

WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Programs in Iowa

Policy

USDA Breastfeeding Policy and Guidance: Breastfeeding Peer Counseling in the WIC Program

4.1 B. *Loving Support* Model for the Successful Peer Counseling Program (*Loving Support Model*): The *Loving Support Model* is the framework for State agencies to use to establish policies and practices under each of its required components. The *Loving Support Model* emphasizes adequate support from State and local agency management as well as adequate program support of peer counselors as the keys to sustainable peer counseling programs in WIC. FNS' goal is to ensure that all WIC State agencies operate their peer counseling programs from the same basic components that form the foundation of a successful peer counseling program. The *Loving Support Model* allows for flexibility based on State policy as long as the core components of the *Loving Support Model* are met.

Authority

USDA WIC Breastfeeding Policy and Guidance: Chapter 4. Breastfeeding Peer Counseling in the WIC Program, *excerpt*

[USDA FNS WIC Breastfeeding Model Components for Peer Counseling, *excerpt*](#)

Procedures

All WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling programs in Iowa will be consistent with the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) WIC Breastfeeding Model Components for Peer Counseling (formerly the *Loving Support Model* as referenced in the current USDA WIC Breastfeeding Policy and Guidance) and will use the training materials developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This includes programs funded by the local agency WIC administrative grant and programs funded by other sources (e.g., community grants, foundation grants, etc.).

Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Programs [will follow the USDA FNS WIC Model Components for Peer Counseling below:](#)

- Employ designated Peer Counselors following the FNS Model definition of a peer counselor, including:
 - [Meet the criteria of a paraprofessional*](#)
 - [In line with USDA's definition of peer counseling: recruited and hired from WIC's target population, and, to the extent possible, representing the same racial/ethnic background as the mothers they support.](#)
 - Available to WIC clients outside usual clinic hours and outside the WIC clinic environment. Designated days and hours, or any limitations, will be determined by the local WIC agency.
 - Previous experience with breastfeeding, having breastfed at least one baby for

a minimum of six months.

- Designate local agency Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinators that meet the qualifications of a Competent Professional Authority (CPA) and have successfully completed specialized training in lactation management and care such as International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC), Certified Lactation Specialist (CLS), Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC), Certified Breastfeeding Specialist (CBS), etc.
- Have a defined scope of practice for Peer Counselors limited to supporting normal breastfeeding
- Provide written job descriptions for Peer Counselors
- Provide compensation and reimbursement for Peer Counselors.
- The local agency must have a Designated Breastfeeding Expert (DBE) that is available at all times to the Peer Counselors for breastfeeding situations beyond their scope of practice. DBEs must have successfully completed specialized training in lactation management and care such as IBCLC, CLS, CLC, CBS, etc. (See the WIC-Designated Expert (DBE) policy)
- Train appropriate WIC State/local Peer Counseling management, supervisory, and clinic staff using the FNS WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum and its updates.
- Peer Counselors must receive approved training before assuming duties and providing support to WIC clients.
- Establish standardized Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program policies and procedures at the State and local level as part of agency nutrition education plan.
- Provide adequate supervision and monitoring of Peer Counselors, including regular, systematic contact with supervisor.
- Establish community partnerships to enhance the effectiveness of a WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program. Community partners may include local breastfeeding coalitions, Maternal Child and Adolescent Health programs, social service agencies, local public health agencies, birthing hospitals, and others in the community that serve the WIC population.
- Peer Counselors participate in local agency clinic staff meetings as part of the WIC team.
- Provide opportunities for Peer Counselors to have continuing education and to meet regularly with other Peer Counselors.

*Those without extended professional training in health, nutrition, or the clinical management of breastfeeding who are selected from the group to be served and are trained and given ongoing supervision to provide a basic service or function. Paraprofessionals provide specific tasks within a defined scope of practice. They assist professionals, but are not licensed or credentialed as healthcare, nutrition, or lactation consultant professionals. IBCLCs, registered dietitians, nurses, and other licensed and credentialed health professionals do not meet the definition of a Peer Counselor.