# North Carolina
## Breastfeeding Fact Sheet
2026

Breastfeeding is a **low-cost, high-value investment** that improves infant and maternal health outcomes and reduces long-term health care costs. Federal investments support the systems within hospitals, communities, and local health programs that allow families to meet their infant feeding goals.

## Key Federal Programs Supporting Breastfeeding

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Hospitals Promoting Breastfeeding
- Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health
- Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country
- Safe Motherhood and Infant Health

### Health Resources and Service Administration

- Maternal and Child Health Block Grant
- Healthy Start
- Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies

### U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service

- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program

**WIC serves approximately 41% of all infants in the United States and 42% of them are breastfed**

## Breastfeeding Rates

| Among Infants Born in 2023 | North Carolina | National | HP 2030 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Breastfeeding Initiation | 83.8% | 86.1% | -- |
| Formula Supplementation at 2 days | 19.3% | 22.6% | -- |
| Exclusive breastfeeding at 6 months | 34.7% | 29.8% | 42.4% |
| Breastfeeding at 12 months | 41.9% | 40.8% | 54.1% |

Source: National Immunization Survey-Child, 2026; Healthy People 2030, Infants

# Systems & Environmental Supports

The policies, systems, and environments in which families live, learn, work, and play can either help or hinder breastfeeding success. Maternity care practices, paid family and medical leave, and childcare practices are some of the most critical supports shaping breastfeeding outcomes.

The **North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition** is one of the organizations working to create policy, systems, and environmental interventions to better serve babies, mothers, and families in North Carolina.

## mPINC & ECE Scores

| Metric | NC | National |
|---|---|---|
| mPINC | 84 | 82 |
| ECE | 100 | 72 |

Source: mPINC 2024 Regional Report; State Licensing Scorecards

**Maternity Practices in Infant Nutrition and Care (mPINC)**

A comprehensive, biannual census that measures practices and policies supportive of breastfeeding in hospitals with maternity care services in the U.S. Scores are out of 100.

**State licensing of Early Care and Education (ECE)**

State Licensing Scorecards assess how well each state's ECE licensing regulations encourage and fully support breastfeeding and human milk feeding. Scores are out of 100.

## Access to paid leave significantly increases breastfeeding initiation and duration.

**0** weeks of paid family and medical leave are available in North Carolina for the care of a new child as of 2025.

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