



**It's only  
natural**  
mother's love. mother's milk.



# Leader's Guide

## **Introduction**

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), thank you for participating in our new campaign, *It's Only Natural*. The local community plays a critical role in offering pregnant and new moms the support they need during their breastfeeding journey. As a trusted and respected leader in the community, we need your help to make this initiative a success and to reach as many African American women as possible with these important messages. This is a unique opportunity to work with other community-based organizations, women's health programs, and local hospitals, to join together to help moms make the choice to breastfeed their babies. Our vision for this program is to bring together diverse partners to reach pregnant and new moms who may not otherwise receive this important information about breastfeeding.

As a valued partner in this effort, we'll provide you with the educational tools, resources, and materials to inform moms about the benefits of breastfeeding. Outlined in this guide are the background and purpose of the campaign; information on how to prepare for, promote, and host an *It's Only Natural* session; a toolkit with sample session materials including an agenda and introduction speech; tools to promote your session including a template news release, newsletter article, and calendar posting; and hand-outs for participants.

Thank you for being a partner in this important endeavor to provide moms and babies with a natural and healthy start.

## **Breastfeeding. It's only natural with Mother's Love, Mother's Milk.**

### **Background**

Despite the benefits associated with breastfeeding, rates of breastfeeding among African American women remain lower than the rates of other ethnicities in the United States. Additionally, rates are exceptionally low among African American women living in the South.

Breastfeeding provides a range of benefits, including:

- Babies are less likely to get sick, or have to stay in the hospital due to illness. Breast milk reduces the risk of SIDS by over 70%; it can also help prevent ear infections, diarrhea, respiratory illnesses, childhood obesity, and childhood leukemia.
- Studies show that the longer a woman breastfeeds, the lower her risk of developing breast cancer and ovarian cancer. It also lowers the risk of type 2 diabetes.

### **It's Only Natural Campaign Overview**

Breastfeeding provides mothers and their babies with a healthy start. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services created *It's Only Natural* to offer African American moms the knowledge, help and support they need to breastfeed. You'll find all this at [www.womenshealth.gov/ItsOnlyNatural](http://www.womenshealth.gov/ItsOnlyNatural). Breastfeeding. It's only natural with mother's love, mother's milk.

The goal of the campaign is to increase awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding to mom and baby while also providing practical "how-to" information. We hope this will motivate and inspire moms to seek information about breastfeeding, initiate breastfeeding, and encourage their peers to do so as well.

Core components of *It's Only Natural* include:

- Key partnerships – partnerships with a wide range of groups including, women's health organizations, maternal and child health groups, community groups, faith-based organizations, and government agencies.
- Website – a section of [womenshealth.gov](http://womenshealth.gov) ([www.womenshealth.gov/itsonlynatural](http://www.womenshealth.gov/itsonlynatural)) provides access to campaign materials, breastfeeding-related content that is tailored for our target audience, and contains unique articles and mom-to-mom testimonial videos that reflect the experience of African American moms, and discusses successes and challenges.
- Materials – the development of an array of materials for our target audience and partners including two fact sheets, a poster to help promote educational sessions in the Southern pilot communities, and a radio PSA.

### **What You Can Do**

You can get involved in the national campaign by hosting an *It's Only Natural* breastfeeding session in your community. By hosting this session, you will teach moms about the benefits of breastfeeding, the fundamentals of how to breastfeed, what moms can do if they encounter problems, and how to build a support network. Hosting a session will provide moms with peer-to-peer support and serve to illustrate that African American women do breastfeed.

### **Using the *It's Only Natural* Leader's Guide**

This Guide can be used by any organization interested in increasing awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding to mom and baby. Our goal is to provide practical “how-to” information and foster peer-to-peer communication. The guide contains many of the elements needed to easily plan and conduct an *It's Only Natural* breastfeeding session, including handouts for participants, a host checklist, questions for participants, and much more.

At these sessions, attendees will:

- Participate in a facilitated discussion with a certified lactation consultant.
- Have the opportunity to engage with their peers in an honest and open discussion that fosters support and encouragement.
- Receive materials including a how-to fact sheet with practical tips on breastfeeding, a general fact sheet on the benefits of breastfeeding and a breastfeeding Q&A.
- Receive information on local community services/resources available to support them in their breastfeeding journey.

### **It's Only Natural Session Format**

You are the breastfeeding expert(s) and know what type of information pregnant and new moms need and how best to present that information. However, we do suggest that the session cover topics such as:

- Why you are hosting the session (low African American breastfeeding rates, particularly in the South)
- Breastfeeding benefits (for mom and baby)
- Practical how-to information and tips (latching, holding techniques, how to tell your child is getting enough milk, how to overcome barriers)
- Making it work for you/What feels best for you
- Building a support network
- Q&A
- Local resources

### **Audience**

*It's Only Natural* sessions are for pregnant women, as well as new moms who have recently given birth of all ages, and socio-economic backgrounds. The sessions should be designed to reach audiences of various sizes; it works well with a small group or a large audience. You may consider using break-out groups with larger audiences so participants will feel more comfortable discussing and sharing.

