



Connecticut WIC Program Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Implementation Plan- 2020 Update for FY 2021 State Plan

State Program Overview and Update:

Due to Covid-19 impacts, we are limiting edits to the State Program Overview and Update section of this submission. Except for the Hartford hospital-based peer counseling program administered by the Hispanic Health Council (HHC), all peer operations remain stable and/or are expanding.

The Connecticut WIC Program maintains a hybrid-peer counseling model with support from the USDA WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling funding. The one hospital-based WIC peer counseling programs is the diverse, city of New Haven. The Program also operates WIC clinic-based peer counseling in all four local agencies with International Board-Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC) on staff. Currently, the Connecticut WIC Program operates three clinic based local agency peer counseling programs in Bridgeport, East Hartford and Norwich/New London. During FY 2020, the Waterbury WIC program was awarded funds in to establish collaboration with a privately funded Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program that recruits and serve participants enrolled in the Waterbury WIC program. A focus of the Waterbury collaboration will be to establish communication and continuity of care with participation in Peer Counseling. This collaboration has been slow to occur, but we will continue to pursue this path through FY 2021. Starting in FY 2021, the Hartford WIC Program will take over the breastfeeding peer counseling services previously administered by HHC. We will continue to collaborate with HHC in an unfunded (per their request) capacity to guard against duplication of peer services in the city of Hartford with their privately funded Breastfeeding Peer Counseling programs.

The two long standing clinic-based programs (Bridgeport and TVCCA) have recently had staff changes. Bridgeport hired another Peer Counselor. She was trained in person in in January and February of 2020 and completion of training occurred remotely in March 2020. TVCCA has trained their new peer, that replaced a peer who relocated because of her husband's deployment in early Spring. TVCCA contract is being amended as they will be adding another

part time peer. This will give 1FTE for TVCCA to have two part time peer counselors at each permanent site.

The State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator facilitated monthly peer counseling conference calls. During the time period March-July these calls have been especially critical to understand the real-world issues facing our participants due to the pandemic.

A key accomplishment for peer services in FY 2020, was improved availability of peer hours (Saturdays) in New Haven through a community collaboration with the New Haven REACH project. In New Haven, peer counselors continued to rotate through the city until the pandemic required shutdown. Peer counselors at all our programs have transitioned to remote work and were and remain critical supports to our breastfeeding families.

Formal monitoring of local agencies with peer counseling programs continued this year. One local agency was monitored during their bi-annual WIC Management Evaluation Review (MER) with the State Monitoring Team. One review occurred in the 3rd quarter and the monitoring process was modified due to the Covid-19 precautions. Chart audits were conducted as well as observations of phone and/or video appointments. Management Evaluation Report interviews were done via phone.

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 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 2021, possibly using the modified monitoring schedule and procedures. 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 at the same time likely increasing the satisfaction with the services they receive at WIC

The State WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator has spent a significant amount of time in FY 2020 planning for expansion of peer counseling programs to 3 additional local agencies in FY 2021. Due to the addition of IBCLC credentialing of 3 existing nutritionists at three local agencies: Access agency (Day Kimball Hospital site) Meriden WIC Program and the Hartford WIC Program. This will allow for a clinic-based Peer Counseling Program ensuring Hartford participants have access to a Peer Counselor in the WIC office as well as documentation in CT-WIC for comprehensive, consistent coordinated care. East Hartford is planning to expand adding a part-time, bicultural/bilingual Spanish speaking peer.

Impact of Covid-19 on the peer counseling programs in Connecticut proved to be productive, since several locations were already taking advantage of FaceTime and remote connections the transition to virtual appointments was not as stark as it was for WIC certifications. Most challenging was determining how to onboard new staff in the middle of a pandemic and to make sure our peers were keeping connected and in the loop with other WIC staff that transitioned to remote work.

Training specifically on the USDA Curriculum while eagerly anticipated, will be a challenge post-COVID. We are planning to reach out to states that rely on remote training to see how they had planned to conduct the training.

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.

2020 Update

See State section above for relevant updates.

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.

2020 Update

See State section above for relevant updates. See 3rd quarter report attached.

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. Since 2011 peer counseling was expanded to 4 additional local agencies (Bridgeport (2016), East Hartford (2019), Waterbury (2020), and Meriden (2021) and will be restored to the Day Kimball Hospital site at the Access agency in FY 2021. Connecticut will have a total of 7 clinic-based programs, including Hartford by 2021 and one hospital-based program (New Haven).

2020 Update

See State section above for relevant updates.

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 5 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 \$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; postpartum within one day
Home visits provided according to the following protocols: <u>Prenatal</u> : Provide all prenatal clients with minimum of one prenatal visit; <u>Hospital</u> : Provide all postpartum clients with minimum of one in-hospital visit, additional visits based on participant needs. <u>Postpartum</u> : (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; postpartum 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. 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.

- 2020 Trainings (planned)
 - Peer Retreat- TBD 2020 Postponed d/t COVID-19
 - Monthly Conference calls
 - Technical Assistance calls and meeting for program operation assistance and CT-WIC.
 - CT-LLL Healthcare Provider Seminar- April 2020- Cancelled d/t COVID-19
 - CR annual training
 - WIC Statewide meetings -Cancelled d/t COVID-19
 - MI (GLBW) Breastfeeding Network webinars.
- 2021 Trainings (tentative)
 - Peer Retreat- TBD 2021
 - 11 Monthly Conference calls
 - Technical Assistance calls and meeting for program operation assistance and CT-WIC.
 - CT-LLL Healthcare Provider Seminar- Tentative
 - CR annual training
 - USDA Breastfeeding Curriculum for Peer Counselors (when available- TBD)
 - Oversight and training for TVCCA and East Hartford's new part time Peer Counselors onboarding.
 - Assistance, guidance and training as Day Kimball (Access agency), The City of Meriden and The City of Hartford embark on adding Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Programming to their agencies.
 - CT-WIC enhancement development with the State WIC MIS Nutritionist.

Training Overview

Several trainings were postponed or cancelled as a result of the pandemic. 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 2020 Breastfeeding Conference calls topics were selected based on need of CT-WIC proper operations and topics of interest. All calls open with announcements, follow up question 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. 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.

10-19 Low supply/supplementation case studies and discussion Part I

11-19 Latch refusal discussion

1-20 Case study round table

2-20 Low supply/supplementation case studies and discussion Part II

3-20 Working from home COVID-19 check in.

4-20 COVID19, rev of CDC guidelines and CT hospital practices

6-20 Michigan Breastfeeding Network-Great Lakes Breastfeeding Webinar updates, COVID-19 updated, how are participants, how are you?

7-20 Medicaid Intensive Care Management overview with Community of Health Network of Connecticut staff. Pump Content Sheet overview

8-20 Report out of WBW events

9-20 To be determined