Hmong Women DO Breastfeed!

Changing the narrative on Hmong breastfeeding
Hmong women have always breastfed
The Motherland

- Hmong are a collective society
- Agriculture
- Babies were taken with mothers to the fields or stayed home with caregivers
- Babies breastfed or wet-nursed
- “Yog tsis muaj mis ni am me nyuam tsis loj hlob” (without breastmilk babies can’t grow)
Refugees in Northern Thailand

- Many Hmong escaped to Thailand
- Lived in refugee camps (how many were there and who they lived with)
- Babies breastfed and wet nursed
- Babies stayed with mothers

Courtesy of Yang family
Life in Asmesliskas (America)

- Many Hmong immigrated to US
- “Americans don’t breastfeed”
- “Breastfeeding is ‘backwards’”
- Reported nurses or doctors did not ask if wanted to breastfeed
- Work or school - formula is more convenient
- Decline in breastfeeding
Breastmilk and breastfeeding are IMPORTANT to the Hmong.
Many Hmong believe breastmilk

- “Powerful”
  - Healing ceremonies
  - Lightning belief
- Nourishes - “giving your child life”
- “The children I breastfed are more obedient and patient with me compared to the children I didn’t breastfeed.”

Courtesy of MDH WIC Program
A lot of people think I’m crazy for breastfeeding all my children. But when they see how much and how well they’ve grown, they see that it was the best choice. I’m proud to be Hmong American and breastfeed, making it norm again for my fellow sisters.

Loving this! I understand it’s not always easy for everyone to achieve this, but raising awareness on the benefits of nursing in the Hmong community will help normalize the breast and encourage our sisters to pursue this beautiful journey.
How does supporting Hmong breastfeeding look?
1. **Change** the narrative on Hmong breastfeeding

2. **Include** Hmong pregnant women, mothers, fathers, and elders in breastfeeding outreach and education

3. **Amplify** Hmong breastfeeding stories

4. **Support** Hmong lactation consultant education
Thank you!