

2025 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



Prepared by:

**Coalition of
Oklahoma
Breastfeeding
Advocates**

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Table of Contents

01	Letter from the Executive Director
02	Our Mission
03	Partners
04	Events
05	Programs
06	Who We've Helped
07	Advocacy & Committee Work
08	Looking Back 25 Years
09	Looking Forward
10	Contact Information

Letter from the Executive Director



Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we commemorate COBA's 25th anniversary in 2025, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the strides we've made in promoting, protecting, and supporting breastfeeding across Oklahoma. From our grassroots beginnings in 2000 to becoming a leading advocate for breastfeeding families, our journey has been marked by dedication and community collaboration.

This year, we launched Breastfeeding Champion Awards to honor individuals and public spaces making contributions to breastfeeding advocacy. The Martin Regional Library in Tulsa received the 2025 Public Space Award for providing free meeting spaces for bilingual breastfeeding education classes, serving as a resource for Tulsa's Hispanic community. Additionally, Senators Carri Hicks and JoAnna Dossett were honored with the Legislator Award for their unwavering support of Oklahoma families.

Through the IBCLC Exam Fee and Education Scholarship Program, we've empowered aspiring lactation consultants from underserved communities to achieve certification. Events with our partners have furthered our mission by providing essential training and resources to care providers statewide.

As we look ahead, our vision remains clear: a state where all children have access to human milk. We are committed to removing barriers, fostering inclusive communities, and ensuring that every family receives the support they need. Thank you for standing with us. Your support fuels our mission and brings us closer to a healthier, more equitable Oklahoma.

With gratitude,
Alexis Boryca

11

Events held

210

Professionals received continued education/training

53

Breast pumps provided

Our Mission



Vision

A state where all babies have access to human milk.

Mission

To promote, protect, and support breastfeeding in Oklahoma.

Why It's Important

- Of Oklahoma's 77 counties, **58 are lactation care deserts** meaning a county with no Baby-Friendly hospital and no International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC) available for clinical lactation care either in the hospital or in the community.
- Only **78% of Oklahoma babies are exclusively breastfed at birth**. National average is 84.1%.
- A recent CDC study of over 3 million U.S. births found that ever **breastfeeding is associated with a 26% reduction in the odds of post-perinatal infant death**.
- **The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends infants be exclusively breastfed for about six months** with continued breastfeeding while introducing complementary foods for two years or beyond.

Our Partners

At COBA, we know that lasting change is only possible through strong partnerships. Organizations like the Oklahoma State Department of Health, Oklahoma Breastfeeding Resource Center, Oklahoma Mothers Milk Bank, Chickasaw Nation, and Oklahoma legislators have been instrumental in helping us expand access to lactation education, promote breastfeeding-friendly policies, and ensure that support reaches families in every corner of our state. From co-hosting professional trainings to advocating for legislative change, these partners amplify our mission and make a measurable difference in the lives of Oklahoma families. We are proud to stand alongside them in the pursuit of health equity and breastfeeding success for all.



Oklahoma State Department of Health, Oklahoma Breastfeeding Resource Center, Oklahoma Mothers' Milk Bank, Presbyterian Health Foundation, TSET

Kiddie Academy Edmond, OCARTA, Heidi & Todd Russell, Gore Energy, OK State Emergency Preparedness and Response Services, University of Central Oklahoma

Events



Fall Workshop & Trainings

Our 3rd annual fall workshop featuring Melissa Cole provided attendees valuable information on oral function and assessments, differential diagnoses, tongue and lip ties, milk production and herbal galactagogues, ending with great discussion on critical thinking skills and communication.

A spring pump training with partner OBRC's Jaclyn Huxford provided attendees with the tools necessary to guide families in pump selection and trouble shooting.

35

Attended a celebratory brunch in honor of COBA's 25th Anniversary

150

Legislators reached during Bagels for Breastfeeding at Oklahoma State Capitol in March

Programs

Breastfeeding Friendly Childcare Designation

COBA is pleased to introduce the Oklahoma Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Designation Program. With many Oklahomans returning to work or school after birth, quality child care that supports breastfeeding is of utmost importance. Being a recognized Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care site shows parents and the community that the program follows national breastfeeding and infant feeding standards. It lets everyone know that a childcare facility is committed to helping families give their children the best nutritional start they can – with breast milk!

80%

Percentage of mothers in Oklahoma start breastfeeding, which means families are looking for child care programs who support breastfeeding.

8

Number of facilities designated as Breastfeeding Friendly within the first 60 days of launching.

Model Hospital Care Policy

With the recognition of breastfeeding as a public health issue, the encouragement from professional medical organizations for new mothers to breastfeed for 2 years or as long as desired, and with an increase in breastfeeding rates across the country, it is extremely likely that a lactating mother may be admitted to any area of the hospital. It is imperative that lactation be supported during any maternal or infant hospitalization, as it has both short and long-term effects on the physical and mental health of the woman and child. COBA has therefore created a Model Hospital Policy for Care of the Readmitted Lactating Patient. This policy guides hospitals in the care of lactating persons no matter what facility or hospital service they may be admitted to. In addition, we have created a patient handout, Preparing for Your Hospitalization or Procedure While Breastfeeding. We are happy to announce that this helpful patient handout is now available in Spanish.

Worksite Designation

COBA, OSDH and OBRC recognize 315 workplaces for adopting policies that support breastfeeding employees. Please encourage your worksite and others in your area to apply for recognition and contact us for assistance or questions.

Baby-Friendly Hospitals

This initiative acknowledges that breastfeeding is a biological norm and that breast milk is the best food available for human infants. COBA is proud of the ten Oklahoma hospitals that have been designated Baby-Friendly.

