



Connecticut WIC Program Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Implementation Plan- 2019 Update for FY 2020 State Plan

State Program Overview and Update:

The Connecticut WIC Program maintains a hybrid-peer counseling model with support from the USDA WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling funding. The two hospital-based WIC peer counseling programs are located in the diverse, urban cities of Hartford and New Haven. The Program also operates WIC clinic-based peer counseling in three local agencies with International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC) on staff. Up until this year, the Connecticut WIC Program maintained two clinic based local agency peer counseling programs. In FY 2019, the third clinic based local agency started a breastfeeding peer counselling program at the East Hartford WIC Program. Also during FY 2019, the Waterbury WIC program was awarded funds for Breastfeeding Peer Counseling to establish collaboration with another privately funded Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program that recruit and serve participants enrolled in the Waterbury WIC program. A focus of the Waterbury collaboration will be to coordinate WIC participants' care through access and use of CT-WIC Peer Counseling modules by both the WIC staff and the privately funded peers. The two long standing clinic based programs (Bridgeport and TVCCA) have successfully incorporated CT-WIC into their documentation and focus on continuity of care within the WIC office meeting participants' breastfeeding goals. The New Haven program has worked hard to continue to implement and use CT-WIC with increased comfort and ease. The Hartford program continues to work through its challenges with the routine use of CT-WIC to manage their program. In light of this, the State agency has provided intense technical assistance and support to this agency during 2019. All peer counseling programs have embraced continued new enhancements as they were added to improve the functionality of the system.

The expansion of the State's Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program to the East Hartford WIC program deserves more attention. The East Hartford WIC staff marketed the peer position extensively and were rewarded with much interest from a diverse pool of participants and two well attended Peer Counseling informational sessions. State staff were invited to participate in these sessions that took place in the 2nd quarter. After the

informational sessions, multiple interviews were scheduled. The interviews resulted in a qualified candidate that reflects the East Hartford community. The peer counselor started her position in the 3rd quarter and was trained by the State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator using the current Loving Support curriculum. After her training, she has been thriving using CT-WIC, recruiting a caseload and has been welcomed into the East Hartford WIC program as a new member of the team. This local agency has a strong breastfeeding team with both a Breastfeeding Coordinator/DBE and an IBCLC /DBE. The State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator has frequently provided technical assistance to this agency in order to set the foundation and understanding of peer counseling for all staff and to ensure a smooth start. Prior to recruitment of peer counselor candidates, the State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator presented this local agency's all staff meeting with a Hartford hospital based peer to ensure staff fully understood the program. Excellent communication regarding expectations of the peer counseling program has yielded a wonderful start with this new WIC clinic based program.

Eleven staff members from the Connecticut WIC Program attended the Designated Breastfeeding Expert training. Three State staff members attended including the Breastfeeding Coordinator, Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator and a Nutrition Consultant. Seven local agency Breastfeeding Coordinators/DME and agency Lactation Consultants (IBCLC) with peer counseling programs throughout the State attended and one local agency nutritionist with an IBCLC attended.

All hospital based peer counseling programs continue to use CT-WIC and work hard to maintain WIC office hours during uncommonly high staff turnover this year. Trinity Health of New England (THNE) have many network facilities based in Connecticut. This network received funding to expand non-WIC peer counseling using the Hispanic Health Council's (HHC) Breastfeeding Heritage and Pride Program. The Connecticut WIC Program continues to provide in kind services to support efforts to WIC participants that are part of the THNE target population. In the 1st quarter the THNE peer counselors received an overview of WIC services in Connecticut by the State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator, including a refresher about CT-WIC access and documentation tips in order to ensure continuity of care for shared participants. CT-WIC training is part of ongoing training for these important partners.

We received newly designed peer counseling enhancements and bug fixes for the CT-WIC Peer Counseling module this year. The first enhancement (a new reporting feature) occurred in the 1st quarter and needed bug fixes were made in the third quarter. The new report assists peer counselors in management and monitoring of their caseloads. The Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator reviewed all enhancements and bug fixes with staff when these became available.

In the second quarter, the Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator provided a Connecticut Peer Counseling overview, to the Community Health Network of Connecticut's (CHN-CT) Intensive Care Management teams who are comprised of nurses who specialize in maternal child health. The presentation is attached for your convenience. An emerging partnership with the state's Healthy Start Program, featured a presentation for Healthy Start home visitors and families regarding WIC Breastfeeding Services with an emphasis on Breastfeeding Peer Counseling.

Another key accomplishment for peer services in FY 2019, was improved coordination of WIC office hours with staff changes in the two hospital based (Hartford and New Haven) peer counseling programs. Maintaining and shifting staff allowed the Hartford program to maintain daily half day peer hours at the Santa Marquez Center office and multiple half days per week at Burgdorf Health Center. In New Haven, peer counselors started rotating through the city with newly trained staff in the 3rd quarter. At that time, the Cornell Scott Hill Health Center, Yale New Haven Hospital both York Street Campus and Hospital of St. Raphael's campus had a peer counselor one day per week in the office but are able to serve these participants off site.

