



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



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SUPPORT**

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Connecticut WIC Program Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Implementation Plan- 2021 Update for FY 2022 State Plan

State Program Overview and Update:

Due to the continued Covid-19 impacts, we are limiting edits to the State Program Overview and Update section of this submission.

The Connecticut WIC Program maintains a hybrid-peer counseling model with support from the USDA WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling funding. Currently, one hospital-based WIC peer counseling program is in the diverse city of New Haven which operates a 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 with International Board-Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC) on staff in Bridgeport, East Hartford, and Norwich/New London. During FY 2021, the Waterbury WIC program continued to be awarded funds to work towards collaborating with a privately funded Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program that recruits and serve participants enrolled in the Waterbury WIC program. This year the State agency continued to work for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be signed between Hispanic Health Council (HHC) and the City of Waterbury. The goal of the MOU is to establish communication flows and improve continuity of care for participants enrolled concurrently in the HHC peer counseling program and WIC. We hope that an MOU will be signed in FY 2022.

The Hartford WIC program will implement a clinic-based peer counseling program once the contract amendment is executed. To note, all breastfeeding peer counseling amendments have not executed to date, resulting in a delay of services to WIC participants. The Breastfeeding Unit continues to advocate for a timely process for these amendments. The process is out of the State agency control and in the hands of contracts department. While awaiting contract execution, the Hartford WIC Program Coordinator, Designated Breastfeeding Expert (DBE), and the State Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Coordinator have meet on a weekly basis. Discussion occurred about potential peer counselors to facilitate

recruitment once the contract is executed. Once peers are hired, orientation to the agency and USDA FNS breastfeeding training platform will commence. This will allow for rapid integration of the BF PC into the WIC team. In FY20 the IBCLC at Hartford WIC resigned. Another WIC Nutritionist is currently planning to take the IBCLC exam in fall 2021. The State WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator will provide IBCLC coverage until an IBCLC is in place or local agency hires a per diem IBCLC.

A MOU between HHC and Hartford WIC was signed this fiscal year after much discussion about the benefits of this agreement. With a signed MOU peer staff from both programs can discuss caseloads, breastfeeding status, and updates on WIC participants that HHC peer counselors have enrolled and serve at local hospitals to ensure continuity of care with feeding goals.

The State WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator planned for expansion of peer counseling programs to 3 additional local agencies. Access agency (Day Kimball Hospital site) Meriden WIC Program and the Hartford WIC Program. As mentioned above, peer services are delayed due failure for contracts to execute. Nevertheless, monthly technical assistance was provided to all of these pending peer agencies to facilitate rapid implementation- hiring and training- once contracts are executed. We are hoping for execution in the 4th quarter.

Bridgeport, a long-standing clinic-based program experienced staffing change. The peer counselor trained remotely in March 2020 left in the 3rd quarter of this year. Bridgeport hired an African American peer, and they will be trained by the State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator and Optimus IBCLC during the 4th quarter of FY 21. The new peer is currently enrolled in WIC and has breastfeeding experience with her two sons, one of which she is still breastfeeding. This year to note, the Optimus BFPC team has formed a strong connection with Bridgeport Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). The outreach allowed for the WIC IBCLC and peer to take a tour of the NICU, meet the hospital IBCLC and form a relationship with the unit (and Head Neonatologist). To date if a NICU family does not have WIC, the hospital will make a referral to the WIC IBCLC Nutritionist. Once the family is an active WIC participant(s), staff will make referral to the peer counseling program. Bridgeport's current Hispanic bilingual/bicultural peer was a former NICU Mom, bringing an additional layer support to families in this challenging time.

The Norwich/New London, (TVCCA), peer has successfully initiated a WebEx breastfeeding moms' support group during the pandemic. Guest speakers are a routine part of the virtual group and enjoyed by attendees. The State Breastfeeding Unit observed a support group. It was an interactive, lively discussion where women were able to ask questions and receive support. The peer has also expanded her hours serving participants in both TVCCA locations. She is also a new Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition (CBC) board member.

Implemented in 2019, the East Hartford WIC Program has set the bar for best practices and pandemic operations that will be used to improve peer services statewide. In FY21 the agency expanded peer services with a part-time, bicultural/bilingual Spanish speaking peer. She was trained by the East Hartford IBCLC and DBE, as well as the State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator virtually in Q1 of FY 21. In Q2 in FY 21 East Hartford's original peer completed the virtual CLC course, sponsored through the CDC SPAN and passed the exam. The IBCLC and the DBE continue to have virtual team meetings, use FaceTime to co-counsel with nutritionists and peers when yielding is necessary.

