

Breastfeeding Positive Peer Influence

- I. The WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum was developed via cooperative agreement between FNS and Every Mother, Inc. The WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum resources replaces previous FNS breastfeeding training. It also adds new training curriculum for the WIC Designated Breastfeeding Expert (DBE).

The curriculum is designed to build competencies among all levels of WIC staff in breastfeeding promotion and support strategies in the WIC Program. It relies on recent science, as well as best practices adopted by State and local WIC agencies across the country. The curriculum has four (4) learning tiers. Each level builds on one another to address breastfeeding competencies based on their role and responsibilities. State and local agencies may tailor training programs to best meet the needs of their WIC staff. The tiered levels include:

Level 1. All WIC staff, including support staff;

Level 2. WIC peer counselors and other WIC staff who provide basic breastfeeding support to participants;

Level 3. WIC competent professional authorities (CPAs) and breastfeeding coordinators; and

Level 4. WIC designated breastfeeding experts.

- I. Nutrition Services Administration (NSA) funds must be used, according to USDA policy, to support the salaries of Peer Counselors and their Supervisors if Peer Counseling funding is not available.
- II. Peer Counselor dollars must be used to support the following:
 - a. Training
 - b. Education
 - c. Travel
 - d. Materials
 - e. Networking opportunities
- III. Each local agency will have a Breastfeeding Coordinator, a Peer Counselor Supervisor/Coordinator, or a Designated Breastfeeding Expert to supervise

the Peer Counseling Program and follow guidelines provided. Responsibilities include:

- a. Assists in establishing program goals and objectives.
 - b. Determines peer counselor staffing needs.
 - c. Recruits and interviews potential peer counselors in alignment with program policies and standards.
 - d. Arranges for training of peer counselors.
 - e. Mentors new Peer Counselors during the first three months, providing routine follow-up and guidance in the early days of the job.
 - f. Provides ongoing supervision.
 - g. Holds regular meetings with peer counselors (at least quarterly).
 - h. Collects documentation records and data as appropriate.
 - i. Monitors the program, including review of Peer Counselor documentation.
 - j. Routinely reports on the program to supervisor.
 - k. Works with other peer counselor supervisors (if available) to assess for ongoing improvements to the program that may be needed.
- IV. The Peer Counselor must always perform within their job description. Peer Counselors' role typically does not include issuance of supplies, but they can issue a hand pump after receiving training. Peer Counselors should refer participants who may benefit from supplies, or may need assistance with using supplies, to appropriate staff.
- V. Senior Peer Counselors can be designated for those that have demonstrated expertise in breastfeeding counseling and management. They should have previous experience as a WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor. A Senior Peer Counselor provides advanced breastfeeding information and encouragement

to WIC participants, has demonstrated advanced breastfeeding counseling skills and knowledge, and may have additional responsibilities such as:

- a. Attends breastfeeding training classes in lactation management.
- b. Teaches prenatal classes through facilitated discussion and leads breastfeeding support groups. These classes are additional classes which are provided above and beyond the core classes taught by the CPA/CA staff.
- c. Mentors new peer counselors through ongoing guidance.
- d. Accepts referrals of mothers who need follow-up care.
- e. Can issue hand pumps and electric breast pumps if the Senior Peer Counselor has received training on pump issuance. Supervision and oversight is strongly encouraged to assure issuance is appropriate.
- f. Report program information to supervisors.
- g. Attends monthly staff meetings and breastfeeding conferences/workshops, as appropriate.
- h. May assist WIC staff in promoting breastfeeding peer counseling through special projects and duties as assigned.

VI. The WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum definition of a WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor is a paraprofessional support person:

- a. Who gives basic breastfeeding information and encouragement to WIC pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.
- b. Has breastfed at least one baby,
- c. Is enthusiastic about breastfeeding and wants to help other mothers enjoy a positive experience.
- d. Has successfully completed level 1 and 2 of the WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum.

- e. Is competent to provide breastfeeding advice and information to WIC participants.

VII. The role of a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor includes:

- a. Working within her scope of practice and job description.
- b. Providing guidance, support, and up-to-date information on breastfeeding to interested pregnant and lactating participants. Peer Counselors may facilitate breastfeeding support groups using the following criteria:
 - i. Support group format or facilitated group discussion.
 - ii. Peer counselors must have demonstrated competence.
 - iii. Peer counselors must observe a group contact and be evaluated on first support group session.
 - iv. Peer counselors shall create a nurturing and informative environment.
 - v. Peer counselors shall enhance the sharing of ideas and experiences, as well as provide local resource information.
- c. Pregnant participants should be contacted or seen by a peer counselor early after their certification. (Optimally, this would occur during the first trimester as effectiveness is decreased with contacts late in pregnancy, e.g., at the third trimester.)
- d. Being familiar with common problems encountered by breastfeeding women.
- e. Having the local agency option to bring in her nursing infant/child into the WIC clinic environment and to model successful nursing while working.
- f. Being trained to anticipate problems to help prevent their occurrence.
- g. Referring more difficult problems to a trained Designated Breastfeeding Expert or Breastfeeding Coordinator.
- h. The Advanced or Senior level Peer Counselor may teach breastfeeding topics at prenatal and/or breastfeeding classes. It is

important that a peer-to-peer participant centered approach be used, rather than a traditional, didactic method.

- VIII. With sufficient funding, the roles of the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor can be expanded using online peer counseling services which local agencies are strongly encouraged to implement. This will be offered as an optional communication method for WIC participants to contact Peer Counselors. The online peer counseling services will support social networking in an online one-on-one setting and timely responses to breastfeeding questions, as well as facilitating the sharing of ideas and resources. These online peer counseling services can make lactation support broadly available within a permanent infrastructure, especially in rural areas.
- a. Refer WIC participants to appropriate healthcare professionals and schedule face-to-face meetings with breastfeeding dyad if there are advanced lactation problems.
 - b. If participants are unprofessional, negative, and/or use disparaging language when communicating with the Online Peer Counselor, these participants can be dismissed from this online peer counseling program.
- IX. Online peer counseling connections will be secure and confidential.
- a. Confidentiality when using online peer counseling services is critical.
 - i. Guidelines when using cell phones to discuss any confidential information:
 - 1. Tell the WIC participant when you are using a cell phone.
 - 2. Inform them of the risks and the possibility for interception and that it may not be 100% secure.
 - 3. Provide the participant with an opportunity to consent.
 - 4. Refer to cell phone information in the WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum. This can be adapted by each local WIC agency.
 - ii. Internet communications and participant confidentiality.
 - 1. Email and internet communication may be subject to interception by a third party resulting in a breach of confidentiality.

2. Limit online communications to factual information which is evidence-based rather than advice which may be more related to personal opinion and/or personal experience.
3. Do not communicate a message that could be considered as medical advice.
4. Review all email thoroughly before sending.
5. Maintain competence by successful completion of the WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum.
6. Avoid negligence (failure to work within the USDA Peer Counselor job description/scope of work, failure to consult or refer according to the USDA Peer Counselor Curriculum guidelines, and failure to provide attention/care within scope of work. Do not answer participant questions if you need to do more research and/or gather more information before responding.