United States Breastfeeding COMMITTEE
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To: The Leaders of Healthy People 2020:
Rear Admiral Penny Slade Sawyer, DHHS, ODPHP
Secretary's Advisory Committee
Federal Interagency Workgroup

Re: Suggested Topic Areas for Healthy People 2020 (HP2020)

Date: July 2, 2009

Dear Leaders of the Healthy People 2020 process:

Is "Maternal and Child Health" still a needed concept for Healthy People 2020? The United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) and many of our partner organizations think it is!

As the plans are being made for HP2020, a USBC task force has been following the deliberations of the Secretary's Advisory Committee (SAC). We have noted the emphasis on the determinants of health and disease across the life course, which will support Goal 4, "to promote healthy development and healthy behavior across every life stage." [i]

We like Goal 4 and were keen to see where breastfeeding, a healthy behavior *and* a key strategy for healthy development, would fit in the new scheme. At the SAC meeting on April 20 we learned that SAC has suggested a framework that would omit the Topic Area of "Maternal, Infant, and Child Health" and instead would cover the whole life span with a set of Life Stages.

Currently these Life Stages are listed as "Prenatal, Preschool, Primary School, Adolescent Health, Adult, Healthy Aging, and Dying." [ii]

Do you see the same gap that we see in this list of Life Stages? Where is birth? Where is infancy? And where is the mother, who is biologically linked to her child throughout gestation, birth, and breastfeeding? As WHO and UNICEF say, "Mothers and babies form an inseparable biological and social unit; the health and nutrition of one group cannot be divorced from the health and nutrition of the other." [iii]

In order to provide a "home" for birth and breastfeeding, and to reflect that fact that gestation, birth, and breastfeeding are life stages shared by two beings at different ages and stages of development, we would like to make a respectful suggestion. This would be either 1) to expand the Life Stage now called "Prenatal" so that it includes gestation, birth, and infancy up to age one or two years, or 2) to add a new Life Stage that starts at the end of pregnancy and continues until weaning. In either case, the name of this life stage should reflect its dual nature. Names like "Maternal/Child Health," "Childbearing," "Maternal/Infant Dyad," or "Mother/Baby Dyad" are possibilities.

We believe that the life events of gestation, birth, and breastfeeding—our primary focus—should have a "home" in Healthy People 2020. Thank you for considering our suggestion.

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Sincerely,

Joan Younger Meek

Joan Younger Meek, MD, MS, RD, FAAP, FABM, IBCLC
Chair, United States Breastfeeding Committee

The United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) is an independent nonprofit coalition of 41 nationally influential professional, educational, and governmental organizations. Representing over half a million concerned professionals and the families they serve, USBC and its member organizations share a common mission to improve the Nation's health by working collaboratively to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding. For more information on USBC, visit ***www.usbreastfeeding.org***.

CO-SIGNERS:

*Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine

*AnotherLook

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs

*Association of Military Surgeons of the United States

Best for Babes Foundation

Bright Future Lactation Resource Centre, Ltd.

Childbirth Connection

Foundation for the Advancement of Midwifery

*Healthy Children Project

*International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners

International Center for Traditional Childbearing

International Childbirth Education Association

*Lamaze International

Midwives Alliance of North America

*National Alliance for Breastfeeding Advocacy

National Healthy Start Association

*Wellstart International

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[i] The Secretary's Advisory Committee on National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives for 2020, Phase I Report, page 7. www.healthypeople.gov/HP2020/advisory/PhaseI/PhaseI.pdf

[ii] "2_1_Topic_Areas_Proposed_Approach_05_15_REVISED.pdf" page 9.

[iii] World Health Organization/UNICEF. *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization; 2003. http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2003/9241562218.pdf