This year the New Haven WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program has done an exceptional job of meeting participants' needs during the pandemic. New Haven peers have the flexibility to telework as well as report to the office. During the Q1 of FY 21 the WIC program the largest New Haven site at York Street, moved to a more convenient location on Sargent Street. In the new setting, the peer team is closely located to the WIC program and the pediatric primary care center. Communication among all 4 sites in New Haven is strong due to the leadership of the program's IBCLC. In FY 2021 this program expanded programming with 3 peers that work over 20 hours and 1 full time peer that all funded with USDA FNS WIC BF PC funds. The collaboration with CDC REACH grantee, Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE) continues to raise the profile of breastfeeding in New Haven, shining a light on the impact of structural racism on breastfeeding. CARE hired an African American peer counselor, who is a WIC participant and received peer services from New Haven when her child was an infant, to work alongside our New Haven WIC Program Peer Counseling Team. CARE's peer was trained with assistance from both New Haven IBCLC and WIC State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator. An African American peer counselor took the IBCLC exam in FY 2021 and passed! She is the first WIC peer counselor in Connecticut to become an IBCLC. She received a 2020 CBC scholarship supported by CDC Statewide Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) funding to pay for required classes and exam fees. We are excited to see her work within the community as an IBCLC. Two bilingual/bicultural peers are set to begin Healthy Children Project's Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) course in July, also sponsored via SPAN funding.

The State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator facilitated monthly virtual peer counseling conference calls. In the beginning of the pandemic, the calls remained on the State agency conference line, then moved to the Microsoft Teams platform. Local staff had some difficulty initially using their cameras but with Microsoft Teams technology updates staff participation with cameras is almost 100%. This yields a more interactive monthly discussion with peers having their children say hi and staff breastfeeding their babies on the call. These interactions demonstrate the peer's role of being supportive and nurturing. Seeing each other virtually have afforded peers throughout the state to develop stronger connections. Use of Teams will continue post pandemic as this has proven to be a wonderful way to connect as a State unified peer counseling team verses using a conference line.

Most peers remain teleworking and have proven to be critical supports to our breastfeeding families. During FY21 they have strengthened their use of virtual platforms for connecting with participants. This has allowed for IBCLC's to be brought onto these platforms when yielding is necessary, adding a rich layer of co-counseling. Peers have reported that being able to "see" more deeply into participants' environments allows them to better understand their circumstances and adjust counseling accordingly. Participants have also expressed they feel validated and normalized by seeing and hearing peers in their homes. There is mom to mom support on a deeper level allowing for more rapport and trust to develop to enhance breastfeeding support. One participant noted that she enjoyed hearing the peer's children in the background of the call. She reported it makes her feel like the noise in her own house is normal and she was validated. The Connecticut BFPC teams have supported participants above and beyond with their time, preferred mode of communication and individualized care with evolving recommendations and changes faced by participants during the pandemic.

Formal monitoring of local agencies with peer counseling programs did not occur this year. The intent was to join the monitoring unit for a bi-annual WIC Management Evaluation Review (MER) however with our delay in contract execution the local WIC agency that was to be reviewed did not yet have a peer counseling program.

Monitoring tools developed in FY 2018 will still be utilized for future WIC Management Evaluation Review (MER). 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.

The Connecticut Guidelines for Breastfeeding Promotion and Support were updated and sent to locations agencies in June. **The focus of this revision was to add the Peer Counseling Program to the Guidelines and** development of a Peer Counseling Orientation/Competency Checklist to assist local agencies in the training and onboarding of new and existing peer counselors. The document and checklist were reviewed with the Breastfeeding Coordinators'(DBE) and IBCLC's during the June meeting. Updates to the local agency Orientation Checklists for the positions of Consultant IBCLC (for peer programs) and are planned for FY 2022. The State Breastfeeding Unit followed up with all local agencies with existing peer programs to discuss re-opening plans focused how continued remote peer services and teleworking will be implemented. Agencies with active and pending peer programs, were asked to incorporate peer services into the overall WIC Re-Opening Plan due to the State agency in Q3 of FY 21.

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. USDA FNS WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum was

received at the end of April. The WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum will be implemented in FY 2023 once the State Breastfeeding Coordinator and the State Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Coordinator develop a training plan. Adjustments with the pandemic conditions/recommendations will be dictate how/when training will occur. After initial training occurs all newly hired staff will be trained on this curriculum as part of a sustainability process.

With the receipt of the new USDA/FNS Breastfeeding Curriculum we will review the existing peer protocols to ensure that they are consistent with this new training platform. With the implementation of levels, this will clarify the scope of practice for all WIC staff and ensure consistency across all agencies. The original Connecticut Peer Counseling model was developed by Hispanic Health Council (HHC) and Hartford Hospital (HH) established in 1993 with an initial grant award from the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT-DPH). Connecticut WIC adapted these protocols in 2010 to implement WIC clinic-based peer counseling. The protocols were updated again, in 2017, after the FY 2016 WIC Peer Counseling Management Training event at the FNS Regional Office in Boston, MA, provide clarification on the definition of a peer counselor and the scope of practice.

