

## 1,000 Bag-Free Birth Facilities!



CHAMPS is excited to announce that there are now 1,000 bag-free birth facilities listed on the Ban the Bags website (<http://banthebags.org/bag-free-hospitals>)! Ban the Bags is a national campaign to end the distribution of formula company discharge packs, or gift bags, to new mothers in hospitals and birth centers.

Why ban the bags? According to Ban the Bags' website, "Multiple studies have shown that formula sales campaigns undermine mothers who choose to breastfeed, and coopt medical professionals to promote expensive brand-name formula" (<http://banthebags.org/about/>). If hospitals and birth centers give formula as a gift, they become complicit marketers of formula, instead of health. In the words of Ban the Bags' slogan: "Hospitals should market health, and nothing else."

Ban the Bags' mission has been largely successful; a study published in May 2015 in *Pediatrics* reported that the number of hospitals distributing formula company discharge packs has decreased dramatically. 72.6% of hospitals distributed formula discharge packs in 2007, whereas only 31.6% of hospitals did so in 2013. Also, 5 US states are now completely bag free: Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Delaware, and Maryland (and the District of Columbia), and New Hampshire.

Boston Medical Center's Breastfeeding Center, which houses CHAMPS, has conducted studies on the impact of formula discharge packs on breastfeeding. Our 2014 study published in the *Journal of Human Lactation*, "Hospital Discharge Bags and Breastfeeding at 6 Months: Data from the Infant Feeding Practices Study II," showed that at 6 months, receiving formula sample packs was associated with lowered exclusive breastfeeding rates compared to receiving breastfeeding supply bags or no bags. At 10 weeks, formula packs were associated with earlier discontinuation of exclusive breastfeeding compared to breastfeeding supply bags or no bag.

CHAMPS' promotion of Baby-Friendly practices is aligned with Ban the Bags' campaign to end the marketing of formula in birth facilities. To become Baby-Friendly, a birth facility can no longer give formula discharge packs to mothers, and it must also pay for the formula it gives to mothers who request or need it for medical reasons.

The number of Baby-Friendly birth facilities, and subsequently the number of birth facilities that have given the bag the boot, are on the rise. The number of birth facilities on the Baby-Friendly pathway is also rising; CHAMPS has an initiative in Mississippi where 80% of hospitals are now on the Baby-Friendly pathway. We are excited for these positive changes, which are bringing us closer to a Baby-Friendly, bag-free nation!

CHAMPS staff maintain the Ban the Bags website in collaboration with the Massachusetts Breastfeeding Coalition. If your hospital does not give out industry-sponsored formula bags, add its name to the Ban the Bags website by following the instructions on this page: <http://banthebags.org/submit/>.