

Barriers to Nourishing Babies in Appalachia

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APPALACHIAN

BREASTFEEDING NETWORK

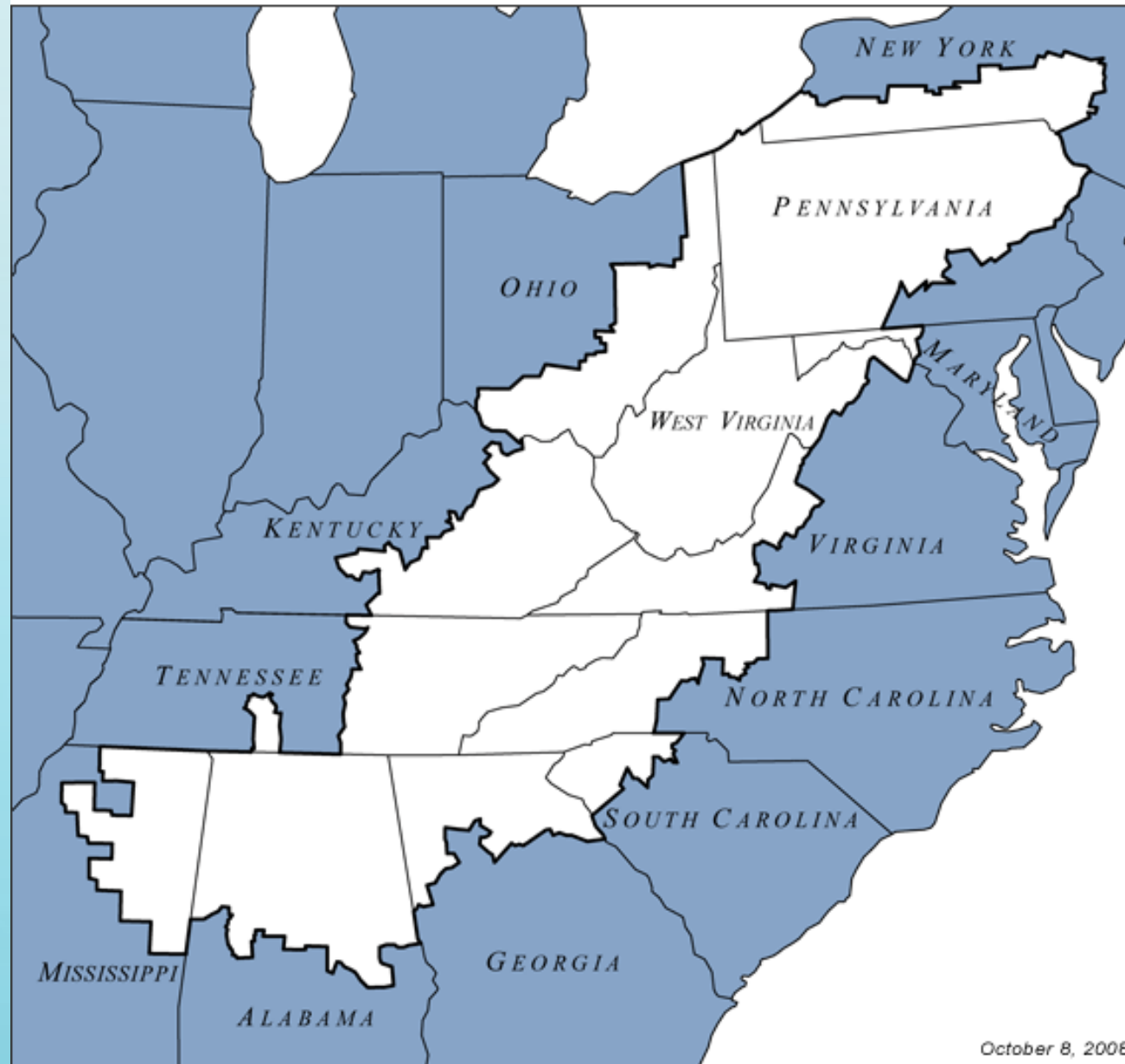
Disclosure

- I am the founder and president of Appalachian Breastfeeding Network. I will be discussing this organization within the context of the presentation.

What is considered Appalachia?

