

Tools needed for Introduction:



- The *Breastfeeding Answer Book* by La Leche League International
- The *Breastfeeding Education Guide* by the Colorado WIC Program

WIC's Breastfeeding History

WIC Makes a Difference

Introduction

Why Promote Breastfeeding?

Breastfeeding benefits a community!! Breastfed infants are healthier and moms who breastfeed lower their risk for some diseases. Breastfeeding saves health care costs because breastfed babies have fewer illnesses and hospitalizations. Breastfeeding is good for the environment because there are fewer cans, bottles, and nipples to throw away. Breastfeeding saves businesses money because healthier babies mean less absenteeism for working moms. Breastfeeding is the GOLD Standard!

The WIC Program has always been a avid promoter of breastfeeding. In 1989, the United States Congress strengthened WIC's efforts by allocating funds specific to breastfeeding promotion and support. In addition to funding, Congress included legislation requiring WIC Programs to:

- develop a national breastfeeding definition
- designate a breastfeeding coordinator in each state agency
- train local WIC staff to promote and support breastfeeding
- develop standards to ensure all women have access to breastfeeding promotion and support during the prenatal and post-partum periods
- provide materials in languages other than English as indicated by the population served

Since 1989, WIC Programs nationwide have implemented numerous activities and programs to increase breastfeeding rates among the WIC population. In fact, during the last decade, breastfeeding rates have increased twice as fast among WIC mothers compared to non-WIC mothers.

WIC Can and Does Make a Difference!!

Breastfeeding Rates

National Goal

WIC strives to achieve the Healthy People Year 2010 Breastfeeding Objective of having 75% of women initiate breastfeeding, 50% continuing to breastfeed for at least 5 to 6 months, and 25% breastfeeding at 1 year.

National Rates

Breastfeeding rates are on the rise!! During the 1950s only one-third of all mothers (WIC and non-WIC) nationwide initiated breastfeeding. Rates increased gradually during the 1970s but declined again in the 1980s. Not until the early 1990s did rates start to climb at a steady rate. Today, approximately two-thirds of all mothers nationwide initiate breastfeeding!

WIC Breastfeeding Rates

Typically breastfeeding rates are lower among WIC moms. It is known that women who are of lower-income, younger (less than 20 years of age), less educated, and of a racial minority are less likely to breastfeed. However, because of the commitment of the WIC Program, breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in the past few years have increased at a faster rate among WIC moms compared to non-WIC moms. Currently, about half of WIC moms nationwide initiate breastfeeding.

Colorado WIC Breastfeeding Rates



Colorado WIC prides itself in having approximately 70% of WIC moms initiating breastfeeding with 30% of all infants being breastfed at 6 months. Colorado WIC breastfeeding rates are higher than the national rate for all women (WIC and non-WIC)! It's exciting to know that at the current rate, Colorado WIC may achieve the national health objective of 75% of women initiating breastfeeding and at least 50% continuing for 5 to 6 months. More breastfeeding moms and infants means a healthier Colorado!

A Breastfeeding Peer Counselor is a mother who has breastfed and received training to provide breastfeeding advice and information to WIC participants.

WIC Activities and Responsibilities

WIC agencies provide breastfeeding education and support by various methods across the state. Education is usually provided by WIC staff through individual education sessions and complemented by video viewing at one or more of the sessions. Some agencies offer breastfeeding or infant feeding classes. A number of agencies provide postpartum support through telephone follow-up programs. A few clinics even have a peer counseling program. And many agencies have electric and/or manual breast pump loan programs.

The WIC Program is seen as a valuable source of sound information and support. Many WIC participants report that WIC staff played an important role in their decision to breastfeed.

Staff Responsibilities



Are you uncomfortable with breastfeeding?

Do you feel inadequate because you have not breastfed?

To ensure women receive adequate breastfeeding information and support, all WIC staff are responsible for:

- encouraging all women to breastfeed; however, they must be informed that HIV-positive mothers should not breastfeed;
- providing education and information at each prenatal visit, including information on the mechanics of breastfeeding, such as "how to breastfeed," positioning, preventing problems, managing breastfeeding when returning to work or school, and expressing and storing breast milk;
- providing education and support during the postpartum period; and
- identifying breastfeeding problems and making referrals, as indicated.

Feeling Good About Providing Breastfeeding Education

Getting comfortable with how you feel about breastfeeding is the first step to providing breastfeeding education. Ask yourself—how do I feel when I see a woman breastfeeding in public? If I had a child or another child would I breastfeed? If a mom says she wants to formula feed would I be afraid of making her feel guilty if I talked about the many benefits of breastfeeding?

If you're uncomfortable seeing a woman breastfeed in public, is it because it is something unfamiliar to you or because of your level of modesty? It's helpful to explore why you feel the way you do and acknowledge that it's okay to feel that way! By understanding your own feelings, you can help your participants who may have the same feelings and apprehensions. Realize that many of us grew up in a bottle-feeding culture—as you gain more knowledge and experience you will become more comfortable with promoting and supporting breastfeeding. If you're comfortable with breastfeeding—great!! You can help others by sharing your feelings and gaining more knowledge about helping moms breastfeed.

