



GUAM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL AUTHORITY

ATURIDÁT ESPETÁT MIMURIÁT GUÅHAN

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For Immediate Release

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GMHA Advances Maternal Care as Part of National CHAMPS Breastfeeding Initiative

(Tamuning, Guam; Saturday, January 31, 2026) The Guam Memorial Hospital Authority (GMHA) announced its continued commitment to supporting mothers and newborns through its participation in the CHAMPS (Communities and Hospitals Advancing Maternity Practices) National Program, a breastfeeding initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CHAMPS works with hospitals across the nation to improve maternity care, increase breastfeeding success, and reduce disparities in maternal health. The program provides hospitals with training, technical support, and evidence-based guidance to strengthen policies and enhance the experiences of birthing families.

“At GMHA, our mission has always been to provide compassionate, family-centered care for every mother and baby who enters our doors,” said Dr. Joleen M. Aguon, GMHA Interim Administrator and CEO.

“Participating in the CHAMPS program strengthens that commitment by giving our teams the tools and support they need to help families thrive from the very first moments of life. We’re proud to stand with our community in promoting healthier beginnings for Guam’s mothers and newborns.”

GMHA’s breastfeeding initiation rates and immediate vaginal delivery skin-to-skin contact after birth are both above CHAMPS national averages, reflecting the steady progress supported through CHAMPS training and best-practice tools.

Dr. Mariana Cook-Huynh, Family Practice Obstetrics Physician and CHAMPS Physician Advocate, said the collaboration helps GMHA continue improving support for families. “GMHA is proud to be working in collaboration with CHAMPS to support mothers and babies for breastfeeding success. Breastfeeding leads to better nutrition and overall health for babies, as well as improved physical and mental health for mothers after delivery.”

Emphasizing the medical importance of breastfeeding, Dr. William Vercio, Medical Director of Obstetrics and Gynecology Services, shared, “Breastfeeding is best when done long term, but even babies who are breastfed for just a few weeks receive the benefits of colostrum, which is full of antibodies to help fight infection and fats that support growth.





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There is nothing in formula that comes close to that. Breastfeeding is work, but it is good work, and I encourage mothers not to miss out on that opportunity.”

Dr. Akua Agyeman, Pediatrics Physician, highlighted the long-standing and protective role of breastfeeding, stating, “Breastfeeding has historically been a mainstay of parenting and strengthens the bond between mother and child. It has been shown to be healthy for babies, including premature infants and those born in challenging circumstances, because of the immunity passed from mother to child. While we are fortunate on Guam to have many resources available, that does not negate the importance of championing breastfeeding, a primary resource mothers can gift their children.”

Through the CHAMPS program, GMHA continues to advance practices that promote early bonding and breastfeeding success, including immediate skin-to-skin contact, rooming-in, timely breastfeeding initiation, and culturally centered care tailored to island families.

“This is another testament to how our hospital is moving forward,” said Governor Lou Leon Guerrero. “Early bonding and breastfeeding support make a real difference, and I’m proud to see GMHA taking these important steps for our families.”

Lieutenant Governor Josh Tenorio added that the initiative strengthens the quality of care available to island families. “We are proud of how our hospital continues to expand maternal care. Programs like CHAMPS help improve outcomes for families and strengthen the foundation of healthcare in our community.”

For more updates on GMHA projects and initiatives, follow the Guam Memorial Hospital Authority on Facebook and Instagram at @GMHA_Guam.

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