“Appalachia is a cultural region in the Eastern United States that stretches from the Southern Tier of New York to northern Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia. While the Appalachian Mountains stretch from Belle Isle (Newfoundland and Labrador) in Canada to Cheaha Mountain in Alabama, *the cultural region of Appalachia typically refers only to the central and southern portions of the range.* As of the 2010 United States Census, the region was home to approximately 25 million people” (Appalachia, 2017).

The Appalachian Region



October 8, 2008

Source: Appalachian Regional Commission

Stigma attached to Appalachian Americans

- Hillbillies
- Rednecks
- Uneducated
- Dumb
- Poor
- Dirty
- Unhealthy

Real Appalachian Traits

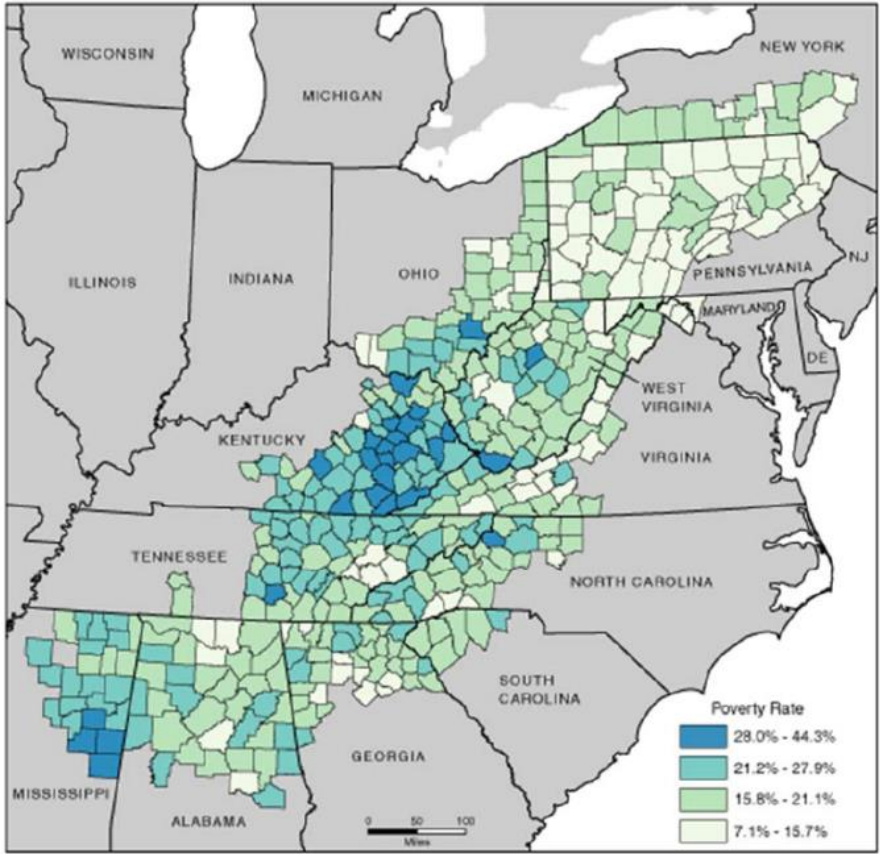
- Proud
- Religious
- Neighborly
- Family Centered
- Modest
- Patriotic
- Personable
- Loves “back home”
- Sense of beauty and humor

The Health Gap in Appalachia

- The health gap in Appalachia is NOT getting better, in fact studies show the health gap is widening with higher rates of:
 - Infant mortality
 - Smoking
 - Obesity
 - Drug overdoses
 - Early death by motor vehicle
- The rural characteristic gets blamed for the health gap. However, Appalachians will travel hours to get the correct care.
- “The communities need better higher-education opportunities and infrastructure improvements, such as improved roadways so patients can more easily get to larger towns and cities to access health care” (Connor, 2017).
- Poverty drives non-improved areas.
- Food insecurity is a common theme in our poverty dense areas.

Poverty Rates are higher in Appalachian counties.