Formal monitoring of local agencies with peer counseling programs continued this year. Two local agencies were monitored during their bi-annual WIC Management Evaluation Review (MER) with the State Monitoring Team. One review occurred in the 2nd quarter and the other the 4th quarter which also included an enhanced breastfeeding review. In the 3rd quarter, one local agency had a follow up monitoring review based on the severity of its findings during its FY18 bi-annual MER. Peer counseling was included in this follow-up monitoring visit. The State WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator was involved with all these reviews. Monitoring tools developed in FY 2018 were utilized. Tools include: Connecticut WIC Program Management Evaluation Report for Breastfeeding Peer Counseling, Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Addendum Chart Audit tool to be used with the Nutrition Services Chart Audit Tool for participants enrolled in Breastfeeding Peer Counseling and a Peer Counseling Observation Tool.

Both the WIC-hospital based and WIC-clinic based peer counseling programs operate using USDA's 10 components to *Loving Support[®] Through Peer Counseling: A Journey Together – For WIC Managers and Loving Support[®] Through Peer Counseling: A Journey Together – For Training WIC Peer Counselors* at their core.

Each type of program uses or has adapted protocols originally created by the Hispanic Health Council (HHC) and Hartford Hospital (HH) for the program that was established in 1993 with an initial grant award from the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT-DPH). Based on the FY 2016 WIC Peer Counseling Management Training event at the FNS Regional Office in Boston, MA language and protocols were updated to reflect new information, specifically providing more clarification on the definition of a peer counselor and the scope of practice.

The following is a brief history and evolution of Connecticut's peer counseling program as it responds to new research and fluctuations in available resources.

The State WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator has been part of the WIC Breastfeeding Unit since 2016. The State WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator has a Master's of Science in Nutrition is IBCLC, RD and brought her experience, managing a WIC-clinic and peer counseling program at the Fair Haven WIC office, to the State agency.

Monitoring of peer programs will continue in FY 2020. The State WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator continues to stress the importance for both nutritionists and peer counselors to review notes and providing concise, timely documentation to ensure continuity of care for peer counseling participants. Consistent use of CT-WIC allows for comprehensive breastfeeding support and education and can facilitate a peer/WIC staff approach that is engaged with moms to assist in meeting their infant feeding goals.

BREASTFEEDING HERITAGE AND PRIDE: HISPANIC HEALTH COUNCIL, HARTFORD HOSPITAL PROGRAM SERVING THE HARTFORD WIC (AND A FEW NEIGHBORING LOCATIONS)

The *Breastfeeding, Heritage and Pride* (BHP) breastfeeding peer counseling program was initially funded through a grant received by the CT-DPH Department of Public Health in 1993. It continues to be jointly operated by the Hispanic Health Council (HHC) and Hartford Hospital (HH). In 2005, using USDA WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling funds, CT-DPH entered into a contract with the HHC to expand the BHP program to include two additional full time peer counselors and administrative support. A 2004, CDC-funded, randomized, controlled trial of the BHP (*Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 2004; 158:897-902) concluded that peer counselors can significantly improve breastfeeding initiation rates and have an impact on breastfeeding rates at 1 and 3 months post partum.

2019 Update

Currently the Hispanic Health Council (HHC) has 3 Hispanic bilingual peer counselors. The program continues with 2.0 FTE peer counselors one has been with the program for over 2 years, the other for over 5 years and one recently returned to the program after 2 years in another program but had been with the program prior for over 5 years. Peer counselors continue to work hard on their skill set and have been an asset to the success of the program. They cover both permanent locations at the Hartford WIC program.

We continue to work with Connecticut WIC local agencies other than Hartford WIC Program who receive benefits from the services the HHC peers provide. Most of the non-Hartford WIC moms receive WIC services East Hartford and New Britain/Bristol programs. Hartford Hospital and St. Francis Hospital, partner with HHC BHP Program. When moms deliver at either of these facilities, they may be referred to the peer counseling program, after delivery.

Referrals also occur when women go to Hartford Hospital or St. Francis Hospitals OB/GYN clinics. Now, WIC staff from outlying Hartford towns are able to use CT-WIC to monitor peer counseling contacts made by HHC peers for these participants. The East Hartford WIC program and HHC are working together to ensure participants do not receive duplicated services and make mindful placement of participants based on location and need.

The State WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Coordinator, CT DPH IT consultants and HHC IT Consultants worked collaboratively to maintain laptops, printers, and CT-WIC accessibility. Historically, HHC has communicated with Hartford WIC Program via email or phone. The use of MIS communication has not replaced former communication but has enhanced what has always existed providing more consistent availability of information regarding participant care. During FY 2019 some assistance has been needed to ensure new staff have been training, equipment is maintained and assistance is provided when issues arise.

