

Breastfeeding vs. Formula — Not a Battle at WIC



The decision to breast-feed is a personal one, and a mother should not be made to feel guilty if she cannot or chooses not to breastfeed. The success rate among mothers who want to breastfeed can be greatly improved through active support from their families, friends, communities, clinicians, health-care leaders, employers and policymakers. Given the importance of breastfeeding for the health and well-being of mothers and children, it is critical that we bring all of our skills, knowledge, and talents to support those who choose to breastfeed. At the same time, supporting the families who choose formula is just as important.

We continue to improve our breastfeeding support and recognize that the words we use affect the families we serve. Over the past few years we have seen a movement away from talking

about the benefits of breastfeeding as we have begun to address the risks of formula feeding. As Diane Wiessinger states in her article *The Language of Breastfeeding*, “The truth is, breastfeeding is nothing more than normal. Artificial feeding, which is neither the same nor superior, is therefore deficient, incomplete, and inferior.”

By using our words to speak to the risks of what formula feeding exposes the mother and baby to, we are demonstrating that breastfeeding is the norm and artificial feeding does not measure up. When educating families about feeding their babies, we need to ensure they have the facts. The choice belongs to them, and if they know from the day they enter the WIC Program that breastfeeding, introducing solids around 6 months of age, making healthy food choices, and having active lives are our goals, think how this could change the decisions they make?

Once the decision is made, our job is to support them to be successful feeding their child, not make them feel guilty, nor try to convince them to change their mind. We may want to consider creating two tracks for expecting moms: one for those who choose breastfeeding and one for those who choose formula feeding. Moms who want to breastfeed could be hooked up with the WIC and community support systems and have opportunities to speak with WIC staff and participants who have breastfed. Moms who want to formula feed could be educated on the proper way to prepare and warm formula, select and clean bottles, and the importance of holding and interacting with their baby.

By respecting each mother’s decision on how she chooses to feed her baby, we will build trust—a trust that just might mean she decides at the last minute to try breastfeeding or perhaps we’ve planted the seed for her next pregnancy. ☪

BPC Q&A Board

Q: In the PC Database (PCDB) reports, what is the difference between number of “Participants Receiving Any Services” and number of “Active Moms”?

A: The “Participants Receiving Any Services” number is the count of unique individuals receiving peer counselor services by time period

(monthly or quarterly). This count is recorded when a contact (not a comment) with an intervention level is entered into the PCDB by peer counseling staff. The “Active Moms” figure reflects the number of actual moms that received services at any point in the month between being enrolled on the

BPC Program and going off the program. ☪



RBL Corner



MONIQUE SIMS,
CONTRA COSTA
COUNTY, RBL

Contra Costa County has a new RBL, Monique Sims! Monique said, "I am honored to have been awarded the RBL position. I am also fortunate in having Lisa

Broughton as a predecessor and mentor." Monique's background includes eleven years of employment in the WIC Program, managing a community health clinic, and operating a non-profit, A More Excellent Way Health (known as MEW), whose mission is to address health disparities,

especially in breastfeeding. She studied at UC Berkeley for a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Clinical Dietetics and became a Registered Dietitian. Post graduate study had included a Masters in Public Health Nutrition and a Doctorate degree in Public Health. Her dissertation work was entitled Engaging the Faith Community as a Partner in Improving African-American Breastfeeding Rates. Monique states, "My passion is in helping mothers and families breast-feed their infants, consequently I am also an IBCLC."

"I am excited to have been passed the baton to expand the careful

foundational work Lisa has accomplished in narrowing the breastfeeding support gaps in Contra Costa County. Our strategy is to market breastfeeding and WIC services to targeted community stakeholders, physicians and nurses and assist hospitals in Contra Costa County into becoming supporters of breastfeeding."

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Congratulations to Gloria Pecina, WIC Director of the United Health Centers of the San Joaquin Valley. Her agency has been approved for funding for this fiscal year and will be hiring a full-time RBL to promote WIC and breastfeeding in the Central Valley. ❧

Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (BPC) Program Highlight

The Glenn County Health Services WIC BPC Program, launched in October 2011, is a small program serving the rural community of Orland in Northern California.

Glenn County BPC Program enjoys close connections with its participants and community partners. A successful peer counselor one-on-one approach has been developed and breastfeeding support groups are conducted in English and Spanish weekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays. During the support group meetings, moms share their breastfeeding experiences and participate in scrapbook activities, while BPC Program staff weaves baby



LORNA HUMPHREYS (PC SUP/
IBCLC), KELLY CAWTHORN (WIC
DIRECTOR), MARCY TORRES (PC)

behavior messages into the conversations. Infants are also weighed,

whenever possible, before or after these meetings.

A unique and tastefully done "Baby's 1st Year WIC Passport" are provided to clients that chronicles each infant's progress to a healthy start in life. This "passport" contains a photo of the infant, agency contact information, a mini-calendar, tracking

dental and doctor appointments at suggested periodicities, and a checklist for moms to write down the dates of key "baby firsts," such as the baby's first smile and first tooth.

Glenn County BPC Program is on target with their plans to establish and refine referral systems for postpartum breastfeeding moms with various area health care partners. They have informal agreements with two Butte County local hospitals that the majority of their clients use when delivering. They also have plans to establish similar relationships with health care providers in Glenn County.

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Strengthening Breastfeeding Support
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