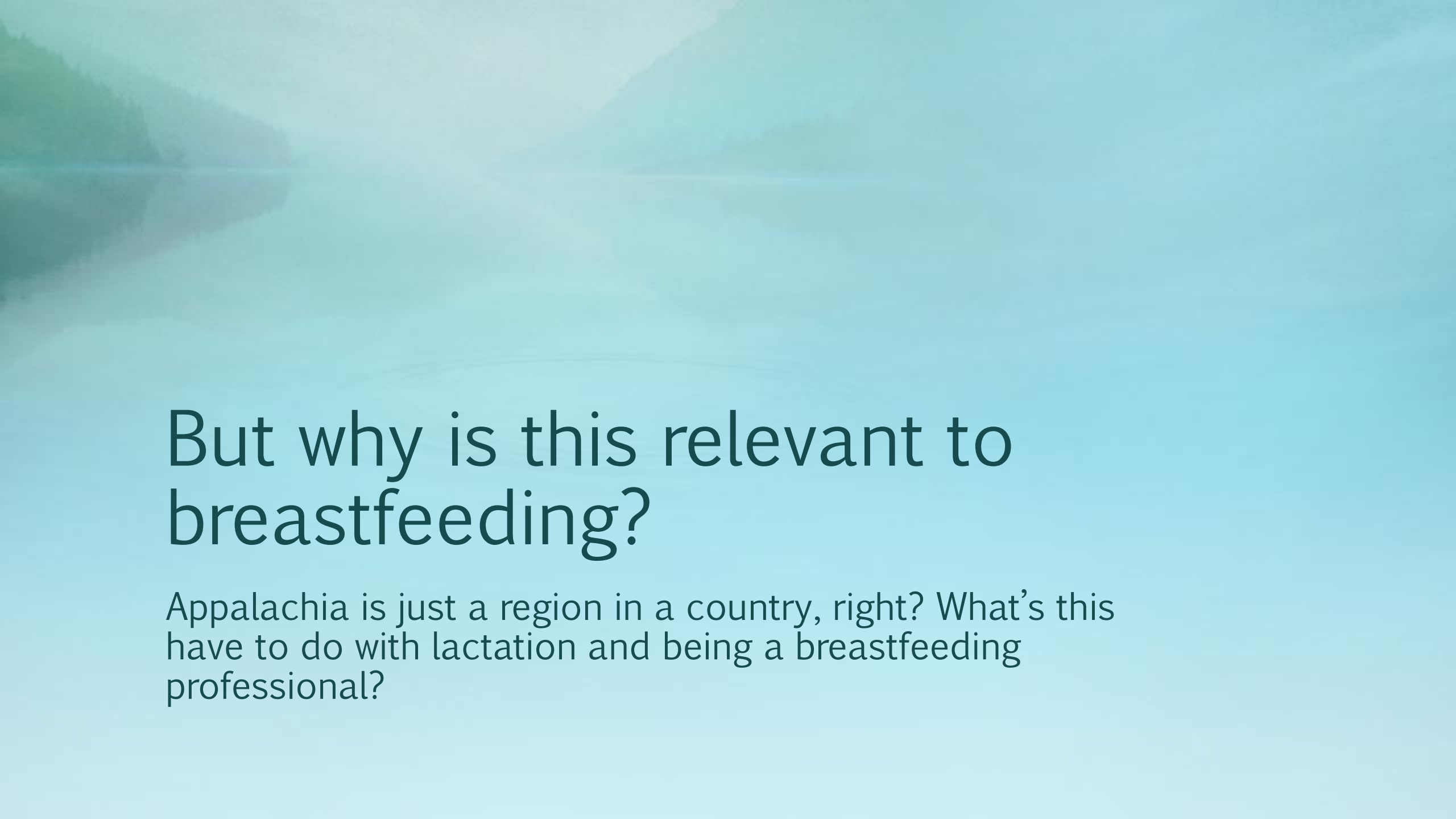
APPENDIX EXHIBIT 1: Poverty Rates in Appalachia, 2010-2014 (US Average = 15.6%; Appalachian Average = 17.2%)



