one-on-one breastfeeding care.

In addition to offering breastfeeding education and services in the community, the Coalition also hosts groups at several Duval County Public Schools high schools that now have breastfeeding stations for students, faculty and staff to utilize: Englewood, A. Phillip Randolph, Robert E. Lee and William Raines.

The Coalition’s breastfeeding outreach and classes is coordinated by Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) Denise Mills. Denise was one of the first participants in the Coalition’s Nurse-Family Partnership program, where she first learned about breastfeeding from her nurse home visitor. She joined the Coalition as a peer breastfeeding counselor and recently came on as a full-time staff member and received her CLC certification.

In addition to community breastfeeding support, the Coalition also has several other breastfeeding initiatives:

- The Carol Brady Live. Love. Latch. Breastfeeding Room opened in 2015 at the Magnolia Project, a federal healthy start project providing clinical and case management services to women before, during and after pregnancy at a storefront site in Pearl Plaza. It provides a calm, relaxing place for mothers visiting Magnolia to breastfeed their babies. Magnolia also provides breastfeeding support through a CLC and support classes.
- The Healthy Start and Healthy Families programs provide breastfeeding support and information to clients of the home visiting programs.
- Practicing what we preach: The Coalition's administrative office recently opened a breastfeeding room as part of an office remodel.

#### **About the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition**

The Healthy Start Coalition leads a cooperative community effort to reduce infant mortality and improve the health of children, childbearing women and their families in Northeast Florida. For more information, visit <http://nefhealthystart.org> or on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @nefhealthystart.

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