

Jan 2026

Polar Bear Care HIE Hold-A-Thon

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NEWBORN BRAIN
SOCIETY

HOPE
for HIE

Agenda

1. Holding during TH
2. Hold-a-thon Overview
3. Timeline & Commitment
4. Toolkit Resources
5. Next Steps and Questions

Holding During TH

NBS Advocacy Project 2025 - 2026



Holding During TH

Inaugural advocacy project
for NBS focusing on
holding during TH

Review publication • NBS webinars • Advocacy campaign • Hold-a-thon

VISION

A future in which care for newborns treated with therapeutic hypothermia includes safe, trauma-informed opportunities for holding that support newborns and their families and that foster bonding.

MISSION

To advocate and educate about safe and trauma-informed, family-centered practices for holding newborns during treatment with therapeutic hypothermia.

Benefits

PARENT

- Improved mood
- Reduced depressive symptoms
- Enhanced stress regulation
- Enhanced bonding and attachment
- More sensitive caregiving responses

INFANT

- Somatosensory stimulation and opportunities for face-to-face interaction
- Supporting newborn sleep organization, temperature and heart rate regulation
- Reduced crying and pain scores
- Improved attachment quality, and socio-emotional development later in infancy

Safety

Carefully supervised holding can be performed without

1. Clinically significant rewarming
2. Temperature instability
3. Adverse events such as central line or endotracheal tube dislodgement

Standardized protocols are important

Barriers & Solutions

Institution

- Lack of nationally endorsed guidelines > develop local protocols & collect data
- Physical space constraints > adapt equipment/spaces

Clinician

- Perception of risk/benefit > education on published data & trauma informed care
- Staffing requirements > flexible staffing protocols & minimum staff requirements
- Absence of protocols for safe transfer > hands on practice

Parent

- Stress, trauma & fear > trauma-informed care, peer support services, & education
- Competing obligations > engagement of SW & other support services

Hold-A-Thon Overview

What is a hold-a-thon?

A “hold-a-thon” is a structured, unit-wide initiative designed to promote and normalize holding by providing standardized clinical support, staff engagement, and cultural reinforcement of family-centered care



Historically has focused on preterm infants with kangaroo care

Polar Bear Care

Nurse-led, trauma-informed
holding protocol during TH being
developed with wide interest
holder engagement from parents,
nurses and other clinicians



38

Why are we
doing a
hold-a-thon?

Only 38% of NICUs
offer holding
during TH

When is the hold-a-thon?

APRIL 2026

A month-long initiative to make sure all units have a chance to participate. April was selected in honor of HIE awareness month.





Where is
the hold-a-
thon?

In your NICU

Who participates in the hold-a-thon?

A hold-a-thon is a great way to get parents, nurses, doctors and administrators all focused on a joint goal of improving family centered care.