Courtesy of Health Affairs

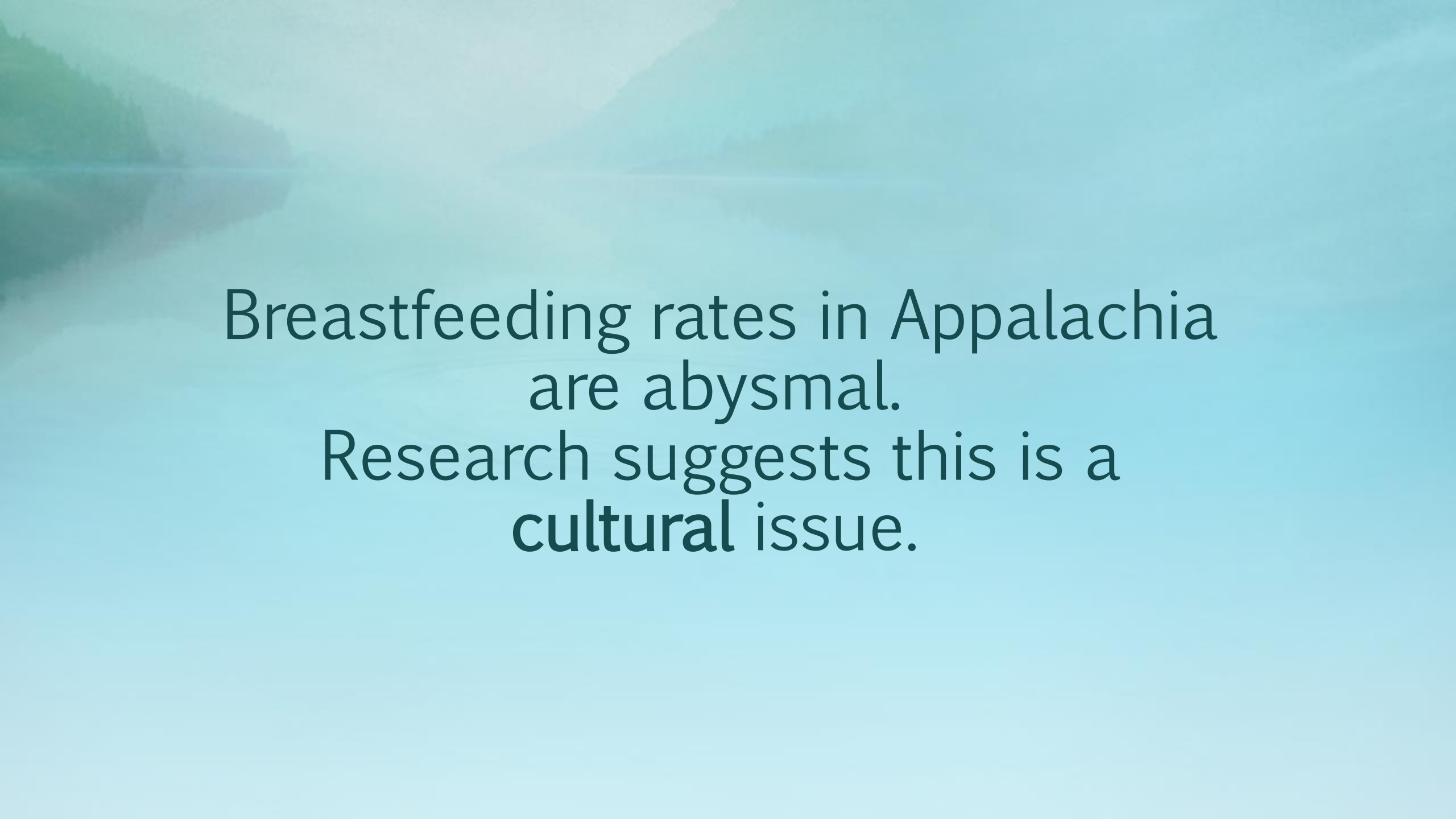
Food Insecurity

- These impoverished areas in Appalachia are facing a food insecurity crisis; especially for the children of Appalachia.
- The rise of the drug epidemic is taking more food out of the children's homes and into drugs – leaving children uncared for at an alarming rate.
- Drug overdoses and infant mortality are continuing to be on the rise in Appalachian communities.

A misty, teal-toned landscape with mountains and a lake. The scene is hazy and atmospheric, with the mountains and water reflecting the soft light. The overall color palette is a range of blues and greens, creating a calm and serene mood.

But why is this relevant to breastfeeding?

