



# Breastfeeding and Criminalized Women

## **Breastfeeding is challenging for criminalized and incarcerated women because:**

- 90% of incarcerated women experienced childhood sexual and physical trauma
- Most incarcerated women experience addiction and mental illness
- Indigenous women and women of colour are vastly overincarcerated in Canada
- Incarceration creates administrative and infrastructural barriers to breastfeeding

## **Breastfeeding is valuable for criminalized and incarcerated women because:**

- It is a protective factor against peripartum mental illness and chronic diseases
- It is the recommended method of feeding for infants with neonatal abstinence syndrome
- It builds self-esteem and personal agency
- It supports bonding with the infant and development of attachment

## **Laws protect the right to breastfeed. Advocate for your patients by knowing what applies:**

- The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms equality provisions
- Provincial and federal corrections legislation
- Human rights codes
- International law including the Nelson Mandela Rules and The Bangkok Rules

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Wellness Within is a volunteer-based registered non-profit organization that serves women, transgender, and nonbinary people who have experienced criminalization and are pregnant or have young children in Nova Scotia, part of the unceded and unsurrendered ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

Wellness Within supports people through the full spectrum of reproductive health experience; facilitates workshops and education sessions; develops resource materials; and advocates for reproductive justice issues.