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URI and Westerly Hospital receive Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace Awards

The University of Rhode Island and Westerly Hospital recently joined three other employers in being recognized as Gold level Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplaces by the Rhode Island Breastfeeding Coalition and the Rhode Island Department of Health. The University of Rhode Island is the first institute of higher learning in the state to be honored with this award since it was established in 2006.

“Rhode Island hospitals and employers continue to demonstrate an outstanding commitment to supporting breastfeeding families,” said Director of Health, David R. Gifford, MD, MPH. “Breastfeeding protects mothers and their babies from numerous health risks and results in significant cost savings for families, the health care system, and employers who support breastfeeding families,” he said.

To encourage breastfeeding, South County, Newport, Westerly, Women & Infants, and Kent County Hospitals in Rhode Island have eliminated the distribution of free infant formula marketing bags to postpartum women at hospital discharge. Multiple studies show an association between the distribution of free commercial formula discharge bags and decreased breastfeeding, according to ‘Ban the Bag’, a national campaign to stop formula company marketing in maternity hospitals.

In addition, South County, Newport, and Westerly Hospitals have met the criteria for ‘Baby Friendly’ Certification as part of a global program to encourage and recognize hospitals that offer an optimal level of care for lactation.

For additional information about the benefits of breastfeeding to mothers and children and employer breastfeeding support, visit www.health.ri.gov/family/breastfeeding.

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