

OVERVIEW OF THE WIC BREASTFEEDING PEER COUNSELING PROGRAM

What is the benefit of having a breastfeeding peer counseling program in WIC?

The Centers for Disease Control identified peer counseling as an effective way to improve breastfeeding rates. Peer counselors provide support and practical suggestions to breastfeeding mothers, especially during times when WIC staff are not available. Peer counselors are effective in communities where role models for breastfeeding are scarce. Combining peer counseling with ongoing breastfeeding promotion efforts has the potential to significantly impact breastfeeding rates among WIC clients.

Requirements of a Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program

1. Peer counselors are women with similar backgrounds as WIC clients and have recent, positive breastfeeding experiences.
2. Peer counseling programs have staff designated to manage the program.
3. Peer counselors are paid and compensated for their job-related expenses.
4. Peer counselors, and the staff who manage them, receive initial and on-going training.
5. Peer counselors have written job descriptions and follow WIC and agency policies and procedures.
6. Supervisors monitor peer counselor services.
7. Peer counselors have timely access to breastfeeding experts.
8. Peer counselors are part of the WIC team.
9. Peer counselors meet regularly with their supervisor and other peer counselors.
10. Peer counseling activities are in addition to regular WIC breastfeeding activities.
11. Community partnerships enhance the effectiveness of peer counseling programs.



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