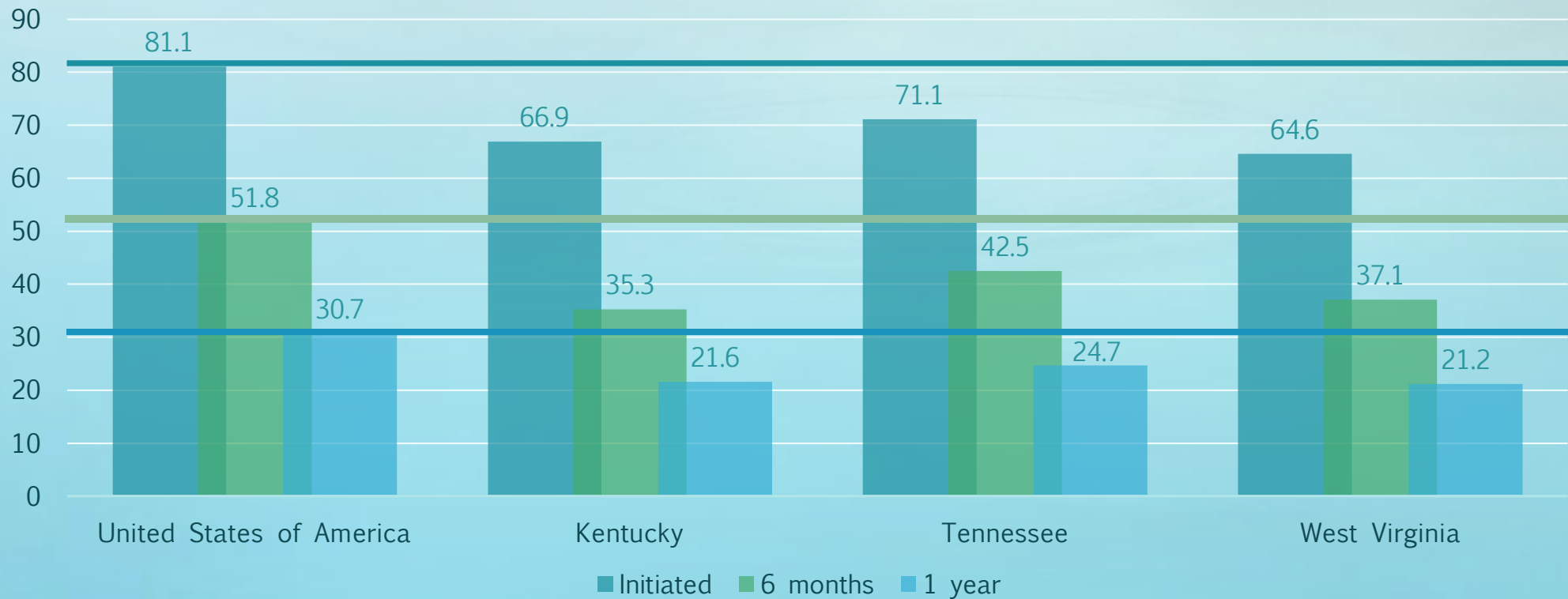
Appalachia is just a region in a country, right? What's this have to do with lactation and being a breastfeeding professional?

A misty, blue-toned landscape of a river valley with mountains in the background. The scene is serene and atmospheric, with the river reflecting the surrounding environment. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Breastfeeding rates in Appalachia
are abysmal.
Research suggests this is a
cultural issue.

Breastfeeding Statistics

2016 CDC Breastfeeding Rates in Appalachian Regions compared to all of United States



<https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/pdf/2016breastfeedingreportcard.pdf>

Most frequently cited reasons for lack of breastfeeding initiation from Appalachian Ohio WIC research

- Lack of **family support** most frequently cited
- In related answers “a” means related to mother, “b” means related to baby.
- Unpublished research study from 2016.

Knisley, L. & Rogers, N. (2016) *Barriers to Breastfeeding in a Formula Feeding Culture*. Ohio Department of Health. Unpublished Research.

Reason Cited	Frequency	Related Answers
Lack of Family Support	15	A
Lack of BF education, knowledge, information	12	B
Inaccurate BF info/myths	8	B
Lack of support from medical workers	7	A
Public stigma/negativity	7	
Inadequate Support	7	A
Physicians “pushing” formula	6	
Moms too busy	6	
Inadequate support from friends/peer	5	A

Appalachian families have always been known to be **large** and connected.



