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Alaska WIC and Pacify Health Partner to Expand Access to Breastfeeding Support Services

The six-year partnership provides free 24/7 virtual lactation support to enrolled WIC participants.

JUNEAU, Alaska – The Alaska Department of Health's Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) has partnered with [Pacify Health](#) to launch a virtual service to support breastfeeding. Each year, Pacify Health will provide free 24/7 access to International Board-Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) for WIC participants across the state. This six-year partnership addresses Alaska's severe shortage of lactation professionals while supporting families in the nation's most geographically challenging state.

Alaska WIC serves about 14,000 Alaskans monthly, with an average of 3,216 pregnant and postpartum women currently enrolled. Through the Pacify platform, Alaska WIC participants will receive unlimited access to a nationwide network of lactation consultants through video consultations, phone calls, and texting. All of this can be done through one streamlined mobile application. Research demonstrates that this type of professional support significantly increases rates of mothers starting and continuing to breastfeed, as well as improves health outcomes for both mothers and infants.

"We are especially excited to begin offering this virtual lactation service during National Breastfeeding Month and right after Indigenous Milk Medicine Week," said Amber Christis, WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator at the Alaska Department of Health.

Access and Enrollment

All Alaskan WIC participants are eligible for this free service. Participants who would like to enroll in Pacify's virtual infant feeding support platform can contact their local WIC clinic or call that state WIC office at (907) 465-3100, option 2. Once enrolled in Pacify, the service provides unlimited consultations with no appointments required, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Most calls are answered in under 5 minutes, providing on-demand access to lactation consultants whenever families need support.

Addressing Critical Health Care Gaps

Alaskans spread across the vast state live in a unique environment for maternal and infant health care. Most of Alaska currently has far below the U.S. Surgeon General's recommendation of 8.6 IBCLCs per 1,000 births. While all WIC staff are trained to support and help with breastfeeding, more professional lactation help is needed in some areas.

"Rural Alaskan families face extraordinary challenges," explained Helena Jacobs from the Alaska Native Birthworkers Community. Jacobs said pregnant women from rural villages travel to regional hubs usually around 36 weeks [of gestation] for delivery. "Some of these women are covering distances equivalent to traveling from Seattle to Tijuana, Mexico, and then they return home postpartum, sometimes alone, on multiple connecting flights with newborns."

Proven Results and Cultural Sensitivity

Through partnerships with other public health agencies, Pacify has demonstrated the ability to improve breastfeeding rates by up to 24%. A study conducted by the RAND Corporation found that "Pacify has demonstrated that virtual lactation services improve breastfeeding rates and patient experience, particularly among women in rural areas where critical gaps often exist," according to Jennifer Sargent, CEO of Pacify. This research recently received additional funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). "Improved breastfeeding rates have tangible outcomes. In our own studies we've seen a 21% reduction in infant ER visits," says Sargent, "meaning that we're not only helping new parents and infants, we're reducing unnecessary burdens on clinicians and reducing health costs for the state."

The Pacify service is specifically designed to address Alaska's cultural diversity, with providers trained to understand the significance of clients' locations and historical impacts on health care access. Pacify's network of more than 100 IBCLCs offers care in both English and Spanish, with translation services available for other languages through the app. For more information, visit <https://www.pacify.com>.

Supporting State Health Priorities

The partnership with Pacify aligns with Governor Dunleavy's [Healthy Families](#) initiative, particularly the Healthy Beginnings pillar focused on maternal and child health. It also supports Administrative Order No. 331's Alaska Food Security and Independence Task Force goals, as breastfeeding can protect families from food insecurity and reduce dependence on external food supplies.

Alaskan data shows strong breastfeeding initiation rates (92% compared to the national rate of 84%) with rates declining after three months:

- Exclusive breastfeeding through 3 months: 60%
- Any breastfeeding at 6 months: 73%
- Exclusive breastfeeding through 6 months: 42%
- Any breastfeeding at 12 months: 50%

The top two reasons Alaskan mothers stop breastfeeding are "not producing enough milk" (56%) and "baby had difficulty latching or nursing" (35%) — both issues that professional lactation support directly addresses (2023 PRAMS survey data).

To learn more about Pacify Health, visit pacify.com.