

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

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# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 1: General Guidelines

### 1. General Guidelines (Effective: January 2023)

- A. It is the goal of the Illinois WIC Program to increase the rates of exclusive and sustained breastfeeding among WIC participants. Including Breastfeeding Peer Counseling with ongoing breastfeeding promotion and support efforts has the potential to significantly impact breastfeeding rates among WIC participants. The longrange goal of the program is to institutionalize breastfeeding peer counseling (BFPC) as a core service in the Illinois WIC Program.
- B. All local WIC agencies are encouraged to implement the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program to supplement existing WIC breastfeeding education and support as part of their overall breastfeeding plan. The Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program serves as an adjunct to usual WIC clinic services. Peer Counselors extend the care of WIC clinic staff but do not replace the work of the CPA, DBE or lactation professionals.
- C. The Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program must include all components of the USDA WIC Breastfeeding Model for Peer Counseling.
- D. Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program local agency specific protocols must be written and accessible to staff.
- E. Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program costs must be kept separate from WIC and billed per Department direction and USDA Allowable Cost Criteria (IL WIC PM AD 3.6).

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 1: General Guidelines

### 2. Use of Social Media (Effective: January 2023)

- A. Local agency Breastfeeding Peer Counselor (BFPC) programs may use social media communication with WIC participants. It is recommended that local social media groups be closed to limit access to WIC participants only and that the Peer Counselor Supervisor have administrative rights.
- B. Uses of social media include:
  - 1. Allowing the peer counselor to email back and forth with pregnant and breastfeeding clients to provide support, answer questions and check in around due dates or at other critical times.
  - 2. Post messages about breastfeeding, remind clients to keep in touch and make or check their WIC appointment.
  - 3. Monitor breastfeeding/pregnancy blogs, and other websites to gather education information and assess the information being shared to better correct misinformation/modify education for clients for the purpose of sharing and discussing information and networking.
- C. Local agency employee policies on use of websites and other social media must be followed. Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary.
- D. The Peer Counselor Supervisor should review with Peer Counselor:
  - 1. Types of social media the peer counselor may use to interact with clients.
  - 2. Topics and types of questions/conversations and answers that are appropriate.
  - 3. Under what circumstances social media is inadequate and the client should be seen or phoned.
  - 4. Procedures for communication should include:
    - a) Topics that are not appropriate or related to breastfeeding or nutrition issues.
    - b) Use of name, title, and agency affiliation.
    - c) Keeping discussions honest and focused on the breastfeeding issue.
    - d) Using appropriate security and privacy features of the social media service.
    - e) Consider before disclosing any personal details, e.g. breastfeeding experiences.
    - f) Respect for client and her privacy; co-workers, agency.
    - g) Avoiding inflammatory, defamatory or offensive comments.
    - h) Avoiding comments contradictory to WIC/agency views or policies.
    - i) Identify information for accuracy and responding quickly to mistakes or errors in information.
    - j) Avoiding promotion of other businesses, services or products.
    - k) Confidentiality of peer counselor/client communications.
    - l) Documentation of peer counselor/client communications.

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 1: General Guidelines

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- m) Frequency of reviewing peer counselor/client interactions.
- n) All interactions should be reviewed on a regular basis.
- 5. Safe guards for passwords are encouraged.
- 6. Proper use of “Fair Use” or copyrighted material.

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 1: General Guidelines

### 3. Security, Care, and Use of Special Equipment (Effective: January 2023)

- A. Safeguards must be implemented to ensure the security and care of special electronic equipment purchased with Breastfeeding Peer Counselor (BFPC) program funds.
- B. Equipment purchased with BFPC funds is the property of the WIC Program and its use is limited.
  - 1. Special electronic equipment should remain in the possession of the BFPC and not be used by anyone not affiliated with the WIC agency or engaged in the BFPC Program.
  - 2. Agency staff must monitor access and disclose any and all information created, sent, received or stored on the laptop.
  - 3. The equipment must be returned to WIC agency when not in use.
  - 4. Equipment should not be left unattended.
  - 5. Only software authorized by the WIC agency may be used or loaded on the equipment.
  - 6. When purchasing computer equipment for peer counselor use:
    - a) All computers, laptops, and other equipment to be used by the peer counselor for uses not currently included in WIC MIS and purchased with peer counselor program funds, must receive approval from the Department.
    - b) Approval of the agency's annual budget or any amendments to the budget does not constitute prior approval from the Department.
    - c) Only computers, laptops, and other equipment meeting Department standards will be approved for use in the Peer Counselor Program.

