
SECTION: Breastfeeding

SUBJECT: Peer Counseling Program Requirements

ITEM: Peer Counseling Program Implementation

Purpose

To ensure compliance with federal regulation and quality peer counseling services for WIC participants.

Policy

The local agency that receives USDA funds targeted for breastfeeding peer counseling shall incorporate the following minimum requirements into the design, implementation, enhancement and/or maintenance of their peer counselor programs.

Required Procedures

- I. The local agency (LA) that receives peer counseling funds shall:
 - A. provide a desk, telephone, and computer with internet access for peer counselors.
 - B. ensure peer counselors have opportunity to see participants face to face.
 - C. ensure peer counseling program participants are contacted at the following frequency intervals:

Prenatal women:

1. within 30 days of enrolling;
2. monthly thereafter until 2 weeks prior to expected delivery date; and
3. then weekly within 2 weeks of expected delivery date.

Postpartum women:

1. every 2-3 days in the first week post delivery;
 2. weekly for the rest of the first month;
 3. before returning to work/school; and
 4. at least monthly from 2-6 months post delivery.
- D. ensure designated staff conducts regular Continue Quality Improvement (CQI) at least monthly to ensure documented contacts occurred and peer counselors provide appropriate counseling

- II. The LA shall ensure all peer counselors:
- A. are paraprofessionals, without extended professional training;
 - B. have good communication skills;
 - C. have breastfed a child;
 - D. are enthusiastic about breastfeeding and have a desire to share that enthusiasm;
 - E. are fluent in the language of the WIC participants they counsel; and
 - F. can speak the program supervisor's language.
- III. The LA shall designate a supervisor and an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). The minimum staffing ratios are:

Number of Full Time Equivalents		
Peer Counselor (PC)	IBCLC	PC Supervisor
0.5	0.25	0.25
1.0		
1.5	0.5	
2.0		
3.0	1.0	

- IV. The LA shall:
- A. develop job descriptions for a peer counselor, IBCLC, and supervisor;
 - B. ensure peer counselors are available outside of normal agency hours;
 - C. have State-approved protocols for:
 1. referring WIC clients to peer counselors;
 2. settings where peer counselors provide services (e.g. telephone calls from WIC office, home, hospital and/or home visits);
 3. referring WIC clients to IBCLC for breastfeeding problems outside the peer counselor's scope of work; and
 4. referring WIC clients to community services as needed which is consistent with minimum referrals required to be given by WIC counseling staff.
- V. The LA shall pay peer counselors at least 80% of a paraprofessional's entry level salary, but not less than minimum wage, and reimburse peer counselors for local agency approved telephone and travel expenses.
- VI. The LA shall ensure that program supervisor receives training on how to manage peer counseling programs through *"Using Loving Support to Manage Peer Counseling Programs"* training curriculum.

- A. Provide the following trainings to peer counselors:
 - 1. initial State developed breastfeeding training using *WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Training Manual* (minimum 25 hours) or the USDA developed "Loving Support through Peer Counselor" training curriculum;
 - 2. procedures for documenting participant contacts;
 - 3. monthly breastfeeding education at regularly scheduled meetings;
 - 4. annual State required training, i.e., civil rights, alcohol and drug abuse, etc.;
 - 5. orientation to WIC services and referrals both internal and external; and
 - 6. local WIC orientation including breast pump policies.
- B. ensure that peer counselors demonstrate competency in counseling, documentation, and referrals.
- C. ensure that all WIC staff:
 - 1. are familiar with the agency's peer counselor services; and
 - 2. receive a training about the role of the WIC peer counselor based upon the Power Point presentation "*Peer Counseling: Making a Difference for WIC Families*" included in the "*Using Loving Support to Manage Peer Counseling Programs.*"

VII. The LA shall ensure peer counselors utilize the web-based "Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Database" to document client contacts. Local agencies whose peer counselors work from home are exempt from this requirement.

VIII. The LA shall ensure peer counselors have:

- A. access to an IBCLC;
- B. weekly contact with their supervisor either in person or by phone;
- C. regular biweekly opportunities to meet with fellow peer counselors and the IBCLC;
- D. current editions of basic breastfeeding education resources; and
- E. the opportunity to participate in WIC staff meetings on a regular basis.

IX. The LA shall ensure all peer counselors adhere to WIC confidentiality requirements and have signed the Employee Security Affidavit (ESA) (WPM-WIC190-20).

X. The LA shall promote the peer counselor program by:

- A. establishing community partnerships for the continuum of breastfeeding care and support; and
- B. establishing a Memorandum of Understanding with other entities/programs if USDA peer counseling program funds are used to train and pay their staff as peer counselors for WIC clients.

XI. The LA shall submit quarterly reports to the State agency using a provided template.

The LA should consider:

- I. selecting peer counselors that are current or previous WIC participants and have breastfed for at least six months;
- II. having an IBCLC fill the IBCLC and program supervisor positions;
- III. providing peer counselors with opportunities for continuing education through attendance at breastfeeding conferences/seminars;
- IV. allowing peer counselors with opportunities to shadow or observe other peer counselors and IBCLCs;
- V. providing a minimum of 25 hours of training to all staff at sites with peer counseling programs using the *WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Training Manual*. Provide new staff with training within one year of date of hire and exempt staff that have obtained CLE/CLC certification within the preceding 5 years;
- VI. conducting an annual follow-up training on “*Best Start’s Three-Step Counseling Methods*” or 30 minutes in-service of basic breastfeeding support to all staff at sites with peer counseling program;
- VII. conducting weekly CQI to ensure documented contacts occurred and peer counselors provided appropriate counseling;
- VIII. providing peer counselors with regular employee benefits;
- IX. providing breastfeeding resource materials in the language spoken by the peer counselor;
- X. developing career path options; and
- XI. establishing a system of early notification of infant delivery to the WIC program by hospitals so that peer counselors can make contact in the early postpartum period.

Exception

The LA must request and obtain a written waiver approval from the State agency if peer counselors are not providing services outside of normal WIC hours. They must have other community resources available for WIC participants at this time.

Authority

USDA All States Memorandum 04-27, “Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Grants/Training” (April 8, 2004)