

New York State WIC Program Position Description

TITLE: Breastfeeding Peer Counselor

DEFINITION: a Breastfeeding Peer counselor is a para-professional support person with a commitment to promote and support breastfeeding women and their families. The Peer Counselor is supervised by the Breastfeeding Coordinator and/or the Peer Counselor Coordinator.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS: Successfully completes the Peer Counselor Training Program through the WIC agency; is a current or former WIC participant or is from the community served by the local agency; exhibits good nurturing skills; has consistent, reliable access to the phone or WIC clinic phone; has access to transportation to keep program commitments; and projects enthusiasm for assisting other women.

EXAMPLES OF RESPONSIBILITIES:

Provide emotional support to mother and significant other through personal interaction.

Provide the mother with advice on aspects of normal breastfeeding.

Provide anticipatory guidance to reduce the occurrence of problems.

Provide information on the effect of foods, medications, and home remedies on lactation within guidelines addressed in training.

Acts and advocate for breastfeeding in the community.

Understand how the cultural attitudes and practices of the community impact on breastfeeding.

Assist in teaching breastfeeding classes.

Provide information on additional sources of help to the breastfeeding mother.

Participate in peer support groups.

Use accepted communication skills.

Be able to demonstrate the following:

- various positioning techniques for mother and baby;
- increasing or decreasing the breast milk supply, including proportion of hindmilk/foremilk;

- manual expression of breast milk; and
- safe and effective collection and storage of breast milk.

Obtain verbal permission from the mother prior to beginning interactions, particularly if touching the baby or the mother are necessary. (Written permission should be obtained by the Breastfeeding Coordinator/local agency staff for release of information about the mother/baby for the Peer Counselor to make the initial contact.)

Keep accurate records of contacts with mothers using correct forms.

Identify the need for referral to the breastfeeding coordinator.

Assist in recruiting candidates for peer counselor training.

Attend Peer counselor meetings monthly.

Attend local, regional, or state breastfeeding promotion and support training when possible.

LIMITATIONS OF THE PEER COUNSELOR:

The Peer counselor will NOT provide specific medical or nutritional advice.

The Peer Counselor will NOT work unsupervised or without the collaboration of health care professionals.

Contact with prenatal or postpartum mothers is best accomplished at clinic or check pick-up sites or through phone contacts.

The Peer Counselor must inform the local agency of all activities for which she represents WIC.

Any hospital visits must be approved and supervised by the WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator who will facilitate visits with the hospital administration.