

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Truman Medical Centers Selected for National Effort to Increase  
Breastfeeding Rates in US Hospitals**

*Joins Exclusive Group of Hospitals Transforming Maternity Care Services in States with  
Low Breastfeeding Rates*

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**Kansas City, Mo** – Truman Medical Centers (TMC) announced today that it has been selected to participate in *Best Fed Beginnings*, a first-of-its-kind national effort to significantly improve breastfeeding rates in states where rates are currently the lowest. Although breastfeeding is one of the most effective preventive health measures for infants and mothers, half of US-born babies are given formula within the first week, and by 9 months, only 31% of babies are breastfeeding at all. *Best Fed Beginnings* seeks to reverse these trends by dramatically increasing the number of US hospitals implementing a proven model for maternity services that better supports a new mother's choice to breastfeed. The National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality (NICHQ) is leading the effort through a cooperative funding agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and will be working closely with Baby-Friendly USA, Inc.

"TMC is delighted to have been chosen to participate in this important effort and to have the opportunity to continuously improve our maternity care services to better support breastfeeding," said Beth Severt, RN, MSN, IBCLC, TMC Lactation Consultant.

In addition to TMC, 89 other hospitals are participating in this initiative and were selected from 235 applicants. The groups will work together in a 22 month learning collaborative, using proven quality improvement methods to transform their maternity care services in pursuit of "Baby-Friendly" designation. This designation verifies that a hospital has comprehensively implemented the American Academy of Pediatrics-endorsed Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, as established in the WHO/UNICEF Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative. Breastfeeding rates are higher and disparities in these rates are virtually eliminated in hospitals that achieve this status.

"We look forward to working with TMC and congratulate them on their successful application," said Charlie Homer, MD, MPH, president and CEO of NICHQ. "The large number of applications we received affirms the commitment of hospitals across our country to be part of a health care system that truly focuses on promoting health for women and infants. We are especially pleased that we received so many applications from hospitals in states where there are

so few facilities with Baby-Friendly designation and from hospitals that serve populations of women who now are much less likely to breastfeed.”

Breastfeeding has multiple health benefits for both infants and mothers. For infants, it decreases the incidence and severity of many infectious diseases, reduces infant mortality, and optimally supports neurodevelopment. It also decreases infants’ risk of becoming obese later in childhood. For mothers, breastfeeding decreases the risks of breast and ovarian cancers, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and cardiovascular disease.

Click [here](#) for a list of the 90 hospitals selected to participate in *Best Fed Beginnings*.

#### **About the CDC**

CDC works 24/7 saving lives, protecting people from health threats, and saving money through prevention. Whether these threats are global or domestic, chronic or acute, curable or preventable, natural disaster or deliberate attack, CDC is the nation’s health protection agency.

#### **About NICHQ**

Founded in 1999, the National Initiative for Children’s Healthcare Quality (NICHQ) is an action-oriented organization dedicated to achieving a world in which all children receive the high-quality healthcare they need. Led by experienced pediatric healthcare professionals, NICHQ’s mission is to improve children’s health by improving the systems responsible for the delivery of children’s healthcare. For more information, visit [www.nichq.org](http://www.nichq.org).

#### **About Baby-Friendly USA**

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) is a global program sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to encourage and recognize hospitals and birthing centers that offer an optimal level of care for infant feeding and mother-baby bonding. The BFHI assists hospitals in giving mothers the information, confidence, and skills needed to successfully initiate and continue breastfeeding their babies or feeding formula safely, and gives special recognition to hospitals that have done so. For more information, visit [www.babyfriendlyusa.org](http://www.babyfriendlyusa.org).

#### **About TMC**

**Truman Medical Centers is a not-for-profit two acute-care hospital health system in Kansas City.** The TMC Health System includes TMC Hospital Hill, TMC Lakewood, TMC Behavioral Health, the Jackson County Health Department and a number of primary care practices throughout Eastern Jackson County. Recently named one of the nation’s top academic medical centers, TMC is the primary teaching hospital for the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Dentistry and specializes in asthma, bariatrics, diabetes, women’s health, and trauma services. For more information, please call (816) 404-3785 or visit [www.trumed.org](http://www.trumed.org)