



WHAT IS FIRST BREATH?

First Breath is a program that **helps people make positive changes** to their tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, and other substance use during pregnancy and beyond. First Breath started in 2001 as an evidence-based tobacco treatment program.

Over the past **20+ years**, the program has grown and adapted to meet the needs of pregnant people and families throughout Wisconsin. After many years of development and testing, in 2022 First Breath expanded its services to address all perinatal substance use.

HOW DOES FIRST BREATH WORK?



FIRST BREATH PROVIDERS

First Breath trains health professionals to use the **Ask-Advise-Refer model** to address perinatal substance use as part of existing perinatal care. Providers use a validated tool to assess for use, provide a brief intervention, and then submit a referral to First Breath.



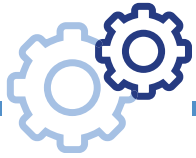
FIRST BREATH HEALTH EDUCATORS

From there, First Breath's team of highly trained, locally based Health Educators provide **comprehensive services** to help participants stop or reduce their use of tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, and other substances. Services are participant-centered and use a strengths-based, harm reduction approach.

These services include:

- ✓ Individualized, one-on-one education and counseling (up to 13 sessions)
- ✓ Text message support
- ✓ Caregiver/family support
- ✓ Long-term engagement





UTILIZATION & REACH

PROVIDERS



93

New

SITES



299

Total

100% county coverage

(at least one site in each county)



13

New

OUTREACH



26

Total

Outreach events were facilitated

REFERRALS

699 pregnant, postpartum, and caregiving individuals were referred to First Breath.

- 651 pregnant and postpartum people
- 48 caregivers

INTENSIVE SERVICES

194 of the referred individuals received intensive 1:1 services. Health Educators completed **1,149** counseling sessions, including **365** face-to-face sessions and **793** phone calls.

TEXTING PROGRAM

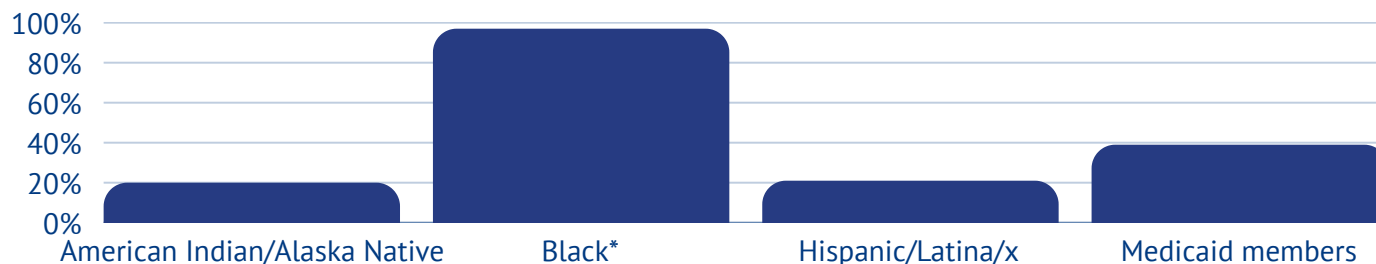
560 of the referred individuals enrolled in the texting programs.

- 524 new pregnant and postpartum people
- 36 support people

At year-end, **4,157** pregnant and postpartum people and **368** caregivers were subscribed to the texting programs.

FIRST BREATH REACH (TOBACCO ONLY)

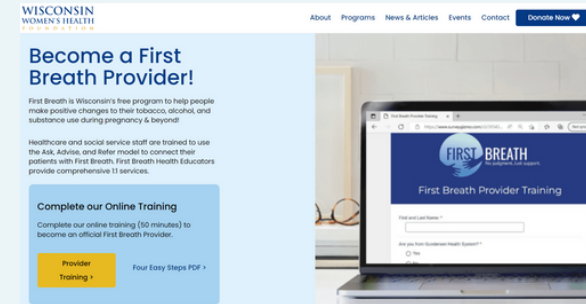
First Breath calculates an approximate "reach rate" for pregnant tobacco users. Reach rate is the number of First Breath referrals received in a given year (2025: 651) divided by the total number of pregnant people who use tobacco in the state, based on the most recent birth certificate data (2024: 2,020). In 2025, **First Breath reached approximately 32% of all pregnant tobacco users in Wisconsin.** To ensure equitable access to First Breath, reach rates are also calculated for priority populations (below).



*2024 WISH data reported far fewer pregnant tobacco users than previous years. The data provided may not include vaping rates.

2025 First Breath Provider Onboarding training responses:

- **93 providers** completed the training.
- **97% were satisfied** with the training.
- **98% were confident** in their ability to implement First Breath.