Monitoring of peer programs will continue in FY 2022, using the modified monitoring schedule and procedures that was used during the pandemic. 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

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. FY2021 has proven success in training new peers and using technology to communicate with both participants and staff effectively.

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.

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.

2022 Update

See State section above for relevant updates. See relevant quarterly reports attached (New Haven).

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

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.

2022 Update

See State section above for relevant updates.

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). Awaiting execution for FY 21 The City of Meriden and Hartford as well to restored to the Day Kimball Hospital site at the Access agency. Connecticut will have a total of 7 clinic-based programs.

2022 Update

See State section above for relevant updates.

LATCH Study: Research partners have applied for NIH funding to expand the 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 verses 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 5peer 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:** 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 was Designated in 2019 after submission of the State Plan. Currently, there are 11 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

New Haven has an IBCLC. She has 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 Nutritionists. 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 base 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-based 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.

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.

- 2021 Trainings
 - Peer Retreat- June 4 and June 11, 2-hour virtual sessions
 - Monthly Conference calls 4th Tuesday of the month
 - Technical Assistance calls and meeting for program operation assistance, CT-WIC and planning for implementation of BF PC programs for agencies that will commence services once contracts executed.
 - Virtual CT-LLL Healthcare Provider Seminar (March 25 and April 2, 3 hour each session).
 - CR annual training
 - Virtual WIC Statewide meetings April 8
 - MI (GLBW) Breastfeeding Network webinars ongoing
- 2022 Trainings (tentative)
 - Peer Retreat- TBD
 - 11 Monthly Conference calls
 - Technical Assistance calls and meeting for program operation assistance and CT-WIC.
 - CT-LLL Healthcare Provider Seminar-possibly virtual
 - CR annual training
 - Planning of New USDA Breastfeeding Curriculum for WIC staff
 - Training for Access-Day Kimball Hospital, City of Meriden, and Hartford new part time Peer Counselors onboarding. As well as Optimus new Peer Counselor.
 - Technical Assistance and guidance with established BF PC programs as well as continued onboarding and oversite for Access- Day Kimball, The City of Meriden, and The City of Hartford once contract

- execution allows full implementation of Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Services at said agencies.
- CT-WIC enhancement development with the State WIC MIS Nutritionist.

Training Overview

Several trainings were in a virtual format due to the pandemic this year. The La Leche League of Connecticut Health Care Provider Seminar for Health Care Professionals took place over two virtual sessions. The breastfeeding peer counseling retreat used Leading Edge Coaching and Development to design two days of virtual trainings that were 2 hours each for peer counseling teams. A survey monkey was administered unanimously to staff to gauge areas of interest in training. With the results of the survey, guidance from Leading Edge coaches and the State breastfeeding unit the retreat was designed. The retreat was an interactive training with frequent use of break out rooms that focused on a review of active listening with a focus of being curious, self-management of personal thought patterns, receiving feedback, building rapport and providing targeted counseling around participants needs. Staff enjoyed the training and have since asked to use some of the resources presented during the training into everyday counseling.

Enhancements in CT-WIC for Peer Counseling are being designed and prioritized and will be released in CT-WIC version 3.3. 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 as well as the State WIC MIS Nutritionist.

FY 2021 Breastfeeding Conference calls topics were selected based on need of CT-WIC operations, current breastfeeding initiatives in Connecticut, topics of current breastfeeding interest and a platform to discuss feedback from seminars and training. 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. There is time dedicated at the end of the call for program management only, for concerns and questions. Agenda and summaries about the call are emailed to Peer Counseling teams and their management.

- 10/2020: Updated on how participant breastfeeding challenges are communicated to appropriate staff when teleworking, best practices from the East Hartford WIC program.
- 11/2020: How can we talk to Moms about Baby Behaviors and how this can yield to increased breastfeeding duration
- 12/2020: Sharing and celebrating peer success stories

- 1/2021: Refresher Navigating CT-WIC i.e., how to look up appointments, see assigned food packages etc.
- 2/2021: How peer counselors can work with Nutritionist to ensure appropriate food packages
- 3/2021: Discussed the campaign created by Wheeler clinic. *March 2021 FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder)-SEI (Substance Exposed Infant) Campaign "Breastfeeding: A Quick Guide to Common Questions"*.
- 4/2021: LLL of CT Health Care Provider seminar debrief
- 5/2021: Jennifer Vendetti, PMAD from a Peers Len's
- 6/2021: Did not meet as we had two, 2 hours virtual annual retreat presentations in June (June 4 and 11th).
- 7/2021: Follow up discussion from Jennifer Vendetti, PMAD from a Peers Len's and retreat debrief.
- 8/2021: Report out of WBW events
- 9/2021: To be determined-likely discussion of new Dietary Guidelines for Americans