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# Virginia Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation Program Frequently Asked Questions



## Overview

**What:** The Virginia Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation Program recognizes maternity centers that have taken steps to promote, protect, and support safe infant feeding and care practices in their organization.

The program is based on the [Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding](#) from the Baby-Friendly USA Hospital Initiative. For every two steps completed, you will earn a level of designation. Completion of two steps earn a bronze designation. Completion of four steps earns a silver designation. Completion of 6 steps earns a gold designation. Completion of eight steps earns a platinum designation. Completion of all 10 steps earns a diamond designation.

**Who:** All maternity-centers across the Commonwealth are encouraged to apply to the program. You are eligible to apply as long as your hospital has a birthing center.

**When:** As of October 2024, the program has officially relaunched. Program updates will be shared online at the VDH website located here: [Breastfeeding Friendly Designation Program](#). You may find a link to the application on our website.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Are there any fees for hospitals that want to participate in the 5-Star Breastfeeding Friendly Designation Program?**

No! There are no fees associated with the Maternity Center Breastfeeding Friendly Designation Program.

### **Who can apply to the program?**

If your hospital provides birthing-services, you can apply for the Maternity Center Breastfeeding Friendly Designation Program.

### **Will VDH conduct site visits for the Breastfeeding-Friendly program?**

No, VDH will not be conducting site visits for the program. The application is a self-assessment.

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## **Where can I find instructions to complete the application?**

You can find the instructions to submitting an application here: [Application Process - Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation \(virginia.gov\)](https://www.virginia.gov/health/maternal-child/maternal-child-health/breastfeeding-friendly-designation)

## **What do I have to submit with my application?**

For hospitals that are not part of the Baby-Friendly USA Hospital Initiative, the application must be completed including supplemental documents that must be uploaded, with its submission. You will be asked for the contact information of those involved in the maternity unit at your facility.

For hospitals that are part of the Baby-Friendly USA Hospital Initiative, an expedited application can be submitted. Application requires proof of Baby-Friendly USA designation. Once received, the facility will automatically get a diamond designation from VDH.

Please note all applications will be submitted electronically using the online platform REDCap.

## **What is REDCap?**

REDCap is an online platform which we will be utilizing for application submission. You will be able to upload supporting documentation within REDCap.

## **How do I start the application for my hospital?**

The link to the application will be on the VDH website for the Maternity Center Breastfeeding Friendly Designation Program. You can begin your application at any time.

## **Do I have to complete the online application in one sitting?**

No, you can save your responses and return to your online application later in one of two ways:

(1) by bookmarking the tab that appears once you click “save and return later,” and clicking the “continue to survey” button on this page when you are ready to complete the application

(2) by entering your email address to receive a link which will take you back to your incomplete application and allow you to continue where you left off.

## **Do I have to complete the steps in order?**

No, you can choose what steps you’d like to complete, and fill out as many at a time as you’d like.

## **Will I need a new return link every time I reopen the application?**

No — you can use this original return link from the first time you clicked “save and return later,” even if you save and return multiple times.

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**Is the return link tied to my email address or can a coworker use it to access the online application?**

The return link is not connected to your email address. You can forward this link to colleagues who may be helping to complete the application.

**Does REDCap require a specific type of file to be uploaded?**

REDCap allows for commonly used file types to be uploaded, such as Word documents, PDF, and JPG.

**How can I get a copy of the application for my records?**

After you hit the submit button online, REDCap will give you an option to download a PDF of your application.

**When will application submissions be accepted?**

Applications will be accepted year-round. They will be reviewed twice a year in April and November by the Review Committee.

- To be eligible for application review in April, the application must be received by **April 1<sup>st</sup>**.
- To be eligible for application review in November, the application must be received by **November 1<sup>st</sup>**.

**How long will my maternity center designation last?**

Designation will last for three years following the initial designation that a hospital receives. For example, if a hospital is awarded bronze status in November of 2026, the designation will last until November of 2029. The same hospital may apply for and earn a silver designation in November of 2027. All steps would be up for reevaluation in November of 2029.

This allows the team at VDH to keep track of redesignation in a more sustainable way as the number of participating facilities increases over time.

**If my facility wants to reapply for a higher level of designation before our 3-year designation period ends, what is the process?**

If you submit an application for the two steps in November of 2025, and you receive designation for them but decide you would like to submit for another two steps in November 2026, you will need to start a new application using the original application link. You will only fill out the additional steps you are applying for. We will have your previous submission along with the initial designation on file.

**Does VDH provide materials to help promote a maternity center's status as Breastfeeding Friendly?**

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Facilities awarded designation will receive materials to promote their designation status, including a digital certificate of recognition. Facilities will also receive a file of downloadable medals for the award they have earned.

In addition, facilities earning any of the five levels of designation will be recognized on the Virginia Department of Health website.

If you have further questions, please contact Fahimah Zaman at [Fahimah.Zaman@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Fahimah.Zaman@vdh.virginia.gov)