HHC has and will continue to require technical assistance in the coming year. Primarily, support will continue to focus on facilitating open communication on use of CT-WIC, new staff training, training for Nutritionist staff in Peer Counseling components of CT-WIC and train on enhancements slated for FY 2020. Updated contract language and budget for FY 2020 were finalized in the fourth quarter of FY 2019.

Hartford Hospital (HH), which was the state's first Baby-Friendly hospital, continues to fund and one peer position that is integrated into HHC. We have discussed open communication, the State WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator has had multiple meetings with the HH IBCLC in FY 2019 to ensure continuity of care and WIC has provided in kind services to better accommodate both in-patient and community needs.

As mentioned previously, one of the largest accomplishments of HHC and Hartford WIC is the implementation of peer counselor WIC office hours during FY 2019 this was a fine balance with times of vacancy but these vacancies were not long. Peer staff has weekly huddle meeting with only the peer counselor team. The Main Street WIC site has peer counseling coverage each day of the week and Coventry Street site has coverage twice per week. There have been opportunities to refine the peers' roles in the WIC office. Initially, they would be at an infant feeding class or orientation class when offered and have individual counseling sessions if their participants were in the office. The State WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator, Hartford WIC management staff and HHC management staff met weekly in FY 2019 to discuss the integration of the peers within the WIC office. It has been agreed to continue to have peers integrated in the infant feeding class but to also have peers at new baby certification visits and focus on co-counseling or warm hand off with participants from WIC to peer staff or vice versa. This has increased collaboration and assisted moms in telling their stories once and having the breastfeeding plan and goals being transparent. Peers can call and follow up with mom with ease since they are part of regular WIC nutrition visits.

This is the goal and continues to be a work in progress but overall is an approach that is working well at this time.

NEW HAVEN WIC BREASTFEEDING PEER COUNSELING PROGRAM FORMALLY: BREASTFEEDING HERITAGE AND PRIDE: YALE NEW HAVEN HOSPITAL PROGRAM AND FHCHC

In 2009, the BHP model of peer counseling was expanded to Yale New Haven Hospital (YNHH). The program was originally established using WIC Nutrition Services and Administration (NSA) funding and was planned to staff one full-time Lactation Specialist, Peer Counseling Coordinator and 2 full-time peer counselors. The program is primarily funded with Connecticut's USDA WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling grant and some resources from YNHH.

2019 Update

The program started the year on a positive note with a new part time peer counselors hired in the first quarter. The new peer is African American and replaced the previous African American peer counselor who left in the 4th quarter of FY 2018. She received training from the State WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator in FY 2019 as well as much of her training from New Haven IBCLC in the Loving Support curriculum. She took the Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) course funded by the CDC SPAN grant in the 4th quarter this year. The program is fully staffed, with 2 FTE. There are 2 bilingual Hispanic and 1 African American peer counselors. With the Fair Haven Community Health Center (FHCHC) are 3 peer counseling FTE's in the city of New Haven. The IBCLC provides 5 hour per week of oversight for peer counselors who part time or greater. The IBCLC has 5 hours per week for administrative time for a total of 25 hours per week dedicated to the peer program. The IBCLC conducts a daily huddle with peers about the day's activities and is extremely efficient with her time. The State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator provides technical assistance via calls, emails and site visits as need. In the 2nd quarter a site visit included training of the newest peer counselor and technical assistance to the program.

The merge between the Fair Haven Community Health Center (FHCHC) Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program and the Yale New Haven Hospital (YNHH) York Street Campus (YSC) site has continued to be a success throughout FY 2019. Merging of these programs has allowed for consistent breastfeeding peer counseling services throughout the city of New Haven for WIC participants. In the 3rd quarter of FY 2019 when the new peer counselor was fully trained, peer services resumed to one day per week for office hours at Yale New Haven YSC and St. Raphael's Campus (SRC) in addition Cornell Scott Hill Health Center (CSHHC). The IBCLC has provided in service training for all WIC staff at New Haven WIC meetings and also provided guidance to New Haven WIC Program management regarding the peer program when necessary. Peer counselors presented role plays with the IBCLC for the New Haven

WIC staff. Having peer counselors has been a continued welcomed addition to the permanent New Haven WIC sites.

The New Haven WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program received a contract amendment including a budget increase in FY 2019. The budget increase was to provide peer counselors with iPhones. The local agency created a cell phone plan and added to CT-WIC this year is an indicator to track cell phone use to see the effectiveness of this mode of communication i.e.; texting and FaceTime Peer counselors use their iPhone to communicate and to also assess if a home visit is necessary for participants who choose to communicate with their peer with a cell phone. Preliminary feedback this year has proven this to be a welcomed form of communication with increased accessibility to participants enrolled in the program.

During FY 2019, the YNHH SFC received continued WIC IT support with a laptops in a more private office for the peer at this location. WIC IT continues to be available for support for the Peers and IBCLC as they travel throughout the city.

