



A breastfeeding initiative by the  
**OHIO HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION** and  
the **OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

## Frequently Asked Questions

### First Steps Application

**Q:** Is this application the same as the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI)?

**A:** No. While the First Steps program is based on the WHO & Baby Friendly Ten Steps, our program is not designed to replace or compete with Baby Friendly. This program is a modified and more simplified application process allowing hospitals to be recognized for their work on maternity care practices to support breastfeeding as they are able to do so. Research shows that there is a dose response to the Ten Steps, and if even 5 steps are in place there is a higher likelihood that breastfeeding rates will increase. The program encourages and supports hospitals to work towards full BFHI designation, and acknowledges that full BFHI designation will require additional work.

**Q:** Does my hospital need to complete the Ten Steps in order?

**A:** No. Steps can be completed in any order. Hospitals can apply for as many steps as they would like, and as many times as they need to achieve recognition. Feedback will be provided for steps that are not awarded, to assist with improvement.

**Q:** Is there a cost to apply/participate? When are applications due? Where is the application? Can I find the application prior to completing it online?

**A:** There is no cost to participate or apply. Applications are due quarterly on the first of January, April, July, and October. The application can be found on the First Steps website ([www.ohiohospitals.org/ohiofirststeps](http://www.ohiohospitals.org/ohiofirststeps)) by clicking on “Application & Participating Hospitals” card. Clicking the “Application” will open a .pdf file of the application. We recommend that facilities complete the paper application before applying online. Once you begin the online application, you cannot ‘save’ and return to an application. To formally apply, click the “Online Application” link.

**Q:** Can we use an estimate or approximation when responding to the application questions that require a number or percentage?

**A:** Chart review and maternal interview are now required. The purpose of transitioning from estimates to objective data was to improve the accuracy and fairness of the designation process.

**Q:** How often do I need to reapply for recognition?

**A:** Recognition is valid for three years. At that time, hospitals will need to reapply to remain recognized.



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**Q:** What if my hospital is already recognized as Baby Friendly?

**A:** Baby Friendly hospitals are welcome to become a part of the First Steps program! Hospitals that have earned Baby-Friendly Designation from Baby-Friendly USA may submit a copy of their award and automatically earn full Ohio First Steps Recognition. Please refer to the application form for specific instructions.

**Q:** What if I still have questions about the application and/or application process?

**A:** You can find a link on the First Steps webpage for “Application Instructions”, which goes into more detail regarding the application. You can also reach out to Ryan Everett or Bre Haviland with additional questions.

### **“Bag Free”/Maternity Care Best Practice Award Application**

**Q:** Is participation in this required for hospitals to be a part of the First Steps program?

**A:** No. This voluntary recognition is separate from the Ten Steps recognition program.

**Q:** What exactly does “Bag Free” mean?

**A:** That your facility does not provide any formula company-sponsored gift/diaper bags, which often include formula and/or formula company-sponsored materials. This includes gifts with formula company logos, such as breastfeeding covers, coupons for formula, and coupons for items at the gift shop that have a formula logo. Research has shown that distribution of formula marketing materials has been shown to decrease breastfeeding initiation and duration rates.

**Q:** Our facility has affiliated clinics outside the hospital. Do they need to be compliant as well for recognition?

**A:** We currently only hold this requirement for the hospital, and not the clinics. As we acknowledge the benefit of consistent messaging to new families, this may provide a great opportunity to have conversations with your affiliated clinics if they are still distributing materials.

**Q:** Is this the same as being “Code Compliant” for Baby Friendly recognition?

**A:** No. Becoming “Bag Free” is a great step towards becoming “Code Compliant”, but many additional policies and practices are required for code compliance. More information on code compliance can be found here: <https://www.babyfriendlyusa.org/for-facilities/practice-guidelines/10-steps-and-international-code/>



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**Q:** How can a facility create a breastfeeding policy based on the WHO Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding and the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes if these guidelines have not yet been fully implemented?

**A:** A well-written breastfeeding policy will reflect the current evidence-based principles or rules the facility endorses, implements, and the staff must follow. The policy should only reflect the current standard of care for infant feeding. The policy will change as The Ten Steps and the WHO Code are fully implemented. Therefore, the development of a comprehensive policy is a process that will follow the facility's pathway to creating a Baby Friendly environment.

**Q:** How long do I need to be “Bag Free” to be eligible for recognition?

**A:** Hospitals need to have been “Bag Free” for the full year prior to recognition. (i.e. the award in 2017 will recognize hospitals for being “Bag Free” for all of 2016)

**Q:** If I was recognized last year, do I need to apply again this year?

**A:** Yes

**Q:** Where do I apply? Will I be reached out to regarding my application? How will I be notified of my recognition?

**A:** The application can be found on the OHA First Steps page: [www.ohiohospitals.org/ohiofirststeps](http://www.ohiohospitals.org/ohiofirststeps). If it is your first time applying, you will be contacted by a member of OBA, OLCA, or First Steps for confirmation. Recognized hospitals will be notified via email, and recognized at the Annual OLCA Conference.

## Other Questions

**Q:** Does my facility need to be recognized in the First Steps program to participate in the other aspects of the program (education, resources, etc.)?

**A:** No. While we encourage all maternity hospitals to become involved in the program, it is not a requirement to be engaged in the other components of the work.

**Q:** Do you have any online educational resources and/or free nursing education hours available?

**A:** The First Steps program maintains a “Resource Guide” which we try to keep updated with resources, educational opportunities, and other useful links. This can be found on the Ohio First Steps webpage. All recorded sessions from our monthly educational calls will also be posted on the OHA First Steps webpage.



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**Q:** How should we work towards Step 7 for rooming-in with the ODH requirements for nurseries?

**A:** The maternity unit must still have a holding nursery. This is so that the infant can be safely monitored when the infant is not in with the mother, most often when medically required or the infant is being adopted. Hospitals should encourage rooming in and educate patients, but cannot refuse a mom's request to keep the infant in the nursery. When seeking 80% or higher achievement for Step 7, medical indication is the only exclusion. ODH surveyors should not be asking patients if they can send their infants to the nursery during surveys, as this could have a negative effect on hospital-provided education on rooming-in. Please inform the First Steps team if this is not the case.

**Q:** What about pacifiers and Step 9?

**A:** Pacifiers may only be offered during a painful procedure, with parental consent, and then thrown away. Pacifiers should not be routinely given to babies. If parents bring their own pacifier, they should be educated about the risks of using a pacifier. NAS is considered to be a painful time and babies are "permitted" to use a pacifier. Car seat challenges, circumcisions, IV insertions are other examples of "painful procedures" where a pacifier may be beneficial. Some facilities use a gloved finger instead of a pacifier to further minimize the possibility of introducing a pacifier. Hospital policy should address all of the above. Once painful procedure is completed and pacifier is discarded, offer skin-to-skin with breastfeeding as a comfort measure for infant.

**Q:** How does the Step 4 requirements arounds skin-to-skin apply as it relates to C-section births?

**A:** The 80% requirement for Step 4 is specific to health babies. For a vaginal birth with a healthy infant, this would be immediately after birth. When there is a Cesarean birth, skin-to-skin can be initiated when both the mother and baby are considered to be stable and/or transferred to recovery room. Skin-to-skin can be done in the OR, with many facilities implementing this practice. BFHI does focus on the mother and baby being skin-to-skin, but specifically once the mother/baby are stable. Once skin-to-skin is in place, at least 80% or more should be an ongoing goal.

**If you have questions that were not answered here, please contact Ryan  
or Bre for more assistance:**

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