
Subject: Tennessee Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Roles and Responsibilities

Effective Date: October 1, 2019**Revised Date:** August 1, 2021

Policy: According to WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Grant requirements, Regions/Metros/Clinics that have applied for and received approval for the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program must hire at least one person to act as the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor. The BFPC is a paraprofessional with personal breastfeeding experience who provides basic breastfeeding information and support to WIC mothers. The BFPC is mentored and trained by the Regional/Metro Breastfeeding Coordinator and assisted in clinic by a BFPC Mentor and/or the clinic DBE.

The Peer Counselor may work in various settings that enable her to best reach WIC participants in the local area. Settings may include hospitals, clinic, private physician offices, and other outreach settings.

Reference: **USDA Food and Nutrition Service, *WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum, 2020*; USDA/FNS Breastfeeding Policy and Guidance; USDA/FNS WIC Nutrition Service Standards**

Procedure:

1. Roles and Responsibilities:
 - a. Provides mother-to-mother support to prenatal and postpartum WIC mothers by providing basic breastfeeding information, encouragement, and referral
 - b. Is available to participants outside of usual clinic hours and the WIC clinic environment
 - c. Counsels prenatal and postpartum participants by telephone as well as face-to-face visits at the home, hospital, and/or WIC clinic at regularly scheduled intervals
 - d. Refers participants to the WIC-Designated Breastfeeding Expert, WIC nutritionist or other appropriate health or social service agency, including outside community breastfeeding resources, for situations outside the peer counselor's scope of practice
2. Refer to
 - a. **ADM 10.09.00 BFPC Job Responsibilities**
 - b. Sample Job Description 3: WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor
 - c. Sample Job Description 6: WIC Peer Counselor in the Hospital

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Sample Job Description 3: WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor

General Description:

- A WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor is a paraprofessional support person who gives basic breastfeeding information and encouragement to WIC pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.
- Qualifications:
 - Has breastfed at least one baby (does not have to be currently breastfeeding).
 - Is enthusiastic about breastfeeding and wants to help other mothers enjoy a positive experience.
 - Can work about 10 hours a week.
 - Has a telephone and is willing to make phone calls from home.
 - Has reliable transportation.

Training:

- Attends a series of breastfeeding classes.
- Observes other peer counselors or breastfeeding experts helping mothers breastfeed.
- Reads assigned books or materials about breastfeeding.

Supervision: The peer counselor is supervised by the _____

Specific Duties of the WIC Peer Counselor:

1. Attends breastfeeding training classes to become a peer counselor.
2. Receives a caseload of WIC mothers and makes routine periodic contacts with all mothers assigned.
3. Gives basic breastfeeding information and support to new mothers, including telling them about the benefits of breastfeeding, overcoming common barriers, and getting a good start with breastfeeding. She also helps mothers prevent and handle common breastfeeding concerns.
4. Counsels WIC pregnant and breastfeeding mothers by telephone, home visits, and/or hospital visits at scheduled intervals determined by the local WIC Program.
5. May counsel women in the WIC clinic.
6. Is available outside the WIC clinic and the usual 8 to 5 working schedule to new mothers who are having breastfeeding problems.
7. Respects each mother by keeping her information strictly confidential.
8. Keeps accurate records of all contacts made with WIC mothers.
9. Refers mothers, according to clinic-established protocols, to:
 - WIC nutritionist or breastfeeding coordinator.
 - Lactation consultant.
 - Mother's physician or nurse.
 - Public health programs in the community.
 - Social service agencies.
10. Attends and assists with prenatal classes and breastfeeding support groups.
11. Attends monthly staff meetings and breastfeeding conferences/workshops as appropriate.
12. Reads assigned books and materials on breastfeeding that are provided by the supervisor.
13. May assist WIC staff in promoting breastfeeding peer counseling through special projects and duties as assigned.

I understand the above job responsibilities and agree to perform these duties as assigned.

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Sample Job Description 6: WIC Peer Counselor in the Hospital

General Description:

A WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor in the hospital is a paraprofessional support person who provides basic breastfeeding information and encouragement to WIC and WIC-eligible mothers in the hospital setting.

Qualifications:

- Has breastfed at least one baby (does not have to be currently breastfeeding).
- Current or previous WIC participant.
- Is enthusiastic about breastfeeding, and wants to help other mothers enjoy a positive experience.
- Has expertise in breastfeeding counseling and management through previous experience as a breastfeeding peer counselor, or through additional lactation training and experience.
- Can work about 10-20 hours a week.
- Has reliable transportation and holds a valid driver's license.
- Has good customer service skills, relating to persons of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and communicating in a professional, courteous, and tactful manner.
- Able to remain calm and exercise judgment in unusual or stressful situations.
- Optional: bilingual in English and Spanish.

Training:

- Participates in all standard WIC training programs of peer counselors, including formal training sessions, observing other peer counselors or lactation consultants helping mothers, and reading assigned books or materials about breastfeeding.
- Attends additional WIC training on providing breastfeeding support in the hospital.
- Attends orientation or training required by the hospital.
- Shadows a lactation consultant or expert assisting new mothers in the hospital.

Supervision:

The peer counselor working in the hospital is supervised by the _____.

Duties:

The WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor:

1. Makes hospital visits with WIC and WIC-eligible mothers in the hospital at scheduled intervals as agreed upon by the hospital and WIC agency.
2. Checks in with the hospital nurse or lactation consultant before visiting patient rooms.
3. Visits mothers to assess their interest in breastfeeding and to provide basic assistance.
4. Observes a feeding in accordance with hospital policy to check positioning and latch.
5. Provides basic education and encouragement on:
 - Reasons to breastfeed.
 - Overcoming barriers to breastfeeding.
 - Colostrum quantity and benefits.

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- Normal course of breastfeeding.
 - Positioning and latch.
 - Skin-to-skin and its benefits.
 - Maintaining adequate milk production.
 - Preventing common problems.
 - Anticipatory guidance for the early days home from the hospital.
 - Resources for breastfeeding support.
6. Respects each client by keeping her information strictly confidential.
 7. Reports any breastfeeding concerns that are beyond the peer counselor scope of practice to the patient's assigned nurse or lactation consultant, and the WIC designated breastfeeding expert.
 8. Keeps accurate records for all contacts and submits them in a timely manner to the WIC supervisor and to the hospital nurse following agreed upon procedures.
 9. Gives breastfeeding literature provided by the WIC Program.
 10. Refers to the WIC office for follow-up with the WIC Designated Breastfeeding Expert to arrange for an electric breast pump after discharge, if necessary.
 11. Arranges for follow-up contacts after discharge if agreeable to the mother.
 12. Assists patients with accessing WIC services.
 13. Maintains knowledge and skills about breastfeeding through ongoing learning opportunities such as breastfeeding workshops, monthly staff meetings, and independent reading.

I understand the above job responsibilities, and agree to perform these duties as assigned.

WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor

Date

Supervisor

Date