**GOAL 1: All Children and Youth are Healthy and Thriving**

**INDICATOR 2: Birth to six months – exclusive breastfeeding**

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?**

In 2014, 60% of mothers exclusively breastfed on discharge from hospital and this dropped to 38% by two weeks of age. While the decline in exclusive breastfeeding was small between two weeks (38%) and four months of age (27%), it was more apparent between four and five months (20%) with a larger drop-off of exclusive breastfeeding happening between five and six months of age. On average, 8% of mothers reported breastfeeding exclusively at six months of age or more.

In addition to preventing illnesses like obesity and diabetes later in life, providing breast milk reduces the risk of childhood illnesses like respiratory and middle ear infections and sudden infant death syndrome.

**HOW ARE WE CREATING CHANGE?**

In 2012, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) began working towards formal Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) designation, a process established by the World Health Organization to create supportive environments in front-line services, workplaces and in the community to encourage breastfeeding and increase awareness of its benefits.

**WHAT WORKS?**

- Social marketing strategies to promote breastfeeding;
- Supporting mothers to maintain breastfeeding;
- Foster breastfeeding support groups;
- Comprehensive, coordinated approaches to develop, promote and implement breastfeeding policies and plans, for example:
  - Baby-friendly hospital initiatives
  - Integrating breast feeding support into existing programs
  - Advocating for policies to support breastfeeding in the workplace and public spaces.