Timeline & Commitment

Timeline



Hold-a-thon Meeting Schedule

January

Tues Jan 27 at 3p EST

February

Fri Feb 13 at 9am EST or Tues Feb 24 at 3p EST

March

Fri Mar 13 at 9am EST or Tues Mar 24 at 3p EST

April

TBD

May

TBD

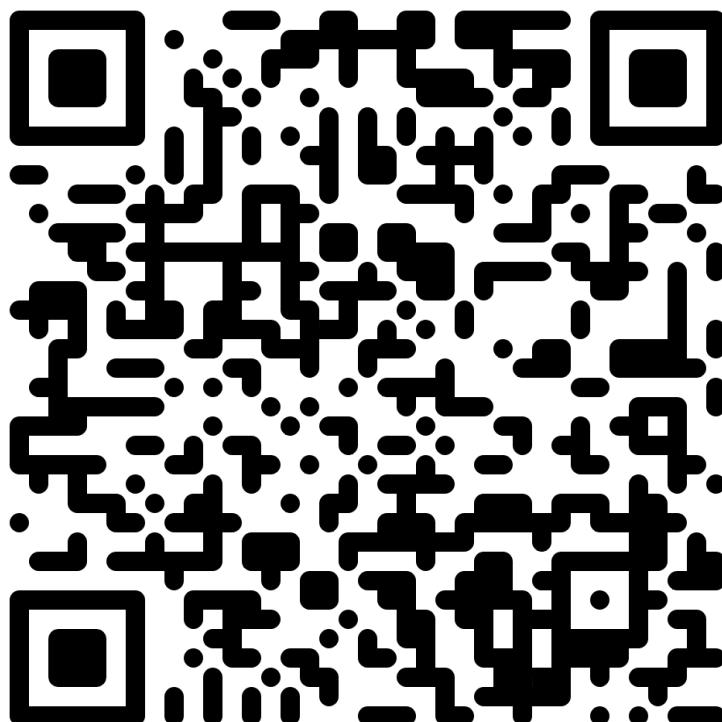
Commitment as Site Champion

- Serve as the primary contact between your institution and the Hold-a-thon organizers
- Attend monthly meetings with hold-a-thon organizers
- Mobilize interest and support within your NICU team
- Facilitate local protocol development using your institution's existing processes
- Coordinate educational activities
- Share your site's experience with the broader community (optional)

