



October 31, 2013

**Re: Registered Dietitian involvement in the Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) process in Ontario Health Units**

Ontario Medical Officers of Health;

Given their unique and valuable role to be contributed, it is urged that Registered Dietitians in public health units be involved in at all stages of the BFI process, from planning to education, implementation and designation. Medical Officers of Health can facilitate this process.

Registered Dietitians in public health are ready-made champions for the BFI process, being uniquely qualified to complement the nurse-led process for the planning, implementation and achievement of the BFI designation for Health Units across the province of Ontario. We are the recognized experts in evidence-based nutrition, being regulated through the College of Dietitians of Ontario, and represented nationally through Dietitians of Canada.

Public Health Dietitians and Nutritionists are also represented by the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH). OSNPPH is the independent and official voice of over 200 Registered Dietitians (RDs) working in Ontario's public health system. OSNPPH provides leadership in public health nutrition by promoting and supporting member collaboration to improve the health of Ontario residents.

Within the OSNPPH membership are experts on maternal and child health, including on the scientific research behind the recommendation for breastmilk as the optimum in infant feeding for normal growth and development as well as the long term health benefits for both mother and child. Through OSNPPH and its working groups such as the Family Health Nutrition Advisory Group (FHNAG), members are provided with a venue that allows for timely knowledge exchange and the creation of consistent messaging among dietitians across the province. In addition, Registered Dietitians in public health have established relationships with community partners who provide direct access to priority populations through collaborative programs like the Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program and Healthy Babies/Healthy Children.

Registered Dietitians in public health are eager to be involved in moving their own health units forward with the process, as well as advising on how dietitians in other institutions that choose to follow the process may contribute to achieving BFI designation. Registered Dietitians have already have been



involved as key team members of the BFI process in public health units across Ontario in the following ways:

- Members of BFI planning & implementation committees,
- Providers of staff training and education re: BFI process,
- Reviewers of in-house resources such as print material, pre and post natal curriculum content, and website content.

OSNPPH's FHNAG – BFI workgroup, formed in January 2013, has obtained permission from BFI Ontario to house documents and a resource inventory of public health nutrition work related to the BFI designation process on their provincial website. Once finalized, approved and posted, these documents will help to support a consistent nutrition approach to the BFI process across the province.

Sincerely,

Heather Thomas RD, PhD  
Public Health Dietitian  
Co-Chair Year 2, OSNPPH

Rebecca Davids, RD, MSc  
Public Health Nutritionist  
Co-Chair Year 1, OSNPPH

**For more information please contact:**

Ginette Blake, RD Public Health Dietitian  
[ginette.blake@mlhu.on.ca](mailto:ginette.blake@mlhu.on.ca)  
(519) 663-5317 ext. 2221  
On behalf of the OSNPPH FHNAG-BFI workgroup  
[www.osnp-ph.on.ca](http://www.osnp-ph.on.ca)

cc. Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) members  
Ministry of Health and Long Term Care  
Ministry of Children's Services  
Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) Ontario  
Dietitians of Canada