The most recent quarterly report (3rd quarter) for the YNHH program is attached.

FHCHC

This New Haven site continues with 1 FTE (37.5 hrs/week), Hispanic bilingual peer. She continues to maintain her CLC credentials. This year the FHCHC budget was amended with an increase to provide a salary more in line with others in her role. Digna has been amazing to watch her grow in her continued confidence and skill into FY2019 with being the lead on CT-WIC peer counseling module implementation. She assisted by providing her skills in the 4th quarter of FY 2019 to our newest peer counselor in the East Hartford office with the State Breastfeeding Coordinator at FHCHC location. FHCHC continues work within CT-WIC identifying best practices and identifying bugs with the 2 new CT-WIC releases that effected the Peer Counseling module in FY 2019. Many continued lessons learned about CT-WIC Peer Counseling Modules have been identified and many bugs have been fixed through the work of Digna and the program staff. Her efforts has allowed the State agency to enhance the usability of the CT-WIC PC modules. State WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator has provided technical assistance visits to assist in the identification and work around for identified bugs continually in FY 2019. The FHCHC peer communicates multiple times per week with the local IBCLC and more often during yielding situations. With the increase use of iPhone at the YSC this mode of communication is increasing as well between the FHCHC peer and the IBCLC.

WIC BREASTFEEDING PEER COUNSELING: PROVIDING LOVING SUPPORT FOR BREASTFEEDING SUCCESS

In 2011, the Connecticut WIC Program established a pilot breastfeeding peer counseling program in three (3) WIC local agencies with existing IBCLC's on staff. Planning meetings

occurred between October 2010 and January 2011 and the BHP protocol and documentation forms were modified to accommodate the more traditional WIC peer counseling model embedded in a WIC clinic. Connecticut's pilot program, *WIC Peer Counseling: Providing Loving Support for Breastfeeding Success* has been up and running since March 2011. An IBCLC consultant was hired to provide technical assistance to both the State and local agencies and to provide training to WIC peer counselors.

2019 Update

We will showcase 2019 updates individually for each clinic-based program due to the unique and substantial changes that occurred over this past year.

TVCCA

First quarter of FY 2019 TVCCA hired a new Peer Counselor. In FY 2018, 4th quarter, the bilingual Hispanic peer counselor for personal reasons resigned. The new peer counselor was trained with the IBCLC and the State Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Coordinator in the Loving Support Curriculum. She quickly started seeing the previous peer counselor's participants and started accruing new participants.

The budget was amended with an increase this year to provide increased hours to peer services at TVCCA. In the 2nd quarter the peer counselor started office hours in TVCCA's other permanent site, New London. In the 2nd quarter, the State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator provided an overview of peer services, review of the referral process and protocols at a TVCCA all staff meeting. This provided a foundation for all staff as the local agency experienced a great deal of staff turnover and to orientate the New London staff to peer counseling as this was new for this location. The TVCCA IBCLC and the peer co-counsel often in the Norwich office and act as a role model for co-counseling skill throughout the state.

Baby Café moved to the TVCCA Norwich WIC site in FY 2018. It was previous located at Otis Library in Norwich and Baby Café had ceased temporarily when the peer counselor left in quarter 4 of FY 2019. Both the old and new Baby Café locations in Norwich are run by the IBCLC and peer. This location has been slow with participation, however offers improved parking and WIC services for those attending Baby Café as needed.

This year an additional location of the Baby Café opened at the New London Public Library. The children's librarian kicks off the Baby Café with a story time. She does a wonderful job of interacting with the families through music and story reading. The second half of the Baby Café the peer, IBCLC and other WIC CLC's conduct Baby Café. This is a popular offering, well attended and feedback has been very positive. The State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator provided technical assistance visits to this local agency to support

this collaboration among the peer, local agency coordinator and leadership at the New London Public Library.

Optimus

In the 3rd quarter the Breastfeeding Coordinator/DBE became an IBCLC. The consultant IBCLC resigned. Now there is increased access to an IBCLC as the Breastfeeding Coordinator/DBE is a nutritionist and the agency Program Nutritionist who works full time for the local agency

This year the budget has been amended with an increase to provide an increase in salary and hours for the peer who has shown increased growth and has taken the CLC course. The budget will also support another part time peer for the Southwest location. Optimus has started to recruit potential African American candidates who will reflect the participant population and compliment the current peer, Alma who is a Latina and bilingual/bicultural. The new peer will train at Optimus office and when fully trained provide services at the Southwest WIC location weekly.

Alma continues to operate well in CT-WIC, manages her caseload and schedule with ease, has a wonderful rapport with her enrolled participants and has adapted to system enhancements within CT-WIC. She is motivated to co-counsel with WIC staff and is always looking to improve her skills.