Toolkit Resources

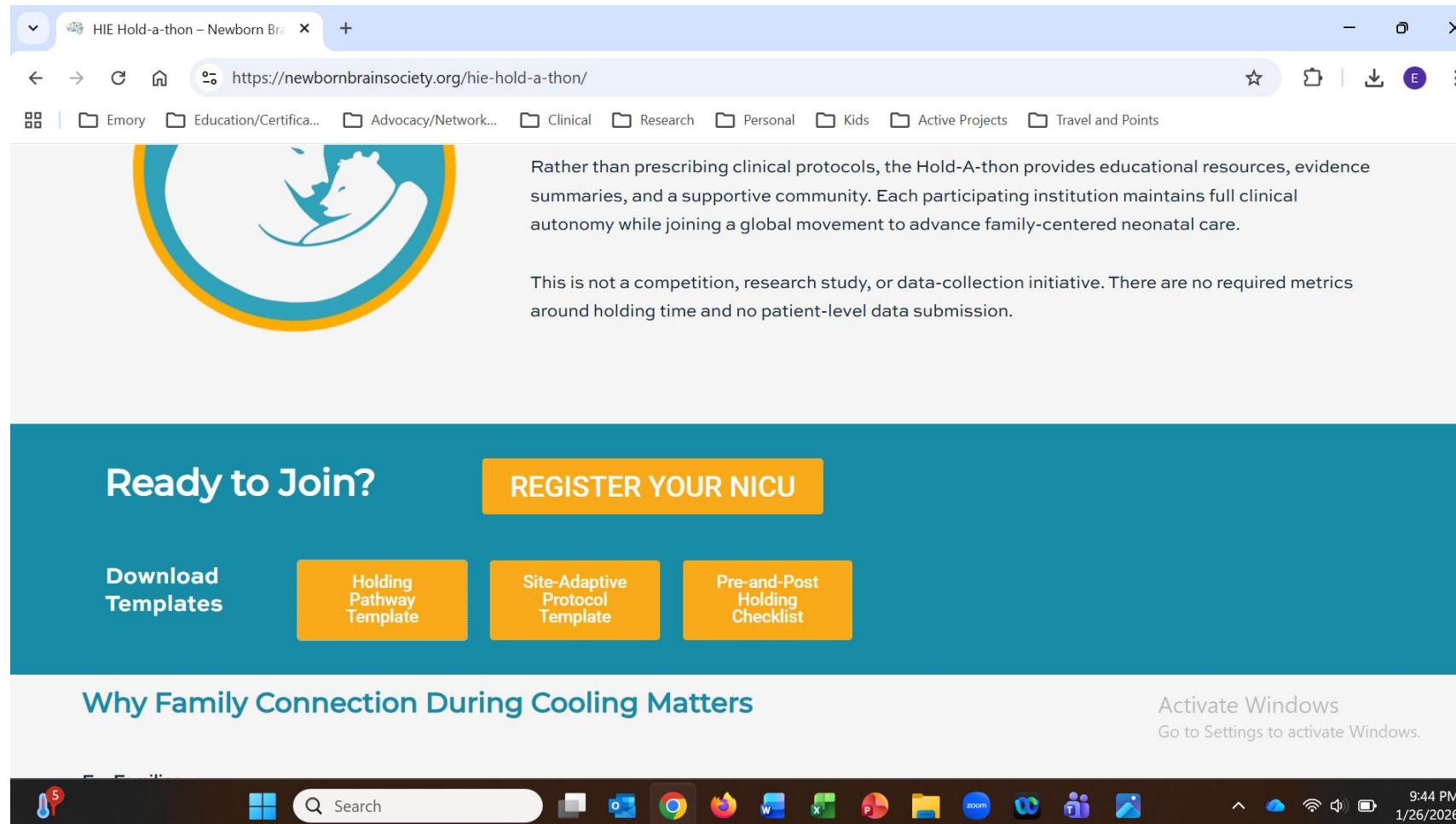
Website

<https://newbornbrainsociety.org/hie-hold-a-thon>



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://newbornbrainsociety.org/hie-hold-a-thon/> in the address bar. The page features the Newborn Brain Society logo (a brain composed of colorful circles) and the text "NBS NEWBORN BRAIN SOCIETY". The navigation menu includes links for ABOUT, EVENTS, MEMBERSHIP, NEWS, RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS, EDUCATION, OUR AWARDS, VOLPE'S VIEW, PROJECTS, NNCC ACCREDITATION, COMMUNITY CENTER, and SHOP MERCH. A language selector shows "English". The main content area has a teal background and displays the title "HIE Hold-a-thon: Polar Bear Initiative" in large white text, followed by "APRIL 2026" and a description: "During HIE Awareness Month, the Newborn Brain Society and Hope for HIE invite NICUs worldwide to participate in a clinician-led initiative supporting evidence-based holding and supportive touch for infants receiving therapeutic hypothermia." Below this, there is an illustration of a polar bear with the text "POLAR BEAR CARE" and a section titled "What Is the HIE Hold-A-Thon?" which describes the initiative as a voluntary, site-led initiative for developing guidelines for infants with HIE undergoing therapeutic hypothermia. The browser taskbar at the bottom shows various open tabs and icons for file operations.

Website



HIE Hold-a-thon – Newborn Br

<https://newbornbrainsociety.org/hie-hold-a-thon/>

Emory Education/Certifica... Advocacy/Network... Clinical Research Personal Kids Active Projects Travel and Points

Rather than prescribing clinical protocols, the Hold-A-thon provides educational resources, evidence summaries, and a supportive community. Each participating institution maintains full clinical autonomy while joining a global movement to advance family-centered neonatal care.

This is not a competition, research study, or data-collection initiative. There are no required metrics around holding time and no patient-level data submission.

Ready to Join?

REGISTER YOUR NICU

Download Templates

Holding Pathway Template

Site-Adaptive Protocol Template

Pre-and-Post Holding Checklist

Why Family Connection During Cooling Matters

Activate Windows
Go to Settings to activate Windows.

9:44 PM 1/26/2026

Guideline Policy & Development

1. Assess Parental/Caregiver Comfort

Explain holding during TH, discuss the equipment and transfer process, evaluate readiness, and select a time agreeable to the family and medical team.

