

6 Temple Place
Bellows Falls, VT 05101

February 24, 2019

Re: The importance of Children's Integrated Services for the Health of Infants, Children and Parents

I cannot overstress the importance of the home visitors of Children's Integrated Services (CIS) in the lives of the families I have worked with in Windham County. The smooth transitions and good working relationships we have forged with the nurses, IBCLC and lactation counselors mean that dyads can go home from the hospital even when there are infant feeding difficulties, or we have concerns about the health of the mother.

As we work towards long term health for mothers in recovery, getting off to a good start makes such a difference for mother and baby. Babies who are identified with Neonatal Adjustment Syndrome (formerly called Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome), and the parents who love them, may be one of the hidden constituencies of CIS. We are working hard here in Vermont to allocate monies for recovery – CIS gives us the opportunity to support mothers in recovery and to provide prevention services that can make a difference to get babies off to a good start under the watchful eye of experienced nurses.

Over 90% of babies begin their lives breastfeeding at The Birthing Center at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital. Yet mothers still describe themselves as nervous – or even terrified! – as well as excited when they consider the responsibility of taking home a breastfeeding baby. “Dr. Google” and their girlfriends shouldn't be the only place for breastfeeding support – Sally Pennington RN, IBCLC is a much better choice here in Windham County.

Last but certainly not least, an example from our Brattleboro New Moms Network Facebook group this week. One mother lamented that her baby was biting her at every feed, yet she still felt committed to breastfeeding for a year, as suggested by the American Academy of Pediatrics. What was she going to do? “Why don't you call Sally?” suggested one of the other mothers. “Oh I forgot I could talk to her! She helped me so much!”

Spending much of my career as the RN, IBCLC in the Birthing Center, I can't tell you what it means to be able to know that families can have easy access to that kind of help without needing an outpatient visit.

Every family CIS helps, in the home and in the community, continues to build a foundation for better physical and mental health for Vermonters and our communities.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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