

Hiring Breastfeeding Peer Counselors

Policy

USDA Breastfeeding and Policy Guidance:

4.3 – The definition of a peer counselor is essential to the integrity of the BFPC (*Breastfeeding Peer Counseling*) program. The *Loving Support* Model requires that peer counselors be paraprofessionals recruited and hired from the target WIC population and available to WIC participants outside usual clinic hours and outside the WIC clinic environment. The definition of a paraprofessional in this context is an individual without extended professional training in health, nutrition, or the clinical management of breastfeeding who is selected from the group to be served, and 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. Therefore, IBCLCs (*International Board Certified Lactation Consultants*), registered dietitians, nurses and other licensed and credentialed health professionals do not meet the definition of a peer counselor in the *Loving Support* Model.

Authority

USDA Breastfeeding Policy and Guidance (July 2016): Chapter 4, 4.3 Definition of a WIC Peer Counselor

Procedures

All Breastfeeding Peer Counselors employed by local WIC agencies in Iowa will be paid for their work and reimbursed for work-related expenses including the following:

- Time spent in phone or face-to-face contacts with WIC participants
- Time spent completing required recordkeeping
- Regular meetings of the local agency Breastfeeding Peer Counselors with the local WIC agency Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program Coordinator
- Travel time to required meetings
- Local WIC office staff meetings
- Mileage reimbursement at current state reimbursement rate
- Reimbursement for communication costs required for making contacts not already provided by the local agency.

Determining Staff Needs

Breastfeeding Peer Counselor staffing needs are determined by assessing the following:

- Number of pregnant and breastfeeding women within the agency
- Number of clinic sites
- Caseload at each clinic site

- Demographics of the area
- Responsibilities required of the peer counselors
- Hours per week each Breastfeeding Peer Counselor can work

Employment Options

Several employment options exist which include:

- Local agency employee
- Contract
- Temporary employment agency

Recruiting Peer Counselors

Potential avenues to recruit Breastfeeding Peer Counselors include:

- Database of WIC breastfeeding mothers
- Recommendations from WIC staff
- Promotional signs in the WIC clinic and other places frequented by WIC families
- Recommendations from physician clinic staff
- Recommendations from members of local breastfeeding coalitions
- Promotional signs in general communication locations such as department stores, grocery stores, etc.
- Ads in local newspapers

For more information about the qualifications, responsibilities, and training requirements for Breastfeeding Peer Counselors, see the policy titled “Breastfeeding Peer Counselor”.