Breastfeeding Promotion and Support in the Spotlight

#2

This is the second of two WIC Update memos that focuses on breastfeeding promotion and support. Preparation now will help WIC “get off on the right foot” in using the new Food Packages to better promote and support breastfeeding. Staff can begin practicing now and build their breastfeeding counseling skills!

What can WIC staff do now to prepare for the new food packages for the breastfeeding dyad?

Practices

- Local agencies should assure that their practices support breastfeeding exclusively and minimize formula supplementation.
  - WIC promotes breastfeeding! Our job is to promote ideal nutrition behaviors. Without a doubt we know breastfeeding is superior to formula. Clients should receive this message when they come to WIC.
  - Assume all infants are breastfed exclusively unless you learn otherwise.
  - Consider frequency and type of follow-up needed. Phone contacts may be helpful to parents of young infants. Consider seeing infants 1 month after certification.
  - Issue benefits to correspond with needed follow-up. If follow-up should occur in 1 month, issue only 1-month’s benefits to the family. Trimonthly benefits should only be issued if appropriate.
  - Train staff so everyone understands that any requests for infant formula must be referred to a CPA. If, after assessing the situation, it is decided that formula is needed, it may be prescribed only by a CPA.

Preparation with participants:

- CPAs should assess for potential barriers and discuss breastfeeding with all pregnant WIC participants.
  - Ask open-ended questions to assess for potential barriers:
    - “What have you heard about breastfeeding?”
    - “What was your breastfeeding experience like?”
    - “What was the best thing about breastfeeding?”
    - “What was the most challenging?”
  - Address identified barriers to breastfeeding.
  - Follow up and build on this counseling throughout pregnancy, and provide anticipatory guidance about what to expect in the hospital and early days.
    - Anticipatory guidance during pregnancy can help moms understand that “babies have tiny tummies” and her milk is made in just the right amount for baby in the early days. Providing only her breastmilk will help her body make more milk for her growing baby.
    - Talk to mothers about the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and how supplementing affects her milk supply.
    - Refer to MSUE Breastfeeding Initiative or other breastfeeding support
  - The following materials are available through the WIC e-forms:
    - Is Breastfeeding Right for Me? DCH-1204
    - Breastfeeding – Getting Started in 5 Easy Steps DCH-0259
    - Your Baby Your Gift DCH-1209
• Support a Sister DCH-1208

• Ask mothers how she is feeding her baby and how did she make this decision.
  o This should be a discussion. Not MI-WIC screen questions.
  o DO NOT fall into the trap of asking “breast or bottle”?

• CPAs should assume all breastfeeding mothers and infants are breastfeeding exclusively.
  If formula is requested for a breastfeeding infant:
  o Ask open-ended questions about the formula request:
    ▪ “It is great that you are breastfeeding, it’s what your baby needs to grow up healthy! I am interested in why you are also giving formula. Please tell me about that.”
  o Let the mother know that you understand her concern. This affirms her feelings and lets her know you’re listening to her. It may also be helpful to ask:
    ▪ “What are your breastfeeding goals?” or
    ▪ “What is your plan for breastfeeding?”
  o Give encouragement to breastfeed.
  o Discuss with mom that giving only breastmilk in the first critical weeks is what her baby needs and helps establish her milk supply. Having formula around discourages breastfeeding and may reduce her confidence.
    ▪ If mom is concerned about not knowing how much baby is taking, discuss other ways to know that baby is taking her breastmilk: number of wet diapers and stools, baby’s satisfaction after a feeding, weight gain, etc.
    ▪ She may also find it helpful to have WIC weigh and measure her baby.

• If you determine that there is reason for concern about breastfeeding and that formula is appropriate, carefully assess the feeding situation:
  o Determine and issue the minimum amount of formula that will meet the assessed need.
  o Discuss building milk supply and how to know baby is getting enough milk.
  o Issue 1 month of benefits and schedule for follow-up the next month.

• Discuss with mothers how adding a small amount of formula will change her food package.
  o Significantly reducing the amount of food she will receive

Anticipated Participant Questions and How to Respond

Q: WIC used to give more formula to breastfed babies during the first month. Why don’t you do this anymore?
A: WIC wants to protect breastfeeding. It takes 4 to 6 weeks for your breastmilk supply to be fully established. Introducing formula, especially at the beginning, interferes with your body’s ability to make breast milk for your baby.

Q: Can I have more formula for when I go back to work/school? (Pregnant woman)
A: We’ll set up an appointment to discuss your return to work or school and to find the best options for you. In the early days and weeks, exclusive breastfeeding will help you and your baby get to know each other, to learn breastfeeding, and to build your milk supply.

Q: What if I don’t have enough breastmilk?
A: 1. Open question. Please tell me about why you are concerned. 2. Validate her concern. 3. Educate, such as “While a lot of women have that concern, it is rare for a
mom to not make enough milk to feed her baby. WIC can help you learn how to develop your milk supply..." (Or similar counseling depending on her response to the question.)