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 2: Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Roles & Responsibilities

### 1. Roles and Responsibilities (Effective: January 2023)

- A. The Breastfeeding Peer Counselor (BFPC) provides specific breastfeeding support and educational services in the Illinois WIC Program. The BFPC is a paraprofessional support person who gives basic breastfeeding information and encouragement to WIC pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women.
- B. The qualifications of a BFPC are as follows:
  - 1. A woman of the community, with similar characteristics (i.e. age, race, cultural ethnicity, education and socioeconomic level) of WIC participants.
    - a) Professional staff, older women or women of disparate backgrounds or characteristics are not appropriate as peer counselors.
  - 2. Previous or current WIC participation or, other women from the community with breastfeeding experience and an enthusiasm for breastfeeding may be recruited, hired and trained to be peer counselors.
  - 3. The Peer Counselor must have breastfed at least one baby (within the last 5 years), but does not need to currently be breastfeeding.
- C. Availability of BFPCs:
  - 1. Must be available at WIC clinics and to WIC participants outside usual clinic hours.
  - 2. Must be available outside the usual WIC clinic environment and may work from her home.
  - 3. Should be able to work about 10 hours a week and have reliable transportation.
- D. Confidentiality for BFPCs:
  - 1. Must be trained on confidentiality and sign a confidentiality statement.
  - 2. Must be trained on using the phone and leaving messages
  - 3. Must be trained on working with files and confidential information at off – site locations as well as her home.
- E. Scope of Practice
  - 1. BFPC s must be trained and practice within their scope to retain liability.
  - 2. BFPCs must refer to the WIC Designated Breastfeeding Expert (DBE) (IL WIC PM AD 11.6) for all breastfeeding situations outside normal breastfeeding issues.

### ***Addendum- Guidelines for Referrals for Breastfeeding Peer Counselors***

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 2: Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Roles & Responsibilities

### 2. Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Job Duties (Effective: January 2023)

- A. Responsibilities may include:
1. Promoting breastfeeding and acting as an advocate in the clinic and in the community.
  2. Talking with women individually or in groups about breastfeeding and answering basic questions about breastfeeding.
  3. Providing anticipatory guidance to help women prepare for their hospital experience and the first few days, weeks and months of breastfeeding.
  4. Providing information on the effect of foods, medications, home remedies on lactation within her scope of practice and Department policy and local agency procedure.
  5. Documenting all contacts/conversations with participants.
  6. Referring participants to the appropriate staff as indicated by local agency procedure.
  7. Establishing relationships with WIC pregnant women and follows- up with them throughout their pregnancy and post-partum.
  8. Establishing relationships and follows-up with WIC breastfeeding moms, based on the schedule, for the duration of breastfeeding.
  9. Identifying and assisting in recruiting and training additional candidates for BFPC training.
  10. Assisting in providing in-services or training sessions for other health care workers.

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 2: Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Roles & Responsibilities

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### 3. Practice Locations (Effective: July 2021)

- A. The Breastfeeding Peer Counselor (BFPC) should work principally in the WIC clinic setting.
- B. BFPCs should make telephone contacts.
- C. The BFPC may provide services in a variety of settings including: medical community, the participants' homes, community centers, faith institutions and retail establishments.

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 2: Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Roles & Responsibilities

### 4. Documentation (Effective: January 2023)

- A. Breastfeeding Peer Counselors (BFPC) must document contacts per Department policy and local agency procedure. (IL WIC PM CS 10.3). BFPCs must use WIC MIS to document:
  - 1. Participant contacts
  - 2. Type of contact
  - 3. Participant concerns, questions or comments
  - 4. Topics discussed
  - 5. Referrals
  - 6. Plans for follow up
- B. BFPC time and work schedules should be documented according to agency procedure.
  - 1. Completes all forms, logs or tallies according to agency procedure.

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 2: Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Roles & Responsibilities

### 5. Participant Contact Frequency (Effective: January 2023)

- A. More and frequent contacts with pregnant and breastfeeding women increases the effectiveness of peer support.
- B. The following contact schedule is recommended:
  - 1. Pregnant women:
    - a) Monthly and at each prenatal follow up visit.
    - b) More frequently as due date nears.
    - c) One week before due date.
  - 2. Early weeks postpartum:
    - a) Within 24 hours after birth of baby.
    - b) Daily during the first week.
    - c) Weekly the rest of the first month.
  - 3. After the first month:
    - a) The BFPC and the breastfeeding woman can determine the contact schedule as mother desires (e.g., if returning to work or school).

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 3: Program Management & Staffing

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### 1. Program Management (Effective: January 2023)

- A. The Breastfeeding Peer Counselor (BFPC) must be supervised by a designated Peer Counselor Supervisor.
- B. Initial and ongoing training for the BFPC and Peer Counselor Supervisor must be planned and implemented.(IL WIC AD 11.1).
- C. All agency WIC staff must receive training in the purpose, function and integration of the Peer Counselor Program at orientation and annually as needed.

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 3: Program Management & Staffing

### 2. WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Supervisor (Effective: January 2023)

- A. The designated staff person at each agency who coordinates Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program activities is called the “Peer Counselor Supervisor.”