East Hartford

As stated above in the overview, we are excited about the newly up and running clinic based Peer Counseling Program at the East Hartford WIC program. The budget was amended with Peer Funds in 3rd quarter of FY 2019.

The State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator has provided TA visits with the breastfeeding and management team about Peer Counseling functionality in CT-WIC, expectation of documentation, co-counseling and the Connecticut WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Protocols. The team is very receptive and is thriving in all aspects of the program.

The Coordinator of the WIC program in East Hartford in the 3rd quarter is working on a MOU with HHC to ensure collaboration amount WIC participants and avoid duplicating services.

Waterbury

The Waterbury WIC budget was amended with Breastfeeding Peer Counseling funds in the 3rd quarter of FY 2019. These funds are to allow the Waterbury WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator/DBE time to coordinate services with the non WIC funded peers from HHC that

are located at St. Mary's hospital located in Waterbury. There have been some staff changes at the Waterbury WIC program but the goal is to coordinate communication between the programs so WIC staff is aware of participates that are receiving non WIC funded peer counseling services to ensure continuity of care to protect breastfeeding dyads feeding goals.

Challenges and Opportunities

In FY 2018 HHC was awarded \$2.08 Million for peer counseling services at some Trinity Health of New England facilities from the WK Kellogg Foundation. The State agency continues to be dedicated to providing in kind services for these new peers and to collaborate with HHC to ensure families being serviced are benefiting from a collaboration between WIC and their non-WIC funded Peer Counseling Program. The State Breastfeeding Unit continues to meet with HHC to discuss how funds can be most effectively leveraged to service shared WIC participants. Without collaboration, families may not be able to have a true team approach to meeting feeding goals. It is critical for HHC and WIC to understand this relationship to provide transparency in education and support services provided. With the meetings this fiscal year there is an understanding of the importance of this priority. The goal is to continue these conversations and see tangible actions emerge in FY 2020. Putting a plan in place will allow WIC staff to issue the appropriate food packages for these families as well as minimizing formula issuance if appropriate, maximizing moms' food packages and increasing WIC retention if appropriate.

The State agency has been able to increase the New Haven, Optimus and TVCCA budgets so hours and salary can be better align with hospital based peer salary. Optimus is now recruiting and able to fund another part time peer who we are hoping to start mid- FY 2020.

The State agency has been able to start a new clinic based Peer Counseling Program in East Hartford and provide funding to the Waterbury WIC program to collaborate with the Trinity Health of New England peer who services participants at St. Mary's hospital in Waterbury.

Due to some setbacks with the CT-WIC peer counseling reports, we continue to struggle with timely data collection. We are hoping to have by mid-calendar year 2020 to more data within PC functions of CT-WIC. We continue to ask our hospital based programs to provide us with narrative program reports as this is worked on with the CT-WIC developers. (See example, attached)

LATCH Study:

The YNHH (currently New Haven WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program) and HHC BHP programs and the two-current WIC clinic-based Breastfeeding Peer Counseling programs (Fair Haven and TVCCA) participated in the expanded LATCH (**LATCH Lactation Advice thru Texting Can Help**) study that concluded in FY 2016. This study was funded through the USDA Center for Collaborative Research on WIC Nutrition Education Innovations at the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine (CNRC WIC Center). It built on the LATCH pilot project and will examine the effectiveness of using texting to provide enhanced support through peer counselors. We've included a listing of newly published research and also research published in the past.

To note, in Q4 of FY 2019, the Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior selected *Impact of the Lactation Advice through Texting Can Help (LATCH) Trial on Time-to-First-Contact and Exclusive Breastfeeding among WIC Participants* by the journal's readership as one of the top three publications of the year. The article will be recognized in the September issue.

LATCH results showed 50% of Moms exclusively breastfeeding at 2 week in the intervention arm versus 31.8% in the control arm. The study was underpowered to determine if this was statistically significant. Participants had high satisfaction with the texting they received. The study showed shortened first time contact with a Peer Counselor after delivery. This is critical to receive personalized breastfeeding support and education to a WIC participant from her Breastfeeding Peer Counselor.

Published in FY 2018,

Martinez, J.L., Harari, N., Segura-Pérez-S., Goeschel, L., Bozzi, V., Pérez-Escamilla, R. (2017). Impact of the Lactation Advice through Texting Can Help (LATCH) Trial on Time-to-First-Contact and Exclusive Breastfeeding among WIC Participants. Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior. Vol 50: 33-42

Feasibility and Acceptability of a Text Message Intervention Used as an Adjunct Tool by WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselors: the LATCH pilot to Maternal & Child Nutrition. Vol 14 12488

Awaiting review

Martinez, J.L., Harari, N., Pérez-Escamilla, R. (2017). Lactation Advice Through Texting Can Help (LATCH): An analysis of intensity of engagement via two-way text messaging. Journal of Health Communication. *Under Review.*

Published previously

Martinez, J.L., Shebl, F., Harari, N., Pérez-Escamilla, R. (2017). An Assessment of the Social Cognitive Predictors of Exclusive Breastfeeding Behavior Using the Health Action Process Approach. *Social Science and Medicine*. Vol. 182: 106-116.

