



3 NUTRITION SERVICES
3.42 Breastfeeding Peer Counseling

Effective: 2/1/2005
Revised: 8/1/2011
Changes in Bold

POLICY: WIC Projects **are strongly recommended to implement** a breastfeeding peer counselor program as part of their breastfeeding promotion and support plan. When the project implements a breastfeeding peer counselor program, they must comply with the procedures outlined below and **sign an annual WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program Agreement.**

PROGRAM GOAL: Breastfeeding peer counseling with ongoing breastfeeding promotion and support efforts has the potential to significantly impact breastfeeding rates among WIC participants. It is the goal of this program to increase the rates of exclusive and sustained breastfeeding among WIC participants. The long-range goal of the program is to institutionalize breastfeeding peer counseling as a core service in the WIC Program.

PROCEDURE:

A. STATE WIC OFFICE RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1. The State WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator is responsible for:**
 - a) Allocating available funding resources to the local projects,**
 - b) Establishing a standardized training program for peer counselors and coordinators that is evidence-based,**
 - c) Establishing a standardized program including procedures for peer documentation, reports, breastfeeding support materials, and monitoring tools that can be used for consistent statewide evaluation of the program,**
 - d) On-going technical support to the local projects, monitoring that they meet the requirements of the Peer Counseling Program,**
 - e) Providing breastfeeding program materials.**
- 2. Funding: State funding for the WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program is separate from the primary WIC funding. The intent of the funds is to enhance WIC breastfeeding support services to WIC participants through peer counseling. The project will use the funding based on the Allowable Costs Guidelines document.**



B. WIC BREASTFEEDING PEER COUNSELOR QUALIFICATIONS

1. A WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor is a paraprofessional with breastfeeding experience, selected from the group to be served, is trained and given ongoing supervision, and who gives basic breastfeeding information and encouragement to WIC pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.
2. A WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor must meet the following qualifications prior to functioning as a peer counselor.
 - a) Complete the Loving Support through Peer Counseling 3 day training program. A *Certificate of Completion* will document that the peer counselor has met the basic competencies to function in this role. **If this face to face training is not available prior to the peer's start date; the project must contact the State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator to discuss alternative training options.**
 - b) **Obtain 12 observation hours. It is recommended that most of the hours be direct observation of an experienced breastfeeding peer counselor, but may also include observation of the project Breastfeeding Coordinator counseling a participant, observation of the WIC clinic and a breastfeeding class, or direct conversation with an experienced peer.**
 - c) Be recruited from the target population that is to be served.
 - d) Has successfully breastfed at least one infant for a minimum of six months.
 - e) Is enthusiastic about breastfeeding and wants to help other mothers enjoy a positive experience.
3. It is recommended that WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselors have the following characteristics:
 - a) Basic written and verbal communication skills,
 - b) A current or previous WIC participant,
 - c) Of a similar ethnic/racial background to the WIC participants she will be assigned, and
 - d) Speak the same language as the WIC participants she will be assigned.



4. A WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor must obtain at least 50 hours of continuing education every 5 years per identified training needs. This must be technically supervised and monitored by the local WIC project Breastfeeding Coordinator

C. WIC BREASTFEEDING PEER COUNSELOR JOB REQUIREMENTS

1. Recommended contact frequency
 - a) Prenatal: Peer counselors should have at least one contact with the mother during pregnancy.
 - b) Postpartum: Peer counselors should initiate contacts as needed with new mothers:
 1. Every 2-3 days in the first critical 7-10 days postpartum,
 2. Within 24 hours if the mother reports problems (making appropriate referrals if problems are not resolved),
 3. Weekly throughout the rest of the first month, and
 4. Monthly throughout the rest of the first year.
2. Content of contacts
 - a) Prenatal: A peer counselor can help explore a mother's individual barriers to breastfeeding and help the mother overcome these barriers. Education about basic breastfeeding techniques and how to get breastfeeding off to a good start may be provided.
 - b) Postpartum: During the postpartum period, peer counselors provide support and a link to help for new mothers. Contacts help mothers with concerns, support and appropriate referrals. Peer counselors normally deal only with basic issues and helping mothers see what is "normal".
3. Confidentiality: All breastfeeding peer counselors must sign a Confidentiality Statement and adhere to the WIC confidentiality requirements. (See Policy 10.41). A sample Confidentiality Statement is attached.
4. Local projects must have a peer counselor job description. A sample job description is attached.



