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OhioMHAS Hospital Honored for Supporting Breastfeeding Mothers in the Workplace

Summit Behavioral Healthcare Earns Ohio Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Award

CINCINNATI – Summit Behavioral Healthcare (SBH) has earned the Ohio Department of Health’s “Healthy Ohio Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Award.” The Healthy Ohio Breastfeeding Friendly Employer award recognizes employers that support their employees by establishing and maintaining comprehensive, high-quality lactation support programs and work toward establishing paid maternity leave for all employed mothers. SBH, one of 22 employers statewide to receive the award, provides employees access to a lactation room and other support.

The hospital’s breastfeeding initiatives give mothers the support, confidence and skills to successfully breastfeed their babies according to Liz Banks, chief executive officer. “We encourage exclusive breastfeeding for six months to reduce the risk of infections especially in the first year of life and for optimal nutrition for the baby,” she explained. “We are also excited about the opportunities to retain and encourage valuable employees through these programs that promote healthy families.”

Supporting breastfeeding makes good business sense; studies have found that breastfeeding reduces absenteeism rates on the part of new mothers and increases their productivity. Meanwhile, studies also show that children who are breastfed have a reduced risk of many health problems including diabetes, asthma, childhood cancer and obesity.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, low rates of breastfeeding add \$2.2 billion a year to medical cost. Babies who are formula-fed instead of breast-fed tend to require more doctor visits, hospitalizations and prescriptions. A recent study published in the journal Pediatrics estimated that the country would save \$13 billion per year in health care and other costs if 90 percent of U.S. babies were exclusively breastfed for six months.

Ohio is committed to promoting and protecting a mother’s right to breastfeed her child for as long as she chooses, whether or not she returns to work. Doctors recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months after birth for the optimal health of a mother and her child.

The Healthy Ohio Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Award and Healthy Ohio Breastfeeding Friendly Business Awards are awarded annually. For more information about the award, visit www.healthyohioprogram.org.

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