GENERAL PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A description of the Connecticut WIC Program's model, which incorporates the *FNS Model for a Successful Peer Counseling Program*, follows.

1. Appropriate Definition of Peer Counselor

The Connecticut WIC Program's definition of a breastfeeding peer counselor is as follows:

- Paraprofessional (i.e., no academic training in breastfeeding)
- Recruited and hired from target population (ideally, a current or past WIC participant)
- Available to WIC clients outside usual clinic hours and outside the WIC clinic environment
- Breastfeeding experience (ideally, a minimum of 6 months)

2. Designated breastfeeding peer counseling program managers/coordinators at State and/or local level

State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator, Lori Goeschel, responsible for contract management and administrative oversight of the 4 peer programs in the state. As outlined above Lori has spent FY 18 on site targeted peer training, technical assistance and CT-WIC use and troubleshooting. She has also worked extensively with New Haven WIC Program on implementing the city-wide peer services which included part time office hours for peers within the permanent WIC sites (Yale New Haven Hospital York Street and St. Raphael's Campus and the Cornel Scott Hill Health Center). A contract extension was processed for HHC through September 30, 2019. With the assistance of the State WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator she will be responsible for ensuring that the USDA WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling funds are used to expand WIC breastfeeding support services through peer counseling.

The State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator maintains contact with subcontractors Leticia Marulanda (HHC) and Kate Manuel (YNHH) with the regarding the status of the program and quarterly reports are required to document progress. Due to design of CT-WIC reports will have more qualitative updated to reflect program progress. Once enhancements are completed in CT-WIC reports there will be more quantitative data to reflect contract language changes that were made in FY 18.

3. Defined job parameters and job descriptions for peer counselors

- The breastfeeding peer counselors are community women, *reflective of the WIC participant population*, who have experience in successfully breastfeeding a child for a minimum of six months. They are committed to encouraging women to initiate and continue breastfeeding, and supporting those who decide to do so, so that they may have the best chance of success and a positive experience. They are responsible for positive role modeling, providing information, encouragement, and knowledgeable support and in person assistance to pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers.
- Peer counselors provide services through a combination of telephone (texting) contacts and home and hospital visits, according to program protocols (see item 6, below).
- Peer counselors also participate in promotional and advocacy activities.
- Peer counselors receive ongoing training and continuing education as described in item 10.

4. Adequate compensation and reimbursement of peer counselors

The BHP peer counselors currently receive approximately \$17.00 per hour. Since its inception in 1993, the BHP Program has tried a number of different options for hiring and compensation. The hiring of full time peers who receive a benefit package and adequate compensation has resulted in the best retention rates and, ultimately, the operation of an efficient and effective program. The WIC-clinic based peers receive \$12.00-\$15.00 per hour and are required to work a minimum of 10 hours per week.

5. Training of appropriate WIC State/local peer counseling management and clinic staff

- WIC clinic-based peers attended the CT-LLL annual Healthcare Provider Seminar in March 2019
- The State agency met as needed with HHC and Yale sub-contractors in 2019. Meetings focused on training of New Haven WIC staff on the expansion which included CT-WIC referrals, part time peer office hours and inclusion of the peer team in permanent site staff meetings and New Haven WIC staff meetings in FY 2019
- Peer counselors provided input on implementation of CT-WIC peer module including identification of bugs and development of solutions (FHCHC).
- Peer Retreat completed May 2019
- Select peers attended the June 2019 Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition Conference
- On-going targeted Peer Counseling Module (CT-WIC) training ongoing in FY 2019.

- Peer counselors were invited to attend WIC Statewide Meetings and Peer Counselor IBCLC were invited to Breastfeeding Coordinator meetings to facilitate teambuilding.

6. Establishment of standardized breastfeeding peer counseling program policies and procedures at the State and local level as part of Agency nutrition education plan.

- **Compensation and reimbursement of peer counselors:** Peer counselors will be compensated at a rate that will promote retention.
- **Training:** Peer counselors will be trained using the “*Loving Support* through Peer Counseling” curriculum as well as the BHP training curriculum.
- **Documentation of client contacts:** All participant contacts, including unsuccessful attempts, will be documented in CT-WIC.
- **Referral protocols:** Both hospital based Peer Counseling Programs continue to use CT-WIC to make referrals. Ongoing training is provided on this process. See specific protocols for referral procedures.
- **Confidentiality:** The Participant Consent will be verbally given when the referring staff member makes a referral to the program. Both hospital and WIC-clinic based programs follow WIC confidentiality regulations.

