

February 9, 2026 Women & Children's Health Committee Zoom Meeting

Meeting summary

Quick recap

The meeting focused on Ashley Minihan's presentation about the doula program at York Correctional Institution, which provides prenatal and postpartum support to incarcerated women. Ashley shared success stories and discussed challenges, including the transportation of breast milk and the need for clearer policies regarding breastfeeding for incarcerated mothers on methadone. Experts, including Dr. Ostfeld-Johns and Latosha Johnson from DCF, offered support and suggested next steps for addressing policy issues. The group also discussed the potential for establishing a prison nursery at York, with Amy expressing interest in facilitating this initiative.

Next steps

- [Ashley Minihan: Send the document regarding the previous mother-baby nursery bill to Co-Chair Amy Gagliardi.](#)
- [Latosha Johnson: Connect Ashley \(and relevant team members\) with DCF's legislative aide and policy team to discuss updating DCF policy regarding breast milk for infants of mothers on methadone/buprenorphine.](#)
- [Latosha: Follow up internally with DCF policy contacts to assess and potentially initiate a policy update regarding breast milk and medication, and to direct collaboration with appropriate partners.](#)
- [Sharon \(Dr. Ostfeld-Johns\): Provide expertise and guidance, including potential participation in meetings, to help inform and support DCF policy updates on breast milk and medications.](#)
- [Amy: Offer support as an IBCLC to help address the breast milk/medication policy issue and assist with efforts to establish a prison nursery/mother-baby unit.](#)
- [Ashley: Continue to work with pediatricians, IBCLCs, and DCF to develop and provide written statements or policy language supporting evidence-based practices for breast milk use by infants of incarcerated mothers on medication.](#)
- [Ashley: Update the committee in future meetings on progress related to policy changes and the mother-baby nursery initiative.](#)

Summary

Empowered Beginnings CT Presentation

Ashley Minahan from Empowered Beginnings CT presented to the Women and Children's Health Subcommittee, with Rep. Sarah Kitt presiding as Co-Chair. The meeting was broadcast live on CTN, and Ashley confirmed she was comfortable taking questions during her presentation rather than at

the end. Rep. Kitt noted that Co-Chair Amy Gagliardi would join later but might need to leave briefly at 10:15.

York Correctional Facility Doula Program

Ashley presented an overview of the doula services and programs at York Correctional Facility, highlighting the support provided to incarcerated mothers during pregnancy, birth, and postpartum. She discussed the facility's dedicated pregnancy tier, which includes educational posters, freezers for breast milk storage, and access to medical care. Ashley explained the doula program's goals of increasing attachment between parents and children, providing education on child development and safety, and offering emotional support to mothers during and after incarceration. She also shared success metrics from the program, including high rates of breastfeeding initiation and continuation.

Incarcerated Mothers' Lactation Support

Ashley discussed the lactation support provided to incarcerated mothers, including hospital visits, pump setup, and transition books. She highlighted the emotional impact of separation on mothers and their babies and described various support activities such as affirmation cards and group projects. Felicia, an inmate, shared her personal experience of giving birth while incarcerated and the support she received from the program, including prenatal care, doula support, and postpartum assistance.

Perinatal Programs in Prison Study

Ashley presented on the Enhanced Perinatal Programs for People in Prison study, which analyzes pregnancy and postpartum programs in 8 states. She shared success stories from York Correctional Institution, including improvements in policies like allowing unshackled labor and visits. The group discussed challenges around breast milk transportation and DCF policies regarding methadone use. Latosha Johnson from DCF offered to connect Ashley with their policy unit to address these issues. The conversation ended with a discussion about potentially establishing a prison nursery, which had previously been proposed but not implemented.

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Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine

https://abm.memberclicks.net/assets/DOCUMENTS/PROTOCOLS/ABM%20Clinical%20Protocol%2021%20SUD_English.pdf

AAP Policy Statement on Use of Human Milk [Policy Statement: Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk | Pediatrics | American Academy of Pediatrics](#)