The Peer Counselor Supervisor must meet the USDA Nutrition Services Standards by July 1, 2024, including:

1. The qualifications for a CPA (IL WIC PM AD 11.3).
2. Experience in program management.
3. At minimum, 1 year of experience in counseling breastfeeding women.
4. Successful completion of specialized training in lactation management and care.
  - a.) International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) is preferred, or
  - b.) Individual may successfully complete other State-approved training, including Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) or Certified Lactation Specialist (CLS), or
  - c.) Level 3 USDA Breastfeeding Curriculum Training (must be completed within 6 months of hire as part of staff orientation training), and
  - d.) Peer Counselor Supervisor Training (must be completed within 6 months of hire as part of staff orientation training).

- B. Responsibilities may include:

1. Managing the WIC BFPC program and assisting in establishing program goals and objectives for the local agency according to the WIC and agency philosophy for achieving breastfeeding success.
2. Conducting a needs assessment to identify gaps in breastfeeding resources and services within the local agency and community that the Peer Counseling Program can address.
3. Assisting in establishing BFPC program procedures.
4. Overseeing BFPC program scheduling, staffing and training and assures all program requirements are met.
5. Providing ongoing supervision, mentoring and feedback and is available to the BFPC for problem solving, questions and general discussion.
6. Holding regular meetings with peer counselors. These may be daily or weekly as needed to keep current with participant issues and any BFPC or supervisory concerns.
7. Conducting regular observation and evaluation of BFPCs; including a quality assurance review of procedures done by each BFPC, at least annually.
8. Collecting documentation recording data as appropriate. Reviewing breastfeeding reports with the peer counselor, other staff and agency management.
9. Completing and submitting required reports to the Department and participating in Department led BFPC program conference calls.
10. Communicating BFPC program status information (i.e. peer counselor

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 3: Program Management & Staffing

terminations, hires, changes in program) to State Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Coordinator.

11. Monitoring BFPC program funding and expenditures. Assisting the fiscal agent in accurately assigning and recording peer counselor program expenditures.
12. Integrating BFPCs into all WIC operations (i.e., involvement in staff meetings; explanation of peer support to all WIC staff; identifying how program staff will refer participants to a BFPC).
13. Advocating within the agency and the community to promote and support the BFPC program.
14. Keeping current with up to date breastfeeding information and disseminating to other local agency staff.

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 3: Program Management & Staffing

### 3. Breastfeeding Peer Counselor (Effective: January 2023)

- A. The Breastfeeding Peer Counselor (BFPC) functions in the WIC Program under the direct supervision of the BFPC Program Supervisor.
  - 1. BFPC working multiple jobs within an agency must have scheduled peer counselor time in which to perform their duties (IL WIC PM AD 13.3).
  - 2. The BFPC provides basic breastfeeding and education in the clinic and in the community through the following actions:
    - a) Promoting and supporting the WIC and agency philosophy for achieving breastfeeding success.
    - b) Encouraging all women to exclusively initiate breastfeeding and to continue breastfeeding for at least one year and as long thereafter as both mom and baby desire.
    - c) The BFPC works within the scope of practice of a peer counselor and within agency guidelines to counsel and support WIC pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum mothers per policy.
    - d) Making routine contacts based on USDA WIC Breastfeeding Model for Peer Counseling guidelines with all eligible WIC clients (see IL WIC PM BFPC 2.5).
    - e) Attending monthly staff meetings, in-services or other agency meetings/events. Presenting information on breastfeeding, peer counseling or other topics as determined by the BFPC program supervisor.
    - f) Participating in Peer Counselor conference calls, conferences/workshops and task force meetings/events as appropriate.
      - 1) Participating in continuing education opportunities.
    - g) Assisting WIC staff in promoting breastfeeding peer counseling through special projects and duties as assigned.
  - 3. Compensation of BFPCs
    - a) BFPC must be compensated fairly according to the procedures of the local agency for all job duties, including contacts outside of clinic hours, and provide fringe benefits when possible.
  - 4. BFPC must receive reimbursement for:
    - a) personal phone use,
    - b) mileage, e.g. travel to home or hospital visits and meetings.
  - 5. Local agencies must cover training expenses.

# Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program (BFPC)

## Section 4: Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Training

### 1. Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Training (Effective: January 2023)

- A. Breastfeeding Peer Counselors (BFPC) should be oriented to the WIC Program and trained on WIC policy and specifically for each task for which they are responsible using appropriate procedures.
- B. The BFPC must complete Level 2 USDA WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum Training or a similar training including all the significant components of the USDA WIC Model for Peer Counseling (must be completed within 6 months of hire).
- C. The BFPC should also observe other peer counselors or lactation consultants providing lactation management services and read assigned books or materials about breastfeeding.
- D. Paraprofessionals should be trained specifically for each task for which they are responsible.
- E. Ongoing training of BFPCs should include:
  - 1. Meeting regularly with other peer counselors.
  - 2. Participating in continuing education activities and in-services.
  - 3. Attending other meetings sponsored by the Department.
  - 4. Participating in statewide peer counselor networking conference calls.