### **Location**

These sessions can be presented in a wide variety of settings—meeting rooms in hospitals and other health care facilities, maternal and child health offices, recreation centers, work sites, community group centers, libraries, and places of worship, for example.

### **How to Host an *It's Only Natural* Session**

Use these simple steps to help plan and organize a successful presentation.

### **Planning the Event**

#### *Finding partners and scheduling a session*

- Identify groups that can help reach the target audience through various ways and have a vested interest in improving breastfeeding initiation rates. A good place to start is with organizations to which you belong or organizations that are popular in your community among the target audience. Examples are sorority alumnae groups, clinics, women's groups, at places of worship, maternal and child health organizations, birthing classes, etc. If these groups are unable to make *It's Only Natural* a topic for one of their meetings or help co-sponsor a session, they may be able to assist you in other ways, such as helping to promote a session.
- Identify a certified lactation consultant(s) to help lead and conduct the session. You can find a list of certified lactation consultants near you at through the International Lactation Consultant Association at <http://www.ilca.org>.
- Identify key partners, local resources and additional information at the United States Breastfeeding Committee. For more information visit <http://www.usbreastfeeding.org>.

## *Logistics*

- Consider printing *It's Only Natural* fact sheets, and other resources for participants provided in this Guide as a leave behind for participants as well as any other relevant handouts you may have.
- Confirm ahead of time that you have the proper equipment for your presentation, such as a speaker system, projector, laptop, television, DVD player, etc. and a large enough space to accommodate your group.
- Consider providing or working with other local partners to provide onsite daycare/nursery for new moms.
- Prepare for the possibility of providing one-on-one follow-up counsel with new mothers and serving as a continued resource, if possible.

## **Promoting the Event**

### *Getting Women to Attend*

- Start promoting the presentation at least three weeks beforehand. Use posters (included in this kit) at community sites such as hospitals, grocery stores, clinics, places of worship, libraries, beauty salons, and community centers.
- Work with local women's groups to promote the presentation through their channels, such as blogs, forums, e-mail lists, newsletters, and group meetings.
- Coordinate with local media to see if they will promote the session. Many newspapers and local cable companies run weekly health event calendars where they may be willing to list your session. Also, radio stations—particularly public radio stations—make announcements of community events, so be sure to reach out to them as well. You can use the template press release and newsletter article (for print or electronic distribution) included in this kit to help get you started.

### **Other ways to get involved in *It's Only Natural***

- Share the campaign's resources, including video testimonials, fact sheets, and resource materials with your contacts, stakeholders, partners, and networks.
- Link to our Web site ([www.womenshealth.gov/itsonlynatural](http://www.womenshealth.gov/itsonlynatural)) and YouTube page on your social media channels, such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Distribute the radio PSA to your local radio station contacts.
- Disseminate our Web articles and videos through your communications vehicles (e.g., Web site, newsletters, at conferences).

# Session Leader's Toolkit



## ***It's Only Natural* Session Leader's Checklist**

This checklist ensures you are equipped with all materials you'll need as a presenter. Let this be your guide to hosting an informative and fun session.

- It's Only Natural* Session Leader's Guide
  - Recommendations and How-to's for hosting a local session
  - Introduction speech
  - Agenda
  - Talking points you develop to lead the session
- Presentation slides
- "Helpful Resources" handout
- General Factsheet on the benefits of breastfeeding for mom and baby
- How-To Factsheet with practical tips on breastfeeding, including holding and latching techniques, how to know if your baby is getting enough milk, and much more
- Internet access to show videos
- Local resources and other credible data
- Promotional poster
- Other resources or hand-outs you may have for participants

## ***It's Only Natural* Session Leader's Introduction Speech**

Good (morning/afternoon/evening). I'm so glad to see you all here today, because we're here to talk about breastfeeding, an important choice for both you and your baby.

Let me begin by telling you who I am and why I'm hosting this group today/tonight.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm a \_\_\_\_\_ (certified lactation consultant, member of \_\_\_\_, mother, etc). I volunteered to lead this meeting because \_\_\_\_\_ ("I know first-hand the importance of breastfeeding", or "I've seen challenges women face in our community when it comes to breastfeeding", or "I want to help women make the choice to breastfeed their babies").

If you had to guess, what percentage of African American moms would you say start out breastfeeding?

Despite what you have been told or what the media may portray, more than *half* of African American moms actually start out breastfeeding. While that is great news, we still have room for improvement – because breastfeeding is great for you and your baby. Despite the benefits, the rates are still too low, especially among African American women living in the South. Go to <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard.htm> to find rates in your state.

To help you keep your baby healthy and strong, we plan to give you the “breastfeeding basics” and practical tips to teach you why breastfeeding is so important, how to breastfeed successfully, and what to do if you come across any problems.