2. Inclusion Criteria

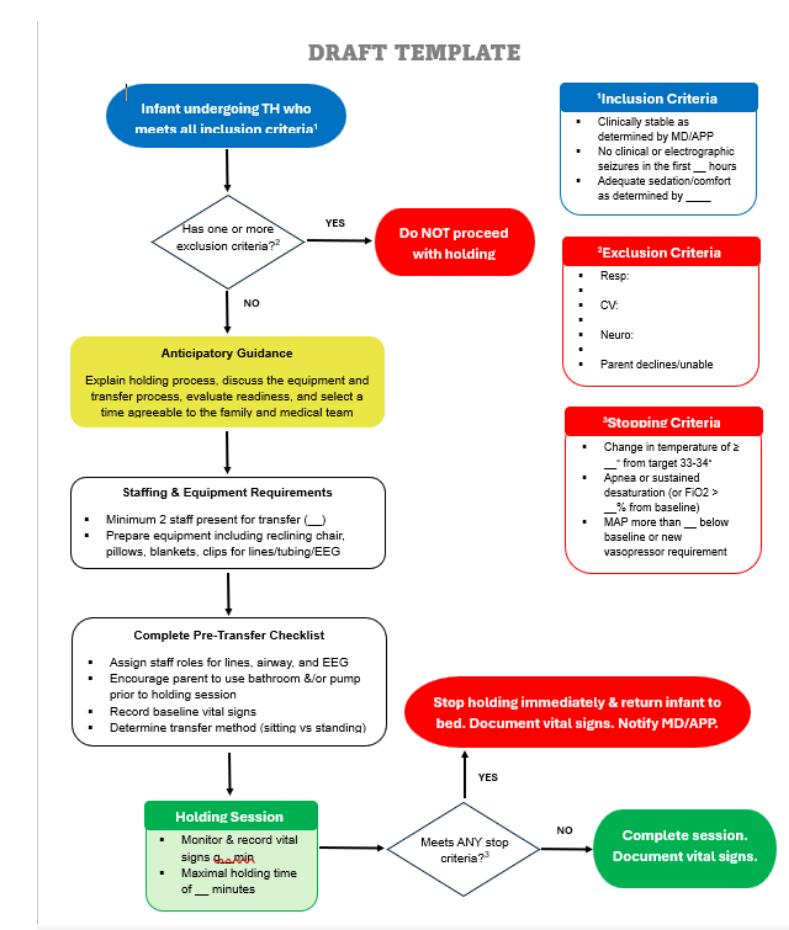
Holding may be offered to newborns who are *clinically stable* as determined by:

[NICU Attending / Fellow / APP / Bedside RN with Attending approval / Other: _____]

AND meet all of the following:

- Diagnosis of **HIE undergoing therapeutic hypothermia**
- **No clinical or electrographic seizures** during the first [12 / 24 / other: _____] hours of TH
- Receiving [room air / nasal cannula / CPAP / mechanical ventilation / any mode of ventilation]
- Adequate sedation/comfort as assessed by [NPASS / COMFORT scale / Other: _____]

3. Exclusion Criteria



Pre-/Post- Transfer Checklist

PRE-HOLDING CHECKLIST

BABY

- Newborn meets eligibility criteria for holding during TH (see Table)
- Medical team clearance obtained (if required by unit protocol)
- Clinical stability confirmed (HR, BP, SpO₂ within acceptable range)
- Temperature within target TH range
- EEG status reviewed (e.g., no seizures requiring immediate attention)
- Routine care completed (vital signs, diaper change, suctioning as needed)
- All lines, tubes, and monitoring leads assessed and secured
- Cooling blanket remains in continuous contact with newborn

SPACE

- Parent reclining chair with arm rest positioned adjacent to bed space
 - Footstool if desired
- Adequate clearance for staff and equipment movement
- Second chair available for support person if applicable
- Pillows, blankets, and positioning aids available
- Monitoring equipment visible and accessible

STAFF

- Minimum of 2–3 trained staff present (RN, MD/APP, RT if applicable)
- Roles clearly assigned including:
 - ~ Clinician leading the transfer

POST-HOLDING CHECKLIST

BABY

- Newborn safely transferred back to bed with cooling blanket contact maintained
- All lines, tubes, and monitoring leads rechecked and secured
- Vital signs obtained immediately post-holding
- Core temperature confirmed within target TH range
- No signs of physiological instability noted
- Document duration and tolerance of holding session

SPACE

- Bed space reorganized to baseline configuration
- Monitoring equipment returned to standard positioning
- Chair and supplies cleared or reset for future use
- Environment remains calm and supportive

STAFF

- Post-holding assessment completed and communicated to team
- Any concerns or deviations from protocol documented
- Plan for future holding sessions discussed (if appropriate)
- Family-centered messaging reinforced

PARENT

- Parent encouraged to share feedback or concerns
- Emotional response acknowledged
- Questions answered and reassurance provided
- Next opportunity for holding discussed, if clinically appropriate