7. Adequate supervision and monitoring of peer counselors On-site Breastfeeding Coordinators or Lactation Consultants

- initial and continued training of peer counselors;
- assignment of referrals;
- regular guidance of patient/ participant care; provision of direct care for complex cases based on program protocols;
- consult as necessary to Program Directors and reporting regularly to Program Directors;
- providing first-line problem solving for peer counselors, and triaging when necessary to program directors and/or medical consultants;
- provision of public education sessions to promote and inform community members about breastfeeding and;
- shared review of program participant charts for accuracy and thoroughness.

8. Establishment of community partnerships to enhance the effectiveness of a WIC peer counseling program.

The BHP program model is designed to benefit the community served through a partnership between Hartford Hospital, Hispanic Health Council and the Hartford WIC Program combining the expertise and resources of each institution to provide an integrated breastfeeding peer counselor program. In the first quarter of FY 2019 HHC

Peer Counselors had half day daily office hours at Hartford WIC's Main Street site and half day coverage 2-3 times per week at the Hartford WIC Coventry site. The BHP replication in New Haven also integrates this partnership approach. The YNHH BHP program has its offices co-located with the WIC Program site at Yale New Haven Hospital. In the WIC clinic-based programs, peer counselors have relationships with area birthing facilities and have also worked closely with hospitals involved in the Connecticut Ten Step Collaborative, the continuation of the successful, Connecticut Breastfeeding Initiative (CBI), a CPPW project funded by CDC to assist 10 maternity facilities in Connecticut in Baby-Friendly designation. Backus hospital in the Norwich (TVCCA) is in Designation Phase of the 4-D Pathway (BFHI), and awaiting confirmation by October 2019 of their successful site review. Windham Hospital is on the pathway. Currently, there are 10 Baby-Friendly Designated Hospitals in the State.

9. Provision of the following to peer counselors:

Timely access to breastfeeding coordinators and other lactation experts for assistance with problems outside of peer counselor scope of practice

In Hartford and New Haven, both BHP Program Lactation Consultants, and the Hartford Hospital Program Director are IBCLC's. Both program's have access to medical consultants who are available whenever assistance is needed.

Peers are mentored by staff IBCLC's employed by WIC local agencies. Three are Nutritionist. The WIC IBCLC/DBE are partially funded by the peer counseling grant. WIC IBCLC/DBE have access to medical support as needed through their host agencies.

The following BHP Peer Counselor Performance Plan addresses:

- **Regular, systematic contact with supervisor.**
- **Participation in WIC clinic staff meetings and breastfeeding in-services as part of the WIC team**
- **Opportunities to meet regularly with other peer counselors.**

BHP Peer Counselor Performance Plan Goals:
Successfully complete peer counselor training process; pass exam with minimum of 80%; Demonstrate competencies based on supervisor observation
Follow-up on all prenatal referrals within 1 week of assignment; post partum within one day
Home visits provided according to the following protocols: <u>Prenatal</u> : Provide all prenatal clients with minimum of one prenatal visits; <u>Hospital</u> : Provide all post partum clients with minimum of one in-hospital visit, additional visits bas on participant needs.

Post partum: (minimum of) once within 24 hours of hospital discharge; once within 48 hours of hospital discharge; once within two weeks of hospital discharge; once within six weeks of hospital discharge; provide telephone calls between visits, and additional visits and telephone calls according to need
Content of all visits according to training and protocols provided - based on program forms
Thorough and accurate documentation of all contacts and attempted contacts (see attachments)
Participation in biweekly meetings with program lactation consultant and monthly meetings with program co-director; maintain regular communication with program lactation consultant according to protocol and as needed
Participation in monthly BHP staff meetings for training and coordination activities
Communication regarding clients with hospital clinicians as needed

WIC clinic Peer Counselor Performance Plan Goals:
Successfully complete peer counselor training process; Demonstrate competencies based on supervisor observation
Follow-up on all prenatal referrals within 1 week of assignment; post partum within one day
Content of all visits according to training and protocols is provided based on program forms
Thorough and accurate documentation of all contacts and attempted contacts
Participation in required (weekly) meetings with WIC IBCLC and supervisor as needed; maintain regular communication with IBCLC and other WIC staff according to protocol and as needed
Participation in monthly Peer Counseling training conference calls; prepare and facilitate one call for other peers, IBCLC's and state staff each year
Engage in community outreach per instructed by WIC IBCLC mentor or clinic supervisor to foster continuity of care for peer counseling participants.

The State agency modified the BHP performance plan goals for the WIC clinic-based peer counseling program 2013. They were finalized and reviewed with the clinic-based programs in 2014. They will be implemented and evaluated in late 2019, after 1 year of consistent CT-WIC implementation. We will measure program goals and objectives when we can extrapolate data from CT-WIC PC modules.