What's really critical to a successful breastfeeding experience is having a support network to turn to you when you have questions, concerns, or just want to talk to someone. That's the real reason we're having this session. You can talk with your peers in an open, honest setting and build that critical support network early on. We will also give you information on local community services and resources that are available to you for additional support.

I want to have an open, honest discussion and give you the opportunity to have all your questions and concerns answered, and hopefully encourage you to learn more about breastfeeding and its benefits. This is about supporting each other in our breastfeeding journey.

Let's go over today's agenda so that you have an idea of what we have planned for the next hour or so.



## ***It's Only Natural* Breastfeeding Session Agenda**

Introduction, Background, Session Overview (10 minutes)

Interactive Q&A to get participants to feel comfortable (10 minutes)

- Sample discussion points:
  - What are you most excited about when it comes to breastfeeding?
  - What are you most scared about?
  - What questions do you have?
  - What have you heard about breastfeeding that surprised you?

Breastfeeding Basics (e.g. benefits to mom and baby, overarching tips) (20 minutes)

Breakout Sessions to Cover Specific Breastfeeding Topics (20 minutes each), such as:

- Practical how to tips (such as holding and latching techniques)
- Where to find support
- Making breastfeeding comfortable for you

Q&A (10 minutes)

Closing (5 minutes)

Tools to Promote an  
*It's Only Natural* Session



## Sample Newsletter Promotion

[Name of organization here] to Host *It's Only Natural* Breastfeeding Session



[Insert Partner Logo Here]

### Learn about making a great choice for you and your baby

**More than half of African American moms start out breastfeeding their babies. Why?** Because it makes babies healthy and strong and builds a feeling of love.

#### Free Breastfeeding Information Session –

Every mother needs information about breastfeeding. Why? Because it helps keep you and your baby healthy. And, learning about breastfeeding now will help you to be prepared when your little one arrives.

**[Insert organization here]** is hosting a breastfeeding session where expecting and new moms will learn the benefits of breastfeeding as well as practical tips and information from an

experienced lactation consultant to help you successfully breastfeed. If you attend you will get to talk with moms experiencing the same things as you and build an important support network early on. You will also receive resource materials that can help answer questions and concerns when you begin breastfeeding your baby and learn about local community organizations and services available help you on this journey.

Do what's great for you and your baby—breastfeed. Attend this free session to learn more.

#### About *It's Only Natural*

Breastfeeding provides mothers and their babies with a healthy start. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services created *It's Only Natural* to offer African American moms the knowledge, help and support they need to breastfeed. You'll find all this at [www.womenshealth.gov/ItsOnlyNatural](http://www.womenshealth.gov/ItsOnlyNatural). Breastfeeding. It's only natural with mother's love, mother's milk.

[LOCAL INFO — Date, Time, Place, RSVP info.]

## **Sample E-mail promotion**

### **[SUBJECT LINE]**

[Name of organization] to Host *It's Only Natural* Breastfeeding Session

### **[E-MAIL MESSAGE]**

**Learn about making a great choice for you and your baby.**

*Please join us for a free 90-minute health information session about breastfeeding on [date/time] at [location].*

**More than half of African American moms start out breastfeeding their babies.** Why? Because it makes babies healthy and strong and builds a feeling of love.

**Every mother needs this information.** Don't miss it. Bring your friends with you, too.

**RSVP by returning this e-mail.** Or call **[PHONE NUMBER]**. We look forward to seeing you. Admission is free

### *About It's Only Natural*

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### **Sample Calendar Listing**

*It's Only Natural* Breastfeeding Session hosted by [name of organization]. Learn about what you can do that's great for you and your baby. Want to know more? Attend this free 90-minute session about breastfeeding to help you be as prepared as possible when your little one arrives. [**LOCAL INFO** —**Date, Time, Place, RSVPS info.**]

## Sample News Release



*[Insert partner logo here]*

**[LOCAL INFO — Date, Time, Place, RSVP info.]**

**(Insert Date)**

Contact:

**(Insert Contact Name)**

**(Insert Contact Phone)**

**(Insert Organization name)** Hosts Educational Breastfeeding Session

**(Insert City/State)**- To help soon-to-be moms learn about breastfeeding, **(insert organization name)** today **(announced/will host/organized, etc.)** a free *It's Only Natural* breastfeeding session. The event will **(insert one or two lines with more details about your event/activity, if needed)**.

More than half of African American moms start out breastfeeding their babies. Why? Because it makes babies healthy and strong and builds a feeling of love. According to **(insert your spokesperson's name)**, "The *It's Only Natural* session is a great opportunity to reach out to expecting and new moms in our community and give them the useful tips and information they need from a breastfeeding expert and help them find support in their community. Attendees will also have the opportunity to get advice from, and share stories and build relationships with, other expecting moms."

**(Insert a paragraph that highlights key aspects of your event.)**

**(Insert Organization name)** activities are in partnership with *It's Only Natural*, a national awareness campaign giving moms the help and support they need to begin breastfeeding.

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About **(Insert Organization name)**

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