Some WIC staff have not breastfed and do an excellent job promoting and supporting breastfeeding. The knowledge you will gain from completing this module will provide you with a strong foundation for providing breastfeeding education and support. The more knowledge you gain, the more comfortable you will feel about providing breastfeeding education. In addition to your knowledge base, your experiences with your family and friends who have breastfed, no matter how few, can bring a level of understanding and sensitivity to your education sessions.

Do you fear making women feel guilty about not breastfeeding?

Fear of making a participant feel guilty about not breastfeeding is a common feeling among WIC staff. It is important to recognize that WIC's role is to provide information and education so that women can make an informed decision. Information is empowering—it allows women to make the best choice for themselves and their families. If a mother has the information and chooses not to breastfeed, WIC staff can know that it was an informed choice. How would you feel if you didn't provide the information, and the mother later regretted not breastfeeding?

What should you do if a mom tells you she is going to formula-feed?

What should you do if you ask a mom about breastfeeding and she tells you she is going to formula-feed? The answer is simple—Ask mom why she came to that decision. Often moms have decided to formula-feed because of things they have heard about breastfeeding. A friend may have told them "It hurts horribly to breastfeed!" or their mother told them "I could not breastfeed because my milk was bad and it may run in the family." You can acknowledge that many women have heard the same thing and then share what you know about breastfeeding. Women also need to know that if they decide not to breastfeed, they have an option of pumping their milk and feeding it from a bottle. Some women are uncomfortable with putting a baby to breast but will choose to provide breast milk from a bottle. And then there are some women who will choose to formula feed despite your efforts to promote breastfeeding. If a woman chooses to formula-feed, you can show your support by acknowledging the mother's decision and providing information about other infant feeding practices.

Repetition helps a person process the information.

Making the Most of an Education Session

People learn best if information is provided repetitively and in small amounts. **Research has shown that the number of times breastfeeding is discussed can have a bigger impact than the total amount of time spent discussing a topic.** Repetition helps a person process the information. WIC prenatal and early postpartum visits provide an excellent opportunity for staff to repeat information and to provide information in manageable amounts.

Identify the woman's need.

It is also important for staff to identify the needs of the participant and address those particular needs. This will prevent you from overwhelming a participant with too much information and shows your interest in meeting her needs. For example, if a woman has already decided to breastfeed and recognizes the many benefits it may be a better use of time to address the "how-to" of breastfeeding, rather than discussing the benefits of breastfeeding. If a woman has previous breastfeeding experience, does she have any concerns she would like to discuss? If a woman has had

Open-ended or closed-ended questions?

an unsuccessful breastfeeding experience, you might discuss options she could try to ensure a successful experience. By tailoring your education contacts, you show your interest in the participant's needs and you save valuable time.

Using open-ended questions can be very helpful in identifying a participant's needs and getting a discussion started. For example, asking a participant "How are you going to feed your baby?" or "How often is your baby nursing?" can help a participant share how she feels about breastfeeding. Using closed-ended questions such as, "Are you planning to breastfeed?" or "How is breastfeeding going?" will elicit a "one word" answer and will shut-down the conversation. By using open-ended questions you can start a discussion with mom which can help you address her particular needs and concerns.

For more information about providing education and information, refer to the *Bright Ideas! Nutrition Education Skills Module*.

Having the Right Tool for the Right Job

The *Breastfeeding Education Guide* is an excellent tool for providing breastfeeding education (ask your supervisor for a copy). The Guide was designed to assist staff with providing breastfeeding education in a quick, fun, and creative way. The Guide stands in an easel notebook allowing the participant to view the educational page while the educator views a corresponding page that outlines the topic for discussion. The division of information into six colored sections enables the educator to tailor each education session, as well as providing smaller amounts of information at each visit. A listing of specific pamphlets and videos that can be used to enhance the education session is included at the end of each section. A reference section includes commonly asked questions with appropriate responses, common problems and solutions, and referral guidelines.



An additional tool:

- *The Breastfeeding Answer Book* by La Leche League International is a great resource book. It provides a wealth of information on managing and supporting breastfeeding. Every WIC clinic has a copy for staff use.

Introduction

— Activities —

Check box when completed ✓

Read *Giving Effective Breastfeeding Help*, Chapter 1 in The Breastfeeding Answer Book by La Leche League International.

Locate and review the *Breastfeeding Education Guide* Table of Contents. You will be referring to the Guide throughout the module.

Introduction

— Quiz —

(10 possible points)

(2 points)

Fill in the blanks.

1. WIC strives to achieve the Healthy People Year 2010 Breastfeeding Objective of having _____% of mothers initiate breastfeeding and _____% continue to breastfeed for at least 5 to 6 months, and _____% breastfeeding at 1 year.
- (2 points) 2. Colorado WIC's breastfeeding initiation rate is approximately _____% and duration rate at 6 months is _____%.
- (2 points) 3. WIC's role is to provide information and education so women