



## Updates to the HIV and Infant Feeding Guidelines in the US

In January 2023, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued sweeping updates to the “Infant Feeding” section of their *Perinatal HIV Clinical Guidelines*. The updates, which the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also supports, assert the need for **shared decision-making and increased support from providers around parents’ infant-feeding choices**.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) followed HHS in May 2024, releasing similarly updated guidance stressing a **“family-centered, nonjudgmental, harm reduction” approach** to infant-feeding discussions.

These modifications represent a significant accomplishment for advocates, including The Well Project, who have been working for years on various levels to effect these changes. The Well Project is especially excited that both sets of guidelines **discourage engagement with Child Protective Services (CPS) or similar agencies in response to the infant-feeding intentions of women and other parents living with HIV**.

Visit us at [www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)

SCAN QR CODE

to access the updated guidelines for infant feeding and HIV



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To see that the voices of those of us living with HIV have been able to invoke change on this level is inspiring. It now feels as if we are one step closer to decriminalizing breast/chestfeeding among parents living with HIV since the guidelines specifically recommend against calling CPS.

(2/1/2023)

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Ciarra “Ci Ci” Covin, senior manager of community programming at The Well Project and a woman living with HIV who breastfed her youngest child

## Key updates in the guidelines include:

- Guidance to counsel birthing parents living with HIV around their infant-feeding options replaces previous recommendations against breastfeeding
- Clearer guidance on transmission rates if the birthing parent has an undetectable viral load and is taking HIV medications (less than 1 percent)
- Detailed information on the potential health benefits of breast/chestfeeding
- Caution to not engage Child Protective Services in response to infant-feeding decisions
- Details guiding care management to reduce HIV transmission risk if a parent decides to breast/chestfeed
- Equity considerations in caring for Black families and other families of color who are unduly affected by HIV, social determinants of health, and conditions that may be alleviated by breast/chestfeeding
- Guidance for transgender and gender-diverse people who desire to breast/chestfeed (HHS only)

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*As a pediatrician...I welcome the new version of infant-feeding guidelines for providers caring for people living with HIV by HHS.... This well-needed update uses available global evidence to advocate for shared provider/patient decision-making and patient-centered approach, which has the potential to reduce HIV-associated stigma and improve quality of life among people living with HIV.*

(2/1/2023)

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**Natella Rakhmanina, MD, PhD,** director of HIV services at Children's National Hospital, Washington, DC, and chair of AAP's Committee on Pediatric and Adolescent HIV