Abstract

Adolescent mothers in the state of Alaska have been less likely to initiate and continue breastfeeding compared to older mothers. This thesis practicum examined what influenced the infant feeding decision for adolescent mothers. The Social Cognitive Theory and the Theory of Breastfeeding Self-Efficacy were used to guide the design, data collection, and analysis for this study. Key informant interviews with Internationally Board Certified Lactation Consultants were conducted to collect data. The study found that the previously identified breastfeeding antecedents of maternal education, influential friends and family, and physiological factors impact the infant feeding decision for teen mothers. Cultivating breastfeeding allies as well as providing more professional development opportunities centered on adolescent development will help families and lactation consultants better support teen mothers. The knowledge gained from this thesis practicum can help shape the education for key family members as well as the professional development opportunities for lactation consultants.