Niedermeyer, P. (2016). Vintage Photography: The People and the Cars of the Cornett Family, As Shot by William Gedney in 1964 and 1972. Retrieved from: <http://www.curbsideclassic.com/blog/photography/cc-vintage-photography-the-people-and-cars-of-the-cornett-family-as-shot-by-william-gedney-in-1964-and-1972/>

Importance of Family

- “Mountain families are typically large. The custom of settling close to kin has made each little valley the domain of a single family. It is not unusual today to find families with four generations living side by side.”¹
- Many families live in the “holler” or it can be typical for large families to live all on the same road in the same town.
- Therefore, **family support is crucial** during any activity, specifically speaking towards breastfeeding support.

¹ Mountain T.O.P. (n.d.) Appalachian Culture. Retrieved from <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mountain-top.org%2Ffiles%2Fforms%2FAppalachian%2520Culture.doc>

Generational Gap

- Slower generational gap than the rest of the country – even a decline in the younger generation staying in Appalachia.

What does this mean?

- More “we’ve always done it this way” mentalities
- Less diverse viewpoints, making diverse families receive unfit care
- Less equity in the workplace
- More “Appalachian migration” – outlying cities less educated on Appalachian values

Fatalistic Society



Appalachian people tend to think all things are **predetermined**, including their health.

Mentioning breastfeeding benefits to someone with a fatalistic attitude could be moot.

Factors that affect breastfeeding such as smoking, diet, caffeine intake, etc. are high in this area due to fatalistic opinions about their health.

Lack of Support from Medical Workers and Government

Nursing staff in Appalachian areas are mostly non-supportive of breastfeeding, due to lack of education or knowledge on breastfeeding, not because of malicious intent (mostly).

Incorrect information means incorrect guidance to the new mother; causing early weaning, high supplementation in hospital

Grant funding usually is determined by population rather than need.