10. Provision of training and continuing education of peer counselors.

- **Peer counselors receive standardized training using “*Loving Support through Peer Counseling*” training curriculum.**

Peer counselors participated in monthly breastfeeding peer counseling conference calls. All peer counselors are expected to participate in any staff meetings, training activities sponsored by their local WIC Program when deemed appropriate from the DBE/IBCLC, peer counseling management staff and WIC management staff. In New Haven, the Peer Counselor Coordinator/IBCLC continues to update her peers on the Loving Support platform modules. FY 2018 funded peers (hospital and WIC clinic based) and Peer management staff have been receiving all WIC Staff communication from State WIC office to ensure they receive information on all WIC staff related matters has been an effective mode of communication. Due to the positive effect of this form of communication this will continue as an ongoing practice.

- 2019 Trainings include:
 - CT-WIC Peer Counseling Release updates 1st and 3rd quarters
 - Peer Retreat- May 2019
 - WIC clinic-based and hospital based peers attended CT-LLL Healthcare Provider Seminar- March 2019
 - WIC clinic-based and hospital based peers attended the Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition meeting June 2019
 - Ten Monthly Conference calls (See below for topics)
 - Attended two WIC Statewide Meeting
 - BF Coordinator/DBE became an IBCLC (contract IBCLC no longer employed by the Local Agency as no necessary due to office infrastructure being present).
 - Two Breastfeeding Peer Counselors attended the CLC training funded through SPAN grant
 - CR annual training
 - Peer Counseling IBCLC attended all Breastfeeding Coordinator Meetings
 - 11 (3 State staff, 8 Local Agency staff) attended the FNS WIC Breastfeeding Training Curriculum

- 2020 Trainings (planned)
 - Peer Retreat- TBD 2020
 - Monthly Conference calls
 - Technical Assistance calls and meeting for program operation assistance and CT-WIC.
 - CT-LLL Healthcare Provider Seminar- April 2020
 - CR annual training
 - WIC Statewide meetings
 - Training of FNS WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum for Peer Counselors

Training Overview

Multiple sites continued individual CT-WIC training throughout FY 2019 and this will continue in FY 2020. Enhancements in CT-WIC for Peer Counseling are being designed and prioritized. The goal is for the developers of CT-WIC to add enhancements that would improve functionality to the system. The State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator will continue to provide targeted education to individual sites and provide guidance when the new enhancements are brought into production of CT-WIC.

FY 2019 Breastfeeding Conference call topics were selected based on need of CT-WIC proper operations and topics of interest. All calls open with announcements, follow up questions and comments from the last call, followed by the "topic of the month", and at the close of the meeting open topic/question time if necessary. At the end of the call there is time for program management only, for concerns and questions. Agenda and minutes about the call are emailed to Peer Counseling teams and their management. Attendance is always taken.

10-18 CT-WIC release 2.2

12-18 Medela overview by Sandra Crowley

12-18 Case Study sharing

1-19 Success Story Sharing

2-19 Marijuana and Breastfeeding, What a Peer Counselor should know.

3-19 Connecticut Breastfeeding Childcare Tool Kit Draft overview

4-19 LLLI conference debrief

6-19 Retreat follow up topics

7-19 Pump Content Sheet overview

9-19 TVCCA Peer Counselor and IBCLC Case Study.

2019 Retreat Overview

Our peer retreat held in May of 2020 at the East Hartford Cultural Community Center, 19 staff members (Peer Counselors, DBE/BF Coordinators and IBCLC's) were in attendance at the retreat. The State WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator facilitated the retreat. The State Breastfeeding Coordinator assisted with the morning sessions. The day began with an ice breaker. Staff shared something unique that the group likely did not know about them. The objective was to build a deeper connection between the peer teams.

State staff spent time reviewing the New WIC Breastfeeding Campaign. A deeper dive was taken into the website with practical take home messages for staff to share and utilize with participants. The goal was to understand the messages and the development of the

campaign. Staff were asked to describe and identify ways they could incorporate the use of the campaign and videos with WIC participants.

WIC Food Package was discussed. Breastfeeding dyads food packages in the first year of life of the infant was reviewed in detail. Key information shared was how peers can support WIC retention and food package redemption. Reasons why WIC retention and redemption are so critical to the WIC program was discussed. Peers felt empowered that they could help with messaging and support in this area.

Case studies about food packages, changing feeding plans and goals were discussed in breakout groups. Staff had time to discuss how they can help provide feedback and suggestions to maximize food packages while supporting the breastfeeding dyad during the first year of life.

CT-WIC was a focus for part of the retreat. We discussed where in CT-WIC a Peer (Peer Team member) could look at food package issuance and the number of months issued. Reasons why this could enrich their work was discussed. Reviewing documentation and timely documentation of their interactions using CT-WIC is important in coordinated services with Moms feeding goals which was stressed at the retreat.

We ended the retreat with a restorative yoga session. Yoga focused on reducing stress, increasing inner peace, perception and wellbeing. Staff left empowered and refreshed.

All peer staff participated in NERO's annual Civil Rights training in the 4th quarter of FY 18. They will complete FY 2019 as scheduled in September 2019.