***STOCKBRIDGE-MUNSEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER***

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Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe Takes Important Step to Support Breastfeeding

On November 6, 2018, the Stockbridge-Munsee Community tribal council voted unanimously to approve a resolution to protect the act of breastfeeding in any private or public location on tribal land where a mother and child are authorized to be present. Breastfeeding is further supported and protected by stating that no person shall prohibit a mother from breastfeeding, direct a mother to move to another location, direct a mother to cover herself while breastfeeding or restrict the mother from breastfeeding on tribal lands. The resolution, brought forth by the Community Health Department, is a step toward normalizing breastfeeding and increasing breastfeeding duration rates. After working to promote and pass the resolution, Courtney Schwefel, community member and Community Health Department staff member, stated, “Our community and tribal council support breastfeeding families and they know they will not be discriminated against for breastfeeding in public. It helps the women and children feel more comfortable and normalizes breastfeeding in the community. It is part of our traditional food, let’s accept it.”

The Community Health Department has been working to increase the number of infants that are breastfed and increase the length of time infants are receiving breastmilk. In the past several years the Community Health staff has attended breastfeeding education trainings, provided community events with breastfeeding education, provided clean, quiet spaces for breastfeeding at community events, and participating in coalitions to enhance community breastfeeding support. After passing the resolution, a community member exclaimed, “It’s great to see the community and the leadership show the importance of the investment in our future generations with breastfeeding.”

Breastfeeding has been shown to decrease the risk of obesity, diabetes, asthma and allergies in children. The risk of breast and ovarian cancers are lowered for women who breastfeed. Breastfeeding is described as dose related, meaning the longer an infant receives breastmilk, the greater the health benefits. “Breastfeeding has so many positive health impacts. We want to show our community how important it is for everyone to support breastfeeding,” states Maternal and Child Health Nurse, Briah Pingel.

The signing of this resolution shows the commitment of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community to improving the health of its members, now and for future generations. The Community Health Department has 4 Certified Lactation Consultants and 1 Indigenous Breastfeeding Counselor on staff to assist families in meeting their breastfeeding goals. For more information about breastfeeding or the resolution, please contact: Judy (Vera) Heubel at 715-793-5060, Courtney Schwefel at 715-793-5013 or Briah Pingel at 715-793-5018.