

<p style="text-align: center;">Texas WIC Health and Human Services Commission</p>

Effective July 1, 2023

Policy No. BF:03.0

Breastfeeding Peer Counselor

Purpose

To ensure that Breastfeeding Peer Counselors (BF PCs) are qualified, trained and perform appropriate duties.

Authority

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Loving Support grant;
USDA Breastfeeding Policy and Guidance; State Policy

Policy

Local agencies (LAs) must employ BF PCs as paraprofessionals to support WIC's efforts to help women initiate and continue breastfeeding. BF PCs address barriers to breastfeeding in normal breastfeeding situations, through education, support and role modeling.

BF PCs must be trained and work under the supervision of the LA Breastfeeding Coordinator. They must be trained in accordance with state agency-designated initial BF PC training prior to working with participants and must complete other training requirements according to **WIC Policy TR:03.0**.

LAs must select BF PC candidates who:

- have breastfed or expressed breastmilk for at least one baby.
- are from the target population and can be trained to be paraprofessionals
- have the ability to work outside of regular clinic hours and outside of the WIC clinic.
- are not licensed or credentialed health professionals such as; International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs), Registered Dietitians (RDs), nurses.

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Definitions

Paraprofessionals – Those without extended professional training in health, nutrition or the clinical management of breastfeeding who are selected from the group to be served and are trained and given ongoing supervision to provide a basic service or function. Paraprofessionals provide specific tasks within a defined scope of practice. They assist professionals, but are not licensed or credentialed as healthcare, nutrition, or lactation consultant professionals.

Target population - A group that shares similar characteristics and is identified as the intended audience for the WIC Program.

Scope of Practice – The BF PCs scope of practice is limited to supporting normal breastfeeding. This means providing basic information and support, including encouraging and supporting mothers to breastfeed; teaching basic breastfeeding to WIC mothers; supporting mothers when difficulties occur; and yielding to the IBCLC when problems beyond their training arise.

Procedures

- I. Include the following criteria in the BF PC job description:
 - A. Is from the target population and can be trained to be a paraprofessional.
 - B. Has breastfed or expressed breastmilk for at least one baby.
 - C. Has the ability to work outside of regular clinic hours and outside of the WIC clinic.
- II. Conduct monthly meetings or trainings for BF PCs on breastfeeding or BF PC job related topics. Monthly meetings can be conducted in person, by conference call or virtually.
 - A. Keep documentation of BF PC meetings or trainings on file at the LA for review and include date, topic and attendance.

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III. BF PCs must perform the following duties at minimum:

- A. Provide pregnant and breastfeeding participants evidence-based breastfeeding education and support and assist in developing individualized breastfeeding goals and strategies, when appropriate.
- B. Make appropriate referral, based on LA's referral protocol, when:
 - i. A participant has an issue or question that is out of BF PC scope of practice.
 - ii. Breastfeeding problems are not resolved within 24 hours of the Peer Counselor's intervention; or
 - iii. Problems exist in an area other than breastfeeding.
- C. Document all encounters with participants.
- D. Additional allowable BF PC duties include:
 - i. Complete prenatal and postpartum follow-up calls to participants.
 - ii. Complete breast pump follow-up calls and document.
 - iii. Complete multi-user retrievals according to **WIC Policy BF:06.0**.
 - iv. Teach or assist in teaching classes on the basics of breastfeeding and the management of normal breastfeeding experiences.
 - v. Teach how to assemble, use, and clean breast pumps.
 - vi. Teach how to express and store human milk.
 - vii. Maintain inventory of breast pumps.
 - viii. Clean breast pumps as needed.
 - ix. Assist in development of LA breastfeeding materials and messaging.
 - x. Counsel new mothers and promote WIC in the hospital or other healthcare settings.
 - xi. Conduct community outreach to promote the BF PC program.
 - xii. Additional clinic support as needed and as qualified to do.