



## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### Black River Hospital is the Seventh Hospital to be Certified Baby Friendly

The Black River Hospital (BRH) in St. Elizabeth has become the seventh public hospital in Jamaica to be internationally certified as a Baby Friendly Hospital.

To be baby friendly means giving every baby the best start in life by creating a healthcare environment that supports breastfeeding. This is in keeping with the global campaign established to prepare health systems and mobilise healthcare workers to protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

Black River Hospital now joins six other certified Baby Friendly Hospitals including the Princess Margaret Hospital in St. Thomas, the Alexandria Community Hospital in St. Ann, the Port Antonio Hospital in Portland, the Port Maria Hospital in St. Mary, the Lionel Town Hospital in Clarendon and the Mandeville Regional Hospital in Manchester.

Minister of Health & Wellness, Dr. Christopher Tufton who delivered the keynote address at the certification ceremony on Thursday, September 7 noted that the baby friendly designation programme has been successful.

“While we are in a working progress, this is a successful initiative that has been taken seriously, compliments to UNICEF, WHO and PAHO as the key multilateral partners and the local team. We have partnered because we recognize the importance of maternal care and baby friendly care in our institutions and the results are there to show” the Health & Wellness Minister said.

He added that: “It is not as easy as it seems, baby friendly is a nice buzz word but to actually get the stamp of approval there are a lot of things that you have to do. There is a lot of training that has to take place, a lot of infrastructural adjustments and those things require time, effort and resources, mostly a commitment to the cause. That commitment can only

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**Chairman: Wayne Chen; Vice Chairman:** Michael Stern, **Board Members:** Lorraine Green Mason, Marcus Greenwood, Stafford Houghton, Winston Maragh, Dr. Lloyd Reynolds, Albert Williams, Omar Miller, Dave Powell, **Permanent Secretary’s Nominee:** Dr. Naydene Williams, **Regional Director and Secretary:** Michael Bent; **Regional Technical Director:** Dr. Vitillius Holder; **CEO, Mandeville Regional Hospital:** Alwyn Miller; **SMO, Mandeville Regional Hospital:** Dr. Everton McIntosh

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come from a recognition that there is the need to achieve this.”

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Minister Tufton pointed out that the baby friendly programme is also part of the Government's drive to provide a framework that enables mothers to acquire the skills they need to breastfeed exclusively for the first six months, followed by complementary foods and continued breastfeeding for two years and beyond.

“This programme saves lives. The international data around the baby friendly concept is that it saves nearly a million lives annually, the global statistics says. For breastfeeding, it also reduces health risks like breast cancer. Those are scientific studies that have concluded on this, so we must take this programme seriously” Minister Tufton added.

For her part, Ms. Novia Condell, Health Specialist at UNICEF, who represented Ms. Olga Isaza, the UNICEF Representative in Jamaica noted that UNICEF's country programme in Jamaica has supported the expansion of the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative for many years.

“In 2019, our efforts with the Health Ministry resulted in an increase from one to five Baby Friendly Certified Hospitals and with today's certification of the BRH, Jamaica now has seven Baby Friendly Hospitals and that is a massive achievement. Coming from our last mixed survey (which is several years ago), on average, Jamaican mothers only exclusively for about three weeks and among infants under six months old, only 23.8 percent are exclusively breastfed. It's going to be a long road to improving these numbers but with the kind of commitment and tenacity that we are seeing here today in Black River, we can do it” Ms. Condell said.

The Baby friendly Hospital Initiative was launched in 1991 as a global campaign to prepare health systems and mobilise healthcare workers to protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

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Picture 1



Minister of Health & Wellness, Dr. Christopher Tufton (4<sup>th</sup> left) is photographed with (left to right): Parish Manager for the St. Elizabeth Health Services, Mr. Sean Brissett; CEO for the BRH, Mrs. Diana Brown-Miller; Acting Regional Director for the Southern Regional Health Authority, Mrs. Herschel Ismail; Health Specialist at UNICEF, Ms. Novia Condell; Assistant Nutritionist at the St. Elizabeth Health Department, Mrs. Tracia Gayle; Director, Health Promotion & Protection in the Ministry of Health & Wellness, Dr. Simone Spence and Consultant Paediatrician at the BRH, Dr. Aggrey Sajabi, following the baby friendly certification ceremony for the BRH.

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Picture 2



Director, Health Promotion & Protection in the Ministry of Health & Wellness, Dr. Simone Spence (right) presents an award to Inservice Officer and Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative Coordinator at the BRH, Mrs. Dorcia Brown-Lyle for her role in the successful certification of baby friendly status for the Black River Hospital.

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