D. COMPENSATION AND REIMBURSEMENT OF PEER COUNSELORS

1. Local agencies must provide peer counselors with compensation for their work at same general hourly rate typical of other entry level positions. It will be the local agency responsibility to assure that the method of compensation chosen is allowable by state law and agency policy. The compensation plan should be available for review upon request. There are several options to consider:

- a) **The peer counselor may be hired as an agency employee, or**
- b) **A contractual employee, or**
- c) **The peer counselor may receive a stipend for a designated amount of work completed.**

E. TRAINING

1. Research has shown that regular provision of training and continuing education for peer counselor program coordinators, peer counselors, and clinic staff is a valued component of a successful peer counseling program. The State WIC Office will coordinate the following training sessions.

- a) Training on how to manage peer counseling programs for local Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program Coordinators.
- b) *Loving Support* through Peer Counseling Training Program for new peers.

2. The local Breastfeeding Coordinator must provide training to all WIC clinic staff about the role of the WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor.

3. Other training and continuing education

- a) On-going training opportunities should be made available to peer counselors. These include: quarterly teleconference calls. Breastfeeding conferences, other WIC staff trainings, and regular WIC staff meetings.
- b) Independent study allows for peer counselors to continue their learning at their own pace and in areas where additional study is needed. This does not replace structured learning, but should enhance these programs.



- c) WIC breastfeeding peer counselors should be trained to become familiar with ROSIE and the WIC program.

F. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT INCLUDING SUPERVISION AND MONITORING OF PEER COUNSELORS

- 1. In those projects with a Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program the project Breastfeeding Coordinator assumes the responsibility of the Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator. This person must have adequate time to perform the duties of this position.**
2. The local project must develop a written peer counseling program policy that includes: (See Project Policy Template).
 - a) How potential participants will be assigned to the peer counselor.
 - b) Where the peer counseling will take place. This may include contacts in the WIC clinic, by telephone/email, in classes, mail, home or hospital visit.
 - c) Documentation procedures that are based on the ROSIE Peer Documentation Guidelines.**
 - d) How peer counselors will make referrals for issues beyond their scope of practice and to whom the referrals should be made.
 - e) The hours that the peer counselor are available.
- 3. The WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program Coordinator is responsible for: mentoring the peer counselor, providing on-going technical supervision, monitoring the peer work regularly, and assuring that the peer is counseling within the scope of practice. The BFPC Coordinator's responsibilities include the following:**
 - a) Meeting with the peer counselor(s) at least monthly to review the peer work and to discuss the participants they are contacting. This may be done in person or by telephone.
 - b) Reviewing the following ROSIE Reports/Queries to determine how often the peer counselors are making contacts with pregnant women and new mothers; to assess if appropriate referrals are being made; and to determine if documentation is being done correctly:**
 - i) Unduplicated Participant Tally by Peer Counseling Contact Report**



- ii) Secondary Education Report
- iii) Peer Counseling Contact Detail Query

- c) **Observing peer counselors on a routine basis by using the Observation Checklists provided by the State both for Individual and Group Contacts.**
 - d) **Conducting three chart audits every 6 months for every peer counselor using the peer File Review Tool; assessing appropriate ROSIE input for referral, education, and care plans.**
4. The WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program Coordinator is also responsible for program management including:
- a) Assisting in determining peer staffing needs and related budget.
 - b) Arranging the training of the peer counselors.

G. ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

WIC mothers have the best chance of overcoming their barriers to breastfeeding when there is general community-wide support for breastfeeding. When a mother is able to receive consistent, accurate information from all providers and return to work, school and her social life with support for breastfeeding readily apparent, she is well on her way to being able to meet the goals set for her and her family.

There are many potential partnerships that can enhance the effectiveness of a peer counseling program within the community. WIC projects implementing a peer counseling program should explore the feasibility of these partnerships.