Q: *Doesn’t feeding breastmilk and formula give my baby the best of both?*

A: No, breastmilk is best for your baby. Formula tries to imitate what breastmilk has, but is nutritionally inferior to breastmilk. Your body makes milk for your baby to help your baby grow. To develop your milk supply it is important to only provide breastmilk in the first weeks. Introducing formula too early results in less breastmilk.

### Key Messages for New Food Package Guidance

#### Prenatal Certification Visit/Follow-up Visits (Review as needed)

**Key Messages:**

- **✓** If you feed your baby only breast milk, you will get more variety and food in your food package.
- **✓** You will receive the best WIC benefit if you are exclusively breastfeeding your baby. An infant breastfed exclusively gets twice the amount of baby food fruits and vegetables and also gets baby meats starting at 6 months. Moms get more milk and juice, and cheese, canned fish, and more on their fruit and vegetable benefits on the Michigan WIC Bridge Card (extra $2).
- **✓** We want to protect your breast milk supply and give your baby time to learn how to breastfeed; your baby won’t need formula right away.
- **✓** We will give you breastfeeding support when you deliver your baby. WIC provides support through caring staff who know about breastfeeding and can answer your questions. WIC also has a breast pump program.
- **✓** *If mom is planning to formula feed –*
  - **WIC** will not provide all of the formula your baby needs.
  - **WIC** is a supplemental food and nutrition program and only provides a portion of what your baby needs. You will need to purchase some on your own, so plan ahead.
  - The formula amount you will get for your baby will vary by your infant’s age.
Breastfeeding & Postpartum Moms and Infants (Birth – 2 months)
Certification Visit

Key Messages:

*All Infants* – as needed

- You will receive the best WIC benefit if you are exclusively breastfeeding your baby. Exclusively breastfed babies get twice the amount of fruits and vegetables and also baby meats starting at 6 months. Moms get more milk and juice, cheese, whole grain foods, canned fish, and more money for fruits and vegetables. (extra $2).

*Breastfed Exclusively*

- Your baby will be getting baby cereal, fruits and vegetables, and baby meats when your baby turns 6 months. Breast milk is all your baby needs until then.
- You will be eligible to stay on WIC and receive for yourself until your baby turns 1 year if you exclusively breastfeed.

*Breastfed Partially*

- Your baby will be getting baby cereal, fruits and vegetables when your baby turns 6 months. Breast milk and/or formula are all your baby needs until then.
- You will be eligible to stay on WIC and receive for yourself until your baby turns 1 year - as long as you are breastfeeding and not receiving more than half a package of formula.
- WIC had to take cheese off your food package, and you will be getting other new foods instead.

*Fully Formula Fed*

- Your baby will be getting baby cereal, fruits and vegetables when your baby turns 6 months. Formula is all your baby needs until then.
- You will be receiving foods for yourself until your baby turns 6 months old.
- WIC had to take cheese off your food package, and you will be getting other new foods instead.
The amounts of formula will vary throughout the year depending on your baby’s age.

### Infant 3-5 Months Visit

**Key Messages:**

**Breastfeeding Exclusively**
- Your baby will be getting baby cereal, fruits and vegetables, and baby meats when your baby turns 6 months. Breast milk is all your baby needs until then.

**Breastfeeding Partially**
- Your baby will be getting baby cereal and fruits and vegetables when your baby turns 6 months. Breast milk and/or formula are all your baby needs until then.

**Breastfeeding mothers requesting more formula than allowed in breastfeeding partially package and Fully Formula fed**
- You will only be receiving foods for yourself until your baby turns 6 months old. If you are still breastfeeding at 6 months, WIC will continue to give you breastfeeding support.

### Infant Evaluations Visit

**Key Messages:**

**Breastfeeding Exclusively**
- Your baby will be getting:
  - 24 oz. of baby cereal,
  - 64 jars of 4 oz. baby food fruits and vegetables and
  - 31 jars of 2.5 oz. baby meats.

Breastfed babies need the iron and zinc that’s in the meats. Mothers will continue to receive the extra foods and $10 for fresh fruits and vegetables.

**Breastfeeding Partially**
- Your baby will be getting:
  - 24 oz. of baby cereal
  - 32 jars of 4 oz. baby food fruits and vegetables
Mothers will continue to receive food benefits for themselves as long as the infant is receiving a standard breastfeeding partially package.

*Breastfeeding mothers requesting more formula than allowed in partial breastfeeding package and Fully Formula fed*

- Your baby will be getting:
  - 24 oz. of baby cereal
  - 32 jars of 4 oz. baby food fruits and vegetables
  - up to 696 fl oz. reconstituted powder
- You will not be receiving food benefits for yourself anymore. If you are still breastfeeding, we will continue to give you breastfeeding support.