

Division of Community Nutrition

Subject: Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Qualifications and Responsibilities		Policy: BF 01.3
Reference: §C.F.R. 246.3	Effective: January 6, 2025	Supersedes: February 1, 2023

I. Policy: All Breastfeeding Peer Counselors are qualified to promote breastfeeding within their scope of practice see Appendix 17.

II. Procedure(s):

A. Each local agency will have a minimum of one (1) Breastfeeding Peer Counselor (BFPC). Specific qualifications required:

- 1) Has successfully breastfed an infant for at least 6 months.
- 2) Can work a flexible part-time schedule between five (5) and twenty (20) hours per week. The minimum work hours will be agreed upon based on local agency needs and will not to exceed the yearly 1500 allowable hours for wage employees.
- 3) Can make and receive phone calls from home.
- 4) Has reliable transportation.
- 5) Has interpersonal skills needed to work with and counsel participants.
- 6) Is a paraprofessional (as described in the WIC breastfeeding curriculum) ideally from the community that the local agency serves.
- 7) Has basic computer skills and technical proficiency.

B. Breastfeeding Peer Counselors will:

- 1) Be incorporated into program operations (WIC clinic flow, outreach, general staff meetings) to promote and support breastfeeding.
- 2) Have a task appropriate orientation to the Virginia WIC Program, including successful completion of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) competency-based training for WIC breastfeeding curriculum levels 1-2 and associated activities within ninety (90) days of hire.
- 3) Create a breastfeeding-friendly environment. Refer to *BF 02.0*.
- 4) Counsel with cultural humility (an understanding of how cultural attitudes and practices) of the individual, family and community impact breastfeeding.

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- 5) Refer participants to the WIC-Designated Breastfeeding Expert, WIC nutritionist or other appropriate health or social service agency, including outside community breastfeeding resources, for situations outside the BFPC's scope of practice (Appendix 17). (See Standard 11: Participant Referrals)
- 6) Demonstrate knowledge of basic breastfeeding skills:
 - a. Various positioning techniques.
 - b. Manual expression of breast milk.
 - c. Collection and storage of breast milk.
- 7) Treat pregnant and breastfeeding participants with respect and keep their personal health information confidential.
- 8) Offer breastfeeding participants continued education and support on maintaining a positive breastfeeding relationship with their infant until the infant is weaned.
- 9) Work with active pregnant and breastfeeding WIC participants and their supporters (partner, family, etc.) individually and in groups or classes. Contacts may be made in the clinic setting, in the hospital, or at the participant's home as determined by the Breastfeeding Coordinator.
- 10) Teach breastfeeding classes and assist with the breastfeeding segment of prenatal or newborn classes.
- 11) Facilitate or refer participants to breastfeeding support groups within the local agency or the community.
- 12) Contact each new pregnant participant before delivery to discuss infant feeding options according to BF 01.4. Utilize Crossroads to assess and document breastfeeding progress.
- 13) Contact each breastfeeding participant to discuss breastfeeding progress and/or issues according to BF 01.4. Utilize Crossroads to assess and document breastfeeding progress.
- 14) Make appropriate referrals according to CRT 08.0.
- 15) Abide by the limitations of the Peer Counselor scope of practice as follows:
 - a. Will not provide specific medical advice.

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- b. Will not make hospital visits without prior approval by the WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator.
 - c. Will not function in duties outside of the *Breastfeeding Peer Counselor's Scope of Practice*.
 - d. Will not perform non-BFPC duties without prior written approval from State WIC Office, part time BFPCs may work in other Health Department roles (Dual Role BFPCs).
 - 1. Dual Role BFPCs are prohibited from working in any other WIC roles as part of the eligibility determination or certification process. Refer to USDA FNS Breastfeeding Policy and Guidance, p. 23.
 - 2. Dual Role BFPCs may serve as Outreach Workers or other equivalent health district roles.
 - 3. BFPC performing non-breastfeeding duties must be compensated for that time with NSA or other appropriate program funds.
- 16) Screen and assist with electric breast pump loan agreements according to BF 04.2, and BF 04.3. Utilize Crossroads to assess and document breastfeeding progress. May assist with maintenance of WIC breastfeeding pumps.
- 17) Attend local, regional, or state breastfeeding promotion and support training when possible. May participate in local breastfeeding coalitions.
- 18) Complete all State WIC Office required continuing education.
- 19) May provide outreach at community events and to community partners to educate about WIC breastfeeding services and human milk feeding.