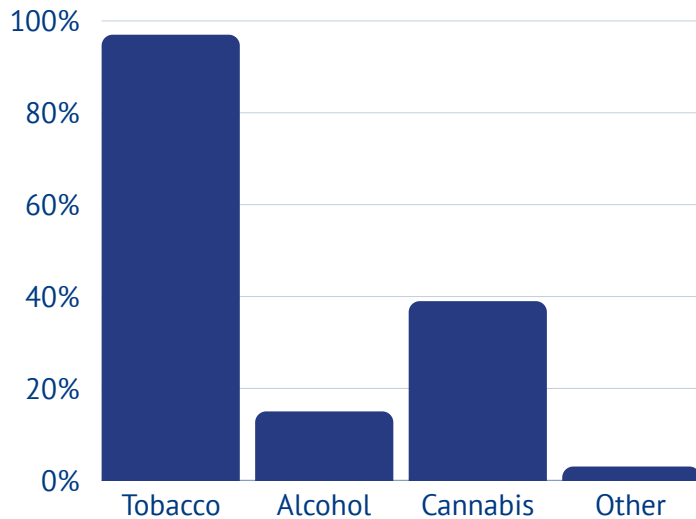
providefirstbreath.org



INTENSIVE SERVICES

FIRST BREATH PARTICIPANTS

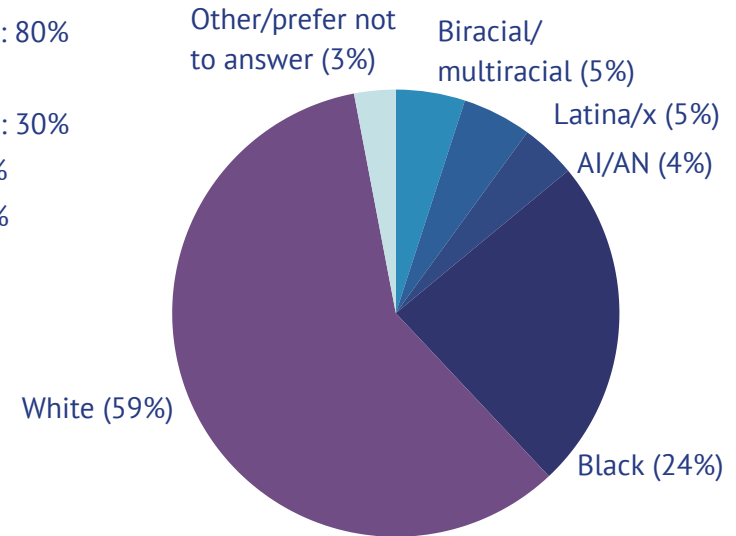
Substance Use At Enrollment (n=219)



Socio-demographics (n=219)

- Has a mental health disorder diagnosis: 80%
- Has a perinatal mood disorder: 30%
- Has a substance use disorder diagnosis: 30%
- Household income above \$50,000: 16%
- Household income below \$29,999: 67%
- Unemployed: 42%
- Medicaid member: 79%
- WIC participant: 57%
- Low social support: 19%
- High stress: 49%

Race/Ethnicity (n=219)



FIRST BREATH PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

By the end of their pregnancies:

77% of tobacco users (n=91) made positive changes

- 33% Quit/Stayed Quit
- 40% Cut down

93% of alcohol users (n=91) made positive changes

- 93% Quit/Stayed Quit
- 0% Cut Down

64% of cannabis users (n=28) made positive changes

- 39% Quit/Stayed Quit
- 25% Cut Down



By six months postpartum:

72% of tobacco users (n=64) made positive changes

- 39% Quit/Stayed Quit
- 33% Cut down

9% of alcohol users (n=45) made positive changes

- 9% Quit/Stayed Quit
- 0% Cut Down

55% of cannabis users (n=18) made positive changes

- 33% Quit/Stayed Quit
- 22% Cut Down



72%
achieved smoke-free homes

91%
achieved zero infant exposure to tobacco smoke



FEEDBACK

ANNUAL PROVIDER SURVEY

71 First Breath Providers completed an annual program survey.



99%

Say that First Breath materials and services are appropriate for the communities they serve



86%

Are satisfied with the communication, technical assistance, and support from First Breath



97%

Report that they are comfortable referring patients to First Breath

Provider Quotes:

I believe it is important to refer families to First Breath because this program has been around for years and is based on scientific evidence.

It's nice to know that people can get help for all substance and not just tobacco. It's opened the door to help for many of my clients.

PARTICIPANT ADVISORY GROUP (PAG)

30 current and past participants took part in the virtual participant advisory group. In the survey, they 1) shared in-depth, real life experiences on influences of their mental health, 2) described barriers to accessing mental health resources, and 3) provided topics for mental health support they would like from First Breath.

PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION SURVEY

26 First Breath Participants completed a satisfaction survey.



100%

Rated First Breath "very good" or "excellent"



97%

Would recommend First Breath to others



96%

Learned new skills to help them quit



96%

Learned new information



97%

Said First Breath helped them quit

Participant Quotes:

It was just nice to have a person to support me in this area only and to give me a different perspective.

My HE has been incredible to me and such a great girl to talk too, she actually changed my life around. I quit drinking and smoking pot my last pregnancy (with her help) and now I'm over 8 months sober. Vaping is cut back a lot more, but vaping is hard to quit without my HE I'd be suffering so much mentally she has honestly been my biggest help and support for quitting all the negativity in my life.

The information that was provided to me actually helped me quit.

I learned to take pride in myself for being able to cut down on smoking and not feel bad.

Read participant success stories at www.hf.org/firstbreath