Who We've Helped



OCARTA

Laycee Williams CPRSS,
Housing Ambassador

"The breast pumps provided through COBA have made a real difference for our participants I work with and their children. Having access to these pumps allows mothers to continue providing breast milk even when they return to work, programs, school, or face other life challenges, I've seen how this support lowers stress, increases confidence, and helps mothers feel empowered to meet their babies' needs. The pumps help families stay consistent with feeding, promote healthier babies, and create stronger bond between mothers and their children. This resource has been truly life-changing for many mothers we serve. Our mothers even have breastfeeding wars and laugh about who can pump the most. It has not only strengthened the bond between mother and baby but also a bond with the mothers. Thank you for all the work you do for our mothers and community."



Childcare Designation

Standfield Family,
Attending Kiddie Academy of Edmond

"We have had some experiences with judgment from people who do not support breastfeeding or some centers that do not offer the support Kiddie Academy of Edmond gave us. Kiddie Academy of Edmond is welcoming and accepting parents' choices and beliefs, and they offer their 100% support, for which I am grateful as they allowed me to continue my nursing journey and build a special bond with my son at an important age in his life. He is almost a year old and although he will move into a toddler class, they are still allowing me to store my breastmilk for them to give him during the day as I wish to keep him on my milk until he is 2-3 years old."

\$100

Coba's annual donation to another deserving non-profit in 2025 was directed to Breastfeed LA. This donation helped in their recovery from the year's wildfires.

Advocacy & Committee Work

Educational Video Series

COBA staff and committee members quickly evolved into producers, script writers, casting directors, and stylists in 2025 as they worked tirelessly to develop educational videos accessible to all Oklahomans. These videos aim to bridge the gap in rural healthcare access; made for the workplace, healthcare professional, and parent audiences. The videos address pumping concerns, fatherhood support, lactation support in the hospital, childcare facility support, returning to work, employer guidelines and infant feeding in emergencies.



We'd like to recognize the partners that helped make this video series possible. Some of the days were very long and many of the hours were volunteered. A very heartfelt thank you to Oklahoma Breastfeeding Resource Center, Oklahoma State Department of Health Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response Services, BlueStem Media, Hobo Pete Productions, McAfee & Taft, Kiddie Academy of Edmond, Gore Energy, Cheryl Coleman, Maria Meyer, Sarah Devane, Jillian Bray, and the Sikes Family.

Newsletter

reached 2,907

Followed and
Opposed

HB 1577

Supporting
Members

40 since launch

Looking Back 25 Years

Our Founding

The Coalition of Oklahoma Breastfeeding Advocates (COBA) was founded as a grassroots organization in 2000. COBA members' dedicated advocacy for pro-breastfeeding legislation resulted in three major victories between 2004 and 2006. During that time, Oklahoma passed laws protecting the right to breastfeed in public, giving jury duty exemption for breastfeeding, and supporting working breastfeeding mothers by clarifying the right to use break time at work for milk expression and encouraging the provision of a private location, other than a toilet stall, for expressing milk. COBA would especially like to thank Becky Mannel, Linda Miller, Rosanne Smith, and Crystal Stearns for their hard work promoting these policies.

Pivotal Moment

Created Breastfeeding Works! brochure for employers, a Breastfeeding Website, and a model Worksite Breastfeeding Policy and breastfeeding room. 315 worksites are currently recognized for policies and amenities that serve breastfeeding employees. COBA assisted OSDH in its choice to include breastfeeding goals in the statewide obesity prevention plan. COBA and OSDH also collaborated to develop a Nursing Moms and Babies Welcome decal for storefronts to help breastfeeding women and their families recognize places that welcome them. COBA partnered with OSDH in 2006-2008 to publish Right to Breastfeed wallet cards in English and Spanish. These cards, updated and still in publication, include helpful information about breastfeeding rights in the United States and Oklahoma. WIC, COBA, and partners have also collaborated to create public service announcements that support breastfeeding. We give special thanks to Nancy Bacon and Rosanne Smith for their commitment to these successful programs.

COBA Founded

2000

Major legislative victories for Oklahomans

2004 & 2006

Oklahoma Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite Initiative

2008



Becky Mannel, Cathy Carothers and Ruth Platak at the 2012 USBC Coalitions Conference

Achieved Non-Profit 501(c)3 Status

2012

Established COBA Baby Cafés

2015

IBCLC Scholarship Program

2019

Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Designation

2025

Looking Forward

COBA was fortunate to be one of the recipients of the Oklahoma Choosing Childbirth (CCB) Grant. This grant has allowed us to expand our staff and hire Sarah Devane as Grant Manager. With the CCB grant we have produced videos on breast pump selection, returning to work and fatherhood support. We also partnered with Oklahoma Citizen Advocates for Recovery and Transformation Association (OCARTA) to set up lactation rooms in their main facility and sober living homes. These funds will propel us forward through the next year as we grow these programs.



Strategic Plan Goals

GOAL ONE: Breastfeeding Promotion, Protection, & Support

COBA will increase promotion and reach of current breastfeeding friendly designation programs.

GOAL TWO: Partnerships

COBA will create new alliances with partners who share in our mission, expand contact and work with current partners, increase legislative alliances, and create annual data-driven reports.

GOAL THREE: Organizational Stability

COBA will focus on improving our financial stability and becoming a data-driven organization.

25K in 2025

Looking back just a few years ago, COBA had a very modest annual operating budget of \$15,000. With robust board support and an increase in event attendance, COBA was able to achieve our once unimaginable goal of raising \$25,000 in celebration of our 25th anniversary.

Contact Us

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Special thank you to Rebecca Mannel for her 25 years of service, and to Heidi Russell for her 5 years of dedication as COBA's first-ever Executive Director.