

# WIC Fast Facts – Support Breastfeeding, because It’s Worth it!

Up-to-date information on the Connecticut WIC Program for the healthcare professional.



## Did you know?

**79.5%** of breastfeeding participants who were on the WIC Program during pregnancy initiated breastfeeding vs. **73.7%** of breastfeeding participants not on WIC during pregnancy.



Data Source: CT-WIC Information System: Quarterly Outcome Reports, Breastfeeding Initiation and Duration, September 2022

## Making Referrals for Breastfeeding Dyads

- Provide referrals to hospital/community based breastfeeding classes and WIC services.
- Refer pregnant and breastfeeding individuals to a WIC Peer Counseling Program if available in your area.
- Assist parents in need of a breast pump by referring them to an appropriate Durable Medical Equipment (DME) provider or refer them to WIC nutrition staff for questions.

## WIC Breastfeeding Services

- Each local WIC Program has a Breastfeeding Coordinator or Designated Breastfeeding Expert, to ensure all WIC staff implement the Connecticut WIC Program's Guidelines for Breastfeeding Promotion and Support.
- The local program Breastfeeding Coordinator can offer your staff training on WIC's Breastfeeding Support Services.
- Each local WIC Program has staff that has completed a Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) training.
- Several local agencies have Nutritionists who are also International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC) on staff who can assist with more complex breastfeeding issues of participants.
- All WIC staff encourage participants to initiate breastfeeding and support them to exclusively breastfeed.
- Nutrition staff help families create a goal and plan for breastfeeding.

## WIC Foods Support Breastfeeding

Did you know breastfeeding individuals receive an enhanced food benefits package from WIC? This means that breastfeeding parents who do not receive formula from WIC receive more foods in their benefits than anyone else participating in the WIC program.



### Some new additions to the food package are:

- Yogurt.
- Whole wheat pasta.
- Low-fat or Fat-free milk for women participants.
- Cash Value Benefit (CVB) to purchase vegetables and fruits.

## How can WIC and providers work together?

- Initiate early discussions on infant feeding choices.
- Review [Breastfeeding in Underserved Women: Increasing Initiation and Continuation of Breastfeeding](#).
- Support the [AAP's Policy Statement on Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk](#), updated in 2022, which states, "breastfeeding and human milk are the normative standards for infant feeding and nutrition."
- Encourage and support parents to keep their babies with them during their hospital stay.
- If supplementation of a breastfed infant is medically necessary, provide your patient (WIC participants) with information on what to supplement (expressed breast milk or formula), when to supplement (after every feeding or once per day), how much to supplement and the plan for discontinuing supplementation as appropriate and/or ensure that they can feed their infant at the breast.

## Why WIC Supports Exclusive Breastfeeding

Exclusive breastfeeding allows a baby to develop a healthy digestive system and decreases the risks for many childhood diseases such as diarrhea and ear infections. Exclusive breastfeeding also decreases the risk of maternal illnesses and/or diseases including ovarian cancer and diabetes. The introduction of formula at any time can immediately disrupt the healthy balance of good bacteria in the baby's GI tract thus limiting breastfeeding benefits.

As defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) - the infant only receives breast milk without any additional food or drink, not even water, until 6 months of age.

Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended until 6 months of age by American Academy of Pediatrics as well as the Connecticut Department of Public Health and the Connecticut WIC Program.

## Secrets of Baby Behavior

The Secrets of Baby Behavior is a training program, developed by the California WIC Program and UC Davis Human Lactation Center which helps health care professionals communicate with parents and caregivers around infant behaviors, specifically infant cues regarding sleep, hunger and crying. Responding to early infant cues can promote successful breastfeeding. Many WIC staff are trained in this program.

**For more information on the Secrets of Baby Behavior trainings, contact the State WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator at 1-800-741-2142.**

## WIC Peer Counseling Programs

What is the Peer Counseling Program?

A WIC peer counselor is a parent who has participated in WIC, breastfed their own baby and is passionate about helping other parents to meet their breastfeeding goals. WIC Peer Counselors complete USDA developed competency based training with an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) or Registered Dietitian (RD) prior to counseling new parents. Peers also receive continuing education to keep current on emerging topics.



**There are eight (8) WIC program-based counseling programs in Connecticut.**

- **Optimus Health Care WIC Program**  
Bridgeport (203) 333-9200  
Southwest Community Health Center (203) 332-4600
- **New Haven WIC Program**  
Fair Haven (203) 773-5007  
Sargent Drive (203) 688-5150  
St. Raphael's (203) 789-3563  
Cornell Scott Hill Health Center (203) 503-3080
- **Access Agency-Day Kimball Hospital WIC Program**  
(860) 928-3660
- **T.V.C.C.A. WIC Program**  
Norwich (860) 425-6562  
New London (860) 425-6620
- **Hartford WIC Program** (860) 757-4860
- **East Hartford WIC Program** (860) 291-7190
- **Meriden WIC Program** (203) 630-4245
- **Bristol/New Britain WIC Program** (860) 225-8695

## Breast Pump Coverage and Education

Did you know private Health Insurance Companies are required to provide breast pumps? Breast pumps should also come with instruction and education. In Connecticut, HUSKY/Medicaid also provides access to breast pumps for its members. WIC works with Community Health Network of CT (CHN-CT) and Department of Social Services to ensure WIC participants that also receive HUSKY/Medicaid get the information they need to be successful at pumping.



WIC staff assist women with accessing a prescription and/or Prior Authorization for an appropriate breast pump (i.e. multi-user or personal use pump) based on the breastfeeding dyad's needs.

## Breastfeeding Rights in CT

Did you know that parents who choose to breastfeed have rights in Connecticut?

Breastfeeding laws include the right to breastfeed in public, the right to breastfeed or pump at work, and rights if a breastfeeding individual is called for jury duty.

## Collaboration with Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition (CBC)

Do you know about the CBC's Breastfeeding Friendly Recognition Programs including Worksite and Childcare?

The CBC recognizes worksites and childcare programs who assist employees and families in reaching their breastfeeding goals by supporting them when they are ready to go back to work. The Connecticut Department of Public Health and Connecticut WIC Program assist employers and childcare programs, who support breastfeeding families, in their process to become recognized.

## Why Breastfeeding is Good for Connecticut and its Communities

- Reduces healthcare costs due to decreased hospital sick visits or hospitalizations, decreased risk of developing diabetes, obesity and allergies later in life.
- Environmentally friendly - breastmilk is packaged and stored by the parent - there is little to no waste!
- Helping Connecticut reach Healthy People 2030 goals for breastfeeding duration.