

Southcoast Health announces New Bedford's St. Luke's Hospital earns baby-friendly redesignation

"NEW BEDFORD, Mass. – Southcoast Health officials are proud to announce that St. Luke's Hospital has once again received the prestigious Baby-Friendly designation by Baby-Friendly USA, the accrediting body and national authority for the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) in the United States.

This distinguished honor is granted after a thorough review process and demonstrates that St. Luke's Hospital adheres to the highest standards of care for breastfeeding mothers and their babies.

These standards are built on the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, a set of evidence-based practices recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for optimal infant feeding support in the significant first days of a newborn's life.



Southcoast Health photo.

“This respected international designation is meaningful validation of the skilled and compassionate care our team members demonstrate every day to our patients and their families,” said David O. McCready, President and CEO of Southcoast Health. “I am extremely proud of all the work our Family Centered Unit has put into this achievement, and grateful we are able to provide this exceptional care for families in our community during this special time in their lives.”

This designation recognizes the hospital for providing breastfeeding mothers information, confidence and education before, during and after childbirth. Designated facilities promote and practice policies such as optimal early bonding care via skin-to-skin contact with mother and baby immediately after childbirth and keeping babies in their room to help prepare parents for going home.

“I want to congratulate our entire team in the Family Centered Unit at St. Luke’s Hospital on this accomplishment. It is

thanks to their collective hard work and dedication that we achieved this recognition,” said Kim Pina, MSN, RN, Executive Director of the Family Centered Unit/Level II Nursery at Southcoast Health.



Southcoast Health photo.

With this redesignation, St. Luke's Hospital remains part of the growing list of more than 20,000 Baby-Friendly hospitals and birth centers throughout the world, 565 of which are in the United States. These facilities provide an environment that supports breastfeeding while respecting every patient's right to make the best decision for their family.

“We're immensely proud of our team. This recognition reflects our commitment to not only supporting breastfeeding but ensuring that all mothers and infants receive the highest quality care and guidance,” said Michelle Murray, Lead Lactation Consultant at St. Luke's Hospital. “By following Baby-Friendly guidelines we are providing evidence-based maternity care practices that allow us to best support new mothers in this journey. We're excited for all we will continue to accomplish in the next five years.”

St. Luke's Hospital was previously designated in 2018

following the same 5-year-long assessment beginning in 2013. Throughout the designation period, hospital leadership will report key statistics annually over the next five years to ensure they are maintaining these requirements.

To learn more about Maternity Services at Southcoast Health, please visit: www.southcoast.org/services/maternity-services/

About Southcoast Health

Founded in 1996, Southcoast Health serves communities across southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island as the largest provider of primary and specialty care in the region. The not-for-profit, charitable system includes three acute care hospitals – Charlton Memorial in Fall River, St. Luke's in New Bedford (a Level II Trauma Center), and Tobey in Wareham, Massachusetts with a physician network of more than 675 providers.

The system has established more than 65 service locations across the South Coast of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, including six urgent care locations, a Visiting Nurse Association, the Southcoast Health Cancer Center, the region's only Level II Adult Trauma Center and numerous ancillary facilities.

Southcoast Health has been recognized consecutively for five years in a row as a Newsweek's World's Best Hospital from 2019-2024 and named a Maternity Care Access Hospital for 2023-2024 by U.S. News & World Report. The organization was recognized as the best place to work for the sixth consecutive year by Southcoast Media Group's community choice awards.

With upward of 7,500 employees, Southcoast Health is the largest employer in southeastern Massachusetts, and one of the largest employers in the Commonwealth, according to the Boston Business Journal. More information is available at www.southcoast.org.

About Baby-Friendly USA

As the accrediting body and national authority for the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) in the United States, Baby-Friendly USA is responsible for upholding the highest standards in infant feeding care by coordinating and conducting all activities necessary to confer the prestigious Baby-Friendly designation and ensure the widespread adoption of the BFHI in the US. Learn more about Baby-Friendly USA and the BFHI at www.babyfriendlyusa.org.