

WIC Peer Counselor in the Hospital: Scope of Practice

Purpose

A WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor is a lactation support person who provides basic breastfeeding information and encouragement to pregnant and lactating WIC (current and eligible) clients in the WIC clinic and hospital setting.

1. Performs in a professional manner in all aspects of the Peer Counselor role.

- A. Respects the client's privacy, dignity, and confidentiality.
- B. Respects and responds sensitively to cultural needs and practices of participants and the community.
- C. Works within the policies and procedures of the WIC program.
- D. Maintains records according to hospital requirements and ethical practices.
- E. Recognizes when assistance is needed and consults with the supervisor, Breastfeeding Coordinator and/or Peer Counselor Coordinator and other lactation specialists.
- F. Identifies situations outside of the Scope of Practice and refers as appropriate in a timely manner.
- G. Refers to the hospital IBCLC or advanced credentialed hospital lactation expert for situations outside of the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor's Scope of Practice.
- H. Acquires ongoing breastfeeding education to maintain and build knowledge and skills.

2. Encourage and support clients to breastfeed.

- A. Uses client-centered communication techniques to best meet client needs.
- B. Helps clients identify the support available to them and educate family members.
- C. Helps clients identify their breastfeeding concerns, barriers, and solutions.
- D. Promotes the benefits of breastfeeding for the dyad.
- E. Counsels clients about the importance of exclusive breastfeeding in the early weeks, and ways to continue breastfeeding.
- F. Assists in infant feeding classes and peer support groups.
- G. Is available to WIC clients outside of usual clinic hours and outside of the clinic environment, specifically the hospital.
- H. Refers clients to resources for support.
- I. Promotes breastfeeding in the community, workplace, and health care system.
- J. Offers breastfeeding education and support during pregnancy continuing throughout infancy and beyond.

3. Teaches basic breastfeeding to clients and helps them when difficulties occur.

- A. Teaches basic, evidence-based techniques that help ensure a successful initiation and including but not limited to milk production, skin-to-skin care, positioning and latch, and milk expression and storage.

- B. Identifies signs of a normal course of breastfeeding, including breastfeeding frequency and duration, infant feeding cues, and normal infant weight gain and stooling patterns.
- C. Provides anticipatory guidance to help prevent the occurrence of problems.
 - i. Dispels the myths and misinformation about lactation.
 - ii. Discusses and reviews expectations in the early days/weeks post discharge.
 - iii. Helps clients plan for returning to work/school that supports the continuation of breastfeeding.
- D. Provides basic and timely problem-solving and support.
- E. Yields clients experiencing difficulties to the WIC or hospital lactation care team.

I have read and understand my responsibility to provide peer counseling services within the defined peer counselor defined scope of practice.

Name _____ Date _____

Adapted from Scope of Practice for Peer Counselors materials from Michigan, California and Virginia WIC.