

AmaMantando

A Latina Breastfeeding Support Group

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that infants be exclusively breastfed for at least six months and encourages breastfeeding, if mutually desired by mother and child, for two years or more¹. While breastfeeding offers a variety of health benefits for mom and baby, disparities exist among Latina women due to cultural and social barriers around initiating and continuing breastfeeding.

To address these barriers, the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan (NKFM), created AmaMantando. AmaMantando, meaning breastfeeding, is a culturally inclusive breastfeeding support group for current and future breastfeeding Latina mothers.

Meeting once a month, virtually, AmaMantando participants learn about the benefits of breastfeeding and common challenges, like not producing enough milk, growth spurts, and the mother's emotional ups and downs while breastfeeding.



“Cultural customs are powerful forces. They have deep roots and long lives. They persist, generation after generation, virtually intact, even as the economic and social and demographic conditions that spawned them have vanished, and they play such a role in directing attitudes and behavior that we cannot make sense of our world without them.”

-Malcom Gladwell, Journalist

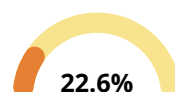
Public Health Challenge^{2, 3, 4, 5}



Less than **1 out of 5** US Latina mothers breastfeed their infants exclusively. While Latina women have the highest initiation rates out of all racial and ethnic groups, they have the lowest continuation rates.



85%, or **17 out of 20**, of US Latina mothers supplemented their breastmilk with formula by 5 months. They are also more likely to introduce formula at 2 days old compared to any other group of women. Supplementing is a culturally embedded practice called *las dos cosas*, meaning "both things".



In 2020, only **22.6%** of moms in Michigan received breastfeeding information from support groups.



There is an **absence** of cultural and linguistic support and community trust in Wayne County that make it more difficult for Latina mothers to meet the AAP recommendations.

“There is little, if any, cultural and linguistic support for pregnant and breastfeeding Latina mothers in Western Wayne County. Many community-based organizations serving local Latinx families have expressed they need more to support breastfeeding mothers throughout their journey. They just don't have the staff, the time, or the money to offer training for current staff to become breastfeeding support lay educators. AmaMantando is lifting that weight and is becoming a safe, welcoming, and reliable space for Latina women.”

-Marolyn Valenzuela, Program Specialist, NKFM

Approach in Establishing AmaMantando

Identify the Need

- Conduct community health needs assessment
- Hold community conversations
- Gain support from community organizations

Plan

- Assess data
- Identify core values
- Build partnerships with community organizations
 - Brilliant Detroit
 - St. Mary Parish

Build Support Team

- Hire breastfeeding lay educator
- Provide training to 2 lay health educators to serve as peer support group facilitators

Policy, Systems, & Environmental Changes

ENVIRONMENTAL:

Establish breastfeeding-friendly space at St. Mary Parish in their Health and Wellbeing Room.

SYSTEMS:

Create referral systems among community organizations, FQHCs, and community groups.

Key Outcomes



4 out of 5 participants said **Yes, always** to:

At AmaMantando, I have experienced a safe and supportive environment where I can discuss common concerns, challenges, and self-care tips in my breastfeeding journey.

4 out of 5 participants said **Yes** to:

Would you advise or invite a friend who is pregnant or breastfeeding to join a breastfeeding support group?

4 out of 5 participants said **Yes, always** to:

Listening to other mothers and their experiences has helped me stay focused on my breastfeeding journey.

4 out of 5 participants said **Yes** to:

Does AmaMantando have an appropriate approach to your cultural and linguistic needs (language).

“I joined [AmaMantando] when I was pregnant after hearing a friend talk about it. I didn't think about breastfeeding; I was going to give formula. I didn't know anything about breastfeeding, so I thought "what do I have to lose?"

After giving birth, the pediatrician and lactation consultant pushed me to give my baby formula because it was "easier". I remembered what I had learned [from AmaMantando]: anyone can breastfeed, you just have to try. My baby is now 3 months and has only received breastmilk. It was hard in the beginning, but this group encouraged me to keep going. I even have a freezer full of milk because of the education and materials I received here.

[AmaMantando] teaches you so much. You never stop learning here, no matter how long you've been breastfeeding. You're reminded you're not alone, that it's not easy, but you can do it. You learn what you are going through is normal. There is no judgment, you can ask any question, and everyone gives you support."

-Erika Sanchez, program participant

Sustaining Success

Through our partnership with Brilliant Detroit, we have established relationships with the families they are currently serving.

A site coordinator at Brilliant Detroit has created a system to refer mothers to AmaMantando. Because they work in and identify with the Latino community, they have provided best practices on how to communicate with Latina women, including using WhatsApp to share support group information and suggestions on what to include in registration forms to create an inclusive, welcoming environment.

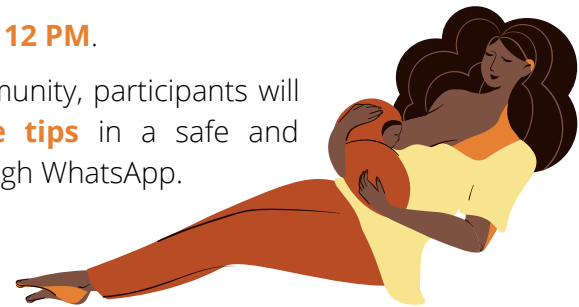
NKFM is drafting sustainability plans for AmaMantando, including training community members to be breastfeeding lay educators, transferring the group to Brilliant Detroit, and promoting the breastfeeding space at St. Mary Parish in Wayne.

A Call-to-Action for Latina Women

AmaMantando meets virtually on the **third Wednesday of every month** at **12 PM**.

Together, with a breastfeeding peer educator and other moms in the community, participants will navigate common **breastfeeding concerns, challenges, and self-care tips** in a safe and supportive environment. Support is available in Spanish, by phone, and through WhatsApp.

Participants can visit reachhealthmi.org/support-group to register.



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REACHHealthMI.org

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