

Division of Community Nutrition

Subject: Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Qualifications and Responsibilities		Policy: BF 01.3
Reference: §C.F.R. 246.3	Effective: February 1, 2023	Supersedes: March 14, 2022

I. Policy: All Breastfeeding Peer Counselors shall be qualified to promote breastfeeding within their scope of practice.

II. Procedure(s):

A. Each local agency shall have a minimum of one (1) Breastfeeding Peer Counselor (BFPC).

Specific qualifications required:

- 1) Has successfully breastfed one or more infants for at least 6 months or more.
- 2) Can work a minimum of five (5) hours per week, not to exceed the hourly allotment assigned by the local agency.
- 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 target population.
- 7) Has basic computer skills and technical proficiency.

B. Breastfeeding Peer Counselors shall:

- 1) 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.
- 2) Create a breastfeeding-friendly environment. Refer to BF 02.0.
- 3) Counsel with an understanding of how cultural attitudes and practices of the individual, family and community impact breastfeeding.
- 4) Refer participants to the WIC-Designated Breastfeeding Expert, WIC nutritionist or other appropriate health or social service agency, including

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outside community breastfeeding resources, for situations outside the BFPC's scope of practice. (See Standard 11: Participant Referrals)

- 5) Demonstrate knowledge of basic breastfeeding skills:
 - a. Various positioning techniques.
 - b. Manual expression of breast milk.
 - c. Collection and storage of breast milk.
- 6) Treat pregnant and breastfeeding participants with respect and keep their personal health information confidential.
- 7) Offer breastfeeding participants continued education and support on maintaining a positive breastfeeding relationship with their infant until the infant is weaned.
- 8) Work with WIC-only pregnant and breastfeeding participants individually and in groups or classes. Contacts shall be made at home, hospital, participant's home, or clinic setting.
- 9) Teach breastfeeding classes and assist with the breastfeeding segment of prenatal or newborn classes.
- 10) Facilitate or refer participants to breastfeeding support groups within the local agency or the community.
- 11) 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.
- 12) Contact each breastfeeding participant to discuss breastfeeding progress and/or issues according to BF 01.4. Utilize Crossroads to assess and document breastfeeding progress.
- 13) Make appropriate referrals according to CRT 08.0.
- 14) Abide by the limitations of the Peer Counselor as follows:
 - a. Shall not provide specific medical advice.
 - b. Shall not make hospital visits without prior approval by the WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator.

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- c. Shall not function in duties outside of the *Breastfeeding Peer Counselor's Scope of Practice*.
 - d. Shall 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).
 - BFPC performing non-breastfeeding duties must be compensated for that time with NSA or other appropriate program funds.
 - Dual Role BFPCs may serve as Outreach Workers or other equivalent health district roles.
 - Dual Role BFPCs **may not** work in any other WIC roles as part of the eligibility determination or certification process. Refer to USDA FNS Breastfeeding Policy and Guidance, p. 23.
- 15) 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.
- 16) Attend local, regional, or state breastfeeding promotion and support training when possible. May participate in local breastfeeding coalitions.
- 17) Complete all State Wic Office required continuing education.