



Media Release
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CRDAMC designated Texas Ten Step Program Star Achiever facility

FORT HOOD, Texas – Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center has taken a giant step towards improving the health of newborns and infants by earning the Texas Ten Step Program Star Achiever facility designation from the Texas Department of State Health Services.

The Texas Ten Step Program encourages breastfeeding as the preferred method of feeding for newborns and infants and is part of a five-year quality improvement project aimed at reversing the low percentage of Texas mothers who exclusively breastfeed for six months.

CRDAMC, the first Army Medical Center in Texas to earn this distinction, joins a growing number of Texas birthing facilities that are supporting new mothers and their decision to breastfeed. The goal of the Texas Ten Step Program is to increase breastfeeding initiation rates to 82 percent.

“With almost 3,000 births yearly, we have to concentrate on providing the best evidence-based, mother-baby care we can,” said Col. Patricia Darnauer, CRDAMC Commander. “We have worked very hard to become a Texas Ten Step Star Achiever and are proud to join the other select Texas hospitals in promoting breastfeeding to our new mothers.”

Research shows that breastfeeding is the best option for moms and babies, ensuring babies receive the critical nutrients and antibodies that help them thrive and protect them from germs and reduce risk of illness such as asthma, childhood obesity, diabetes and other infections.

Still, many women have concerns or fears that lead them to choose not to breastfeed.

“Many mothers simply aren’t aware of the benefits of breastfeeding or may not know how to get started. Breastfeeding may not always be as simple and easy to do as many think,” said Tara Haberl, a CRDAMC nurse educator and an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant. “We want our mothers to know that we are here to help them every step of the way. We offer a wide variety of support, with hands-on training and education.”

CRDAMC has lactation consultants in the Mother/Baby Unit, the Women's Health Center and the Newborn Follow-Up Clinic. Education starts at mom's initial visits and breastfeeding classes are offered every month. A new parent support program is also available that provides free in-home breastfeeding support, parenting skills support and child development information.

Another thing that has helped increase breastfeeding rates, Haberl added, is the 'Skin to Skin' practice, best-evidence based care where the newborn is placed on mom's abdomen for its first hour of life.

"We are already seeing success from all of our efforts to increase breastfeeding," said Lt. Col. (Dr.) Christine Laky, medical director of Labor and Delivery and assistant chief, OB/GYN. "Women, Infant and Children (WIC) data shows we have highest rates of initiation and continuation of exclusive breastfeeding. We meet or exceed national averages and exceed the average rates for this area."

Having earned the Texas Ten Step Star Achiever designation, the next step is for CRDAMC to become certified as a Baby-Friendly Hospital, a World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) worldwide program that certifies hospitals and birthing centers with an optimal level of care for infant feeding and mother/baby bonding.