Site Champion PPT with Talking Points

The slide is titled 'Polar Bear Care HOLD-A-THON' in large, bold, blue text. Below the title is a circular logo for 'Polar Bear Care' featuring a white bear and the text 'Polar Bear Care' around the top. To the right of the logo is the text 'HOPE for HIE' in blue and yellow. At the bottom left is the 'NEWBORN BRAIN SOCIETY' logo, which is a cluster of colorful circles. The slide background is white with a large, stylized graphic of overlapping yellow, teal, and blue waves on the right side. The left side of the slide contains a vertical list of four items, each with a small thumbnail image and a title:

- 1 Polar Bear Care HOLD-A-THON
- 2 AGENDA
- 3 HOLDING IN THE NICU HEALING TOUCH
- 4 HOLDING DURING THERAPEUTIC HYPOThERmia

Below the slide content is a text box with the placeholder 'Click to add speaker notes'. In the bottom right corner, there is a watermark that says 'Activate Windows' and 'Go to Settings to activate Windows.'

Step-by-step Transfer “How To”

transducer to mattress. (Baby should be stable from BP standpoint if being held. If BPs required, can take cuff BPs while being held



Activate Window
Go to Settings to activate

Site Engagement Resources

- Bingo
- Fact or Fiction Quiz
- Email templates
- Parent flyers/brochures
- Nursing script based on trauma-informed care principles

Next Steps

Register for Feb Meeting

FRI FEB 13 AT 9 AM EST



TUES FEB 24 AT 3 PM EST



Complete Institutional Readiness Assessment

Polar Bear Care Hold-A-Thon Institutional Readiness Assessment

Instructions

This assessment helps your institution determine readiness to participate in a Polar Bear Care Hold-A-Thon event. Score each section and use results to identify areas needing development before launch.

SECTION 1: Clinical Practice & Safety (35 points)

Current Holding Practices During Therapeutic Hypothermia

- 5 pts - We routinely facilitate parent holding during cooling for stable patients
- 3 pts - We occasionally allow holding during cooling on a case-by-case basis
- 1 pt - We rarely or never facilitate holding during cooling
- 0 pts - Holding during cooling is currently prohibited by our protocol

Scoring Interpretation

85-100 points: READY TO LEAD Your institution is well-prepared to host a Hold-A-Thon and can serve as a model site. Consider:

- Hosting a flagship event
- Mentoring other institutions
- Contributing to best practice guidelines
- Sharing outcomes data with Newborn Brain Society

70-84 points: READY WITH MINOR PREPARATION Your institution has strong fundamentals. Focus on:

- Addressing gaps identified in lower-scoring sections
- Formalizing existing practices into written protocols
- Strengthening specific areas (staff training, parent education, etc.)
- Timeline: 1-3 months preparation recommended

50-69 points: BUILDING READINESS Significant preparation needed before hosting a Hold-A-Thon. Priorities:

Create your institutional guideline for holding during TH



Gather key multidisciplinary stakeholders



Review evidence



Discuss options for inclusion/exclusion criteria and safety stops



Draft guideline



Distribute guideline for widespread review



Incorporate feedback & finalize guideline

Consider Contacting Hospital Marketing/PR

Email Template for Site Champions to Send Hospital Marketing

Subject: New NICU Initiative - Polar Bear Care Hold-A-Thon [Date]

Dear [Marketing Contact Name],

I'm reaching out about an exciting national initiative our NICU is participating in that I believe has strong potential for positive community engagement and media interest.

What is it? We're participating in a Polar Bear Care Hold-A-Thon in April 2026 - a national awareness campaign sponsored by the Newborn Brain Society and Hope for HIE. This event promotes parent holding during therapeutic hypothermia treatment for babies with hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy (HIE), a serious birth complication.

Why it matters:

- Therapeutic hypothermia (cooling therapy) saves babies' lives, but families often don't know they can still hold their babies during this critical 72-hour treatment
- Our hospital is among the first in [region/state] to participate in this family-centered care initiative
- This aligns with our mission of [insert relevant hospital mission/values]
- Human interest story potential: parents overcoming a devastating diagnosis while

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Thank you
Reach out with questions