1. Breastfeeding Coalitions
2. Businesses
3. Community Organizations
4. Cooperative Extension Program
5. Wisconsin Association of Lactation Consultants (WALC)
6. La Leche League
7. Public Health Programs
8. Clinics and Hospitals



ATTACHMENTS:

- Confidentiality Statement
- Sample Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Job Description



Sample Job Description

WIC BREASTFEEDING PEER COUNSELOR

Title: WIC BREASTFEEDING PEER COUNSELOR

General Description:

A WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor is a paraprofessional with breastfeeding experience who is selected from the group to be served and is trained and given ongoing supervision who gives basic breastfeeding information and encouragement to WIC pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.

Qualifications:

- Has successfully breastfed at least one infant for at least 6 months (does not have to be currently breastfeeding).
- Is enthusiastic about breastfeeding, and wants to help other mothers enjoy a positive experience.
- Be a member of the population that will be served.
- Complete required training.

Training:

- Completes the training sessions required to become and continue as a WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor.
- Observes other peer counselors or lactation consultants helping mother's breastfeed.
- Reads assigned books or materials about breastfeeding.

Additional Work Requirements:

- Can work about <<X>> hours a week.
- Is available to work during the following hours: <<usual hours of work>>
- Is available outside usual 8 to 5 working hours to new mothers who are having breastfeeding problems.
- Has access to a telephone, and is willing to make/receive phone calls from home.
- Has reliable transportation.
- Sign a confidentiality statement.

Supervision:

The peer counselor is supervised by the local project WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program Coordinator.

Specific Duties:

The WIC Peer Counselor:

1. Attends training sessions to become a WIC breastfeeding peer counselor.



2. Counsels WIC pregnant and breastfeeding mothers by telephone, WIC clinic visits, home visits, and/or hospital visits at scheduled intervals determined by the local WIC program.
3. Receives a caseload of WIC clients and makes routine periodic contacts with all clients assigned.
4. Gives basic breastfeeding information and support to new mothers, including telling them about the benefits of breastfeeding, overcoming common barriers, and getting a good start with breastfeeding. She also helps mothers prevent and handle common breastfeeding concerns.
5. Respects each client by keeping her information strictly confidential.
6. Keeps accurate records of all contacts made with WIC clients.
7. Refers mothers, according to clinic-established protocols, to the:
 - WIC breastfeeding coordinator or nutritionist
 - Lactation consultant
 - The mother's physician or nurse
 - Public health programs in the community
 - Social service agencies
8. Attends and assists with prenatal classes and breastfeeding support groups.
9. Attends monthly staff meetings and breastfeeding conferences/workshops as appropriate.
10. Reads assigned books and materials on breastfeeding that are provided by the supervisor.
11. May assist WIC staff in promoting breastfeeding peer counseling through special projects and duties as assigned.

I understand the above job responsibilities, and agree to perform these duties as assigned.

WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor

Date



SAMPLE CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT
Handling of WIC Participant Information

Trust and confidence are needed for a successful program. This trust must be on all levels...between supervisors and peer counselors, between peer counselors and colleagues, and between peer counselors and clients.

Clients share personal information in order to be served as WIC participants. This includes medical, financial, and personal information. At the same time, clients have the right to know that the information they give will be kept confidential and used only as needed by clinic staff. It is our responsibility to respect their privacy and not discuss client information.

Discussing confidential information to anyone outside the WIC clinic is prohibited except when it may be needed to provide services to a client. This includes ensuring that client records and materials in your possession are not able to be viewed by anyone other than authorized WIC program employees either by access to files, or by observation due to careless record management.

AGREEMENT

I have carefully read the above Confidentiality Agreement and understand the confidential nature of all client information and records. I understand that it is my job to share client information *only* with staff involved in the case, and understand that I am prohibited by law from disclosing any such confidential information to any individuals other than authorized WIC Program employees and agencies with which the participant has given written permission to share information. I understand that any willful and knowing disclosure of confidential information to unauthorized persons is in violation of the law and subject to possible legal penalty.

Name *(please print)*

Signature

Date

Witness

Date