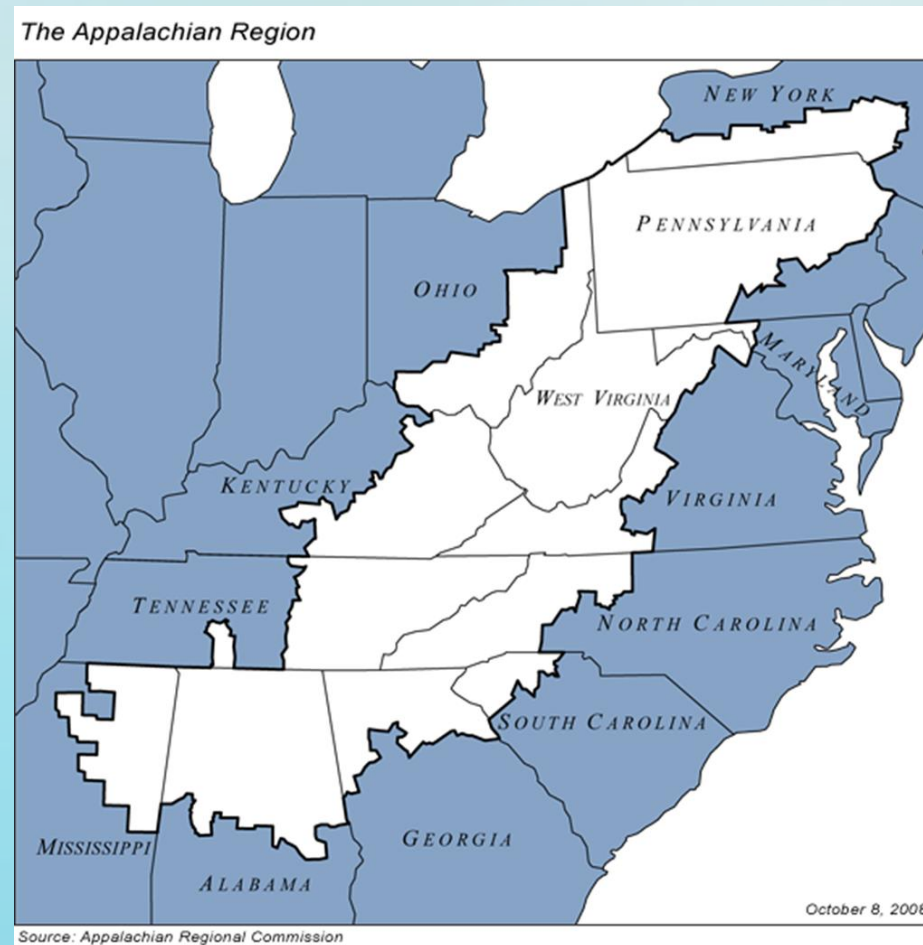
Lack of Lactation Staff

In many rural areas of Appalachia, little to no lactation staff is available.

In many cases, one lactation professional is available for many counties and many women are unaware if there are lactation services in their area.

Many areas have WIC breastfeeding support staff, however each state allocates their breastfeeding peer counselors differently. Many rural counselors have minimal hours (ex. 10/week).

How many Baby Friendly Hospitals are in Appalachia?



15/440 Baby Friendly hospitals in the United States are in Appalachia. = 3%.

West Virginia only has 1 Baby-Friendly Hospital in the entire state! Designated in 2017.

Modest Society

- Embarrassed
- Breasts only viewed as sexual objects
- Breastfeeding should only be done behind closed doors.
- Gray (2010) states, “Respondents corroborate this with their recurring description of not being “comfortable” with breastfeeding, and over half describe being embarrassed at the thought of breastfeeding in public. One client responds: “I chose not to feed my baby by breastmilk because I have no desire to have my baby suck on my breast at anytime. I feel embarrassed and odd.” This expectation, that the sexual function of breast retains cultural capital, contributes to the next expectation—that infants be fed with a bottle, particularly in public.”

Poor Societal Attitudes

Appalachian families are known to be hard workers and from poor areas or poor generations before them.

Formula is considered a medical advancement that only those that are well off can afford, therefore using formula can be seen as a “cultural power code” (Gray, 2010).

“Several cultural expectations/ends emerge from this study’s results: mothers will return to work, preferably six (6) weeks postpartum; the breast remains a sexual object; infants should only bottle feed, especially in public; and mothers who *try* breastfeeding will most often not produce enough milk to nourish their babies” (Gray, 2010).

Hard Workers

- Women are expected to go back to work and earn money for their families.
- Because of the intense poverty in this region and the sense of Appalachian pride, going back to work heavily outweighs breastfeeding a baby.
- Encouragement from family to quit = triple whammy of Appalachian traits

Poverty + Pride + Lack of Family Support = weaning and supplementation of infant formula



APPALACHIAN

BREASTFEEDING NETWORK

What can we do?

How to empower and educate Appalachian women

Appalachian Breastfeeding Network's Mission

“To work towards transformation of breastfeeding culture in Appalachia by providing empowerment and education to increase access to care.”



Empower

Women in Appalachia still are treated as “second class” -
Empower Mom Movement

They need to be informed and educated about their birth
and infant feeding choices, which will empower them to
take hone of their own healthcare

Give all women a voice in Appalachia

Educate

Do not use Centering Pregnancy Patient Care with Appalachian families (Phillippi, 2013).

Do not assume family dynamics.

Encourage Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative in Appalachian hospitals.

Appalachian Breastfeeding Network's Hospital Education Initiative – Education that is specific to the food insecurity crisis in Appalachia, including NAS

Annual Appalachian Breastfeeding Conference in October

- This year in Glouster, Ohio – October 12, 2018.

Educate more lactation staff

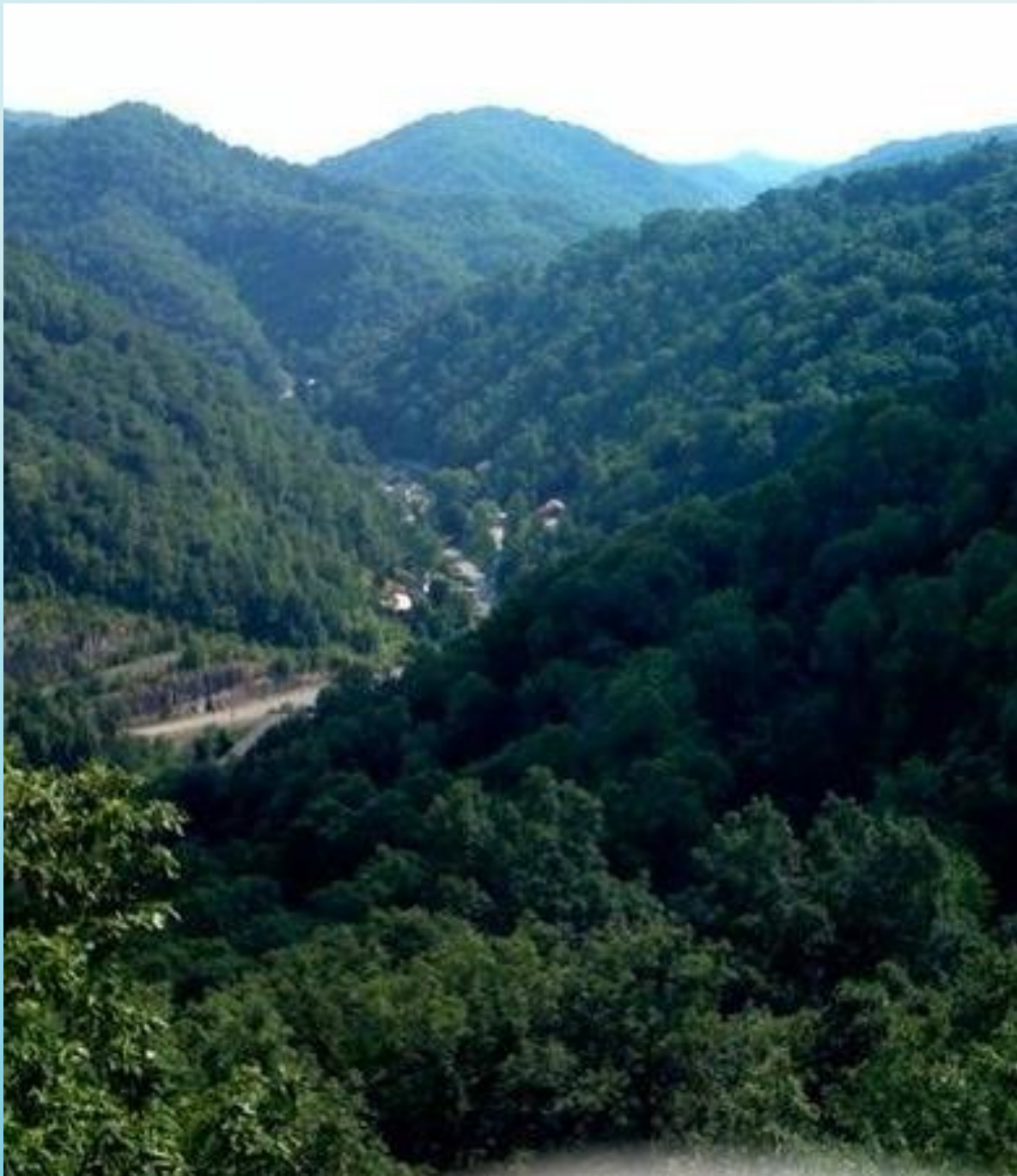
- WVBA is offering CLC training for \$185 in May.
- ABN is offering two scholarships for POC or breastfeeding peer helpers/counselors in Appalachia, or outlier counties for any lactation education and/or IBLCE exam fees.
- Amber Sheeks partnered with Linda Smith to offer Lactation Management Exam Prep course for Athens, OH in May.
- WV home visitor education program with partnership between ABN, WV Perinatal Partnership, and WVBA.

Utilizing Social Media

The use of social media can either help or hurt breastfeeding support matters. In many cases family/friends giving outdated and incorrect info.

Using social media to spread educational information and empowerment posts helps to normalize breastfeeding.

Social media campaigns have heavily increased breastfeeding support hotline calls for Appalachian Breastfeeding Network.



Our mountains are full of families that deserve the quality of care the rest of the nation receives.

A Hidden America: Children of the Mountains

Diane Sawyer – 20/20



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Appalachian Breastfeeding Network on Facebook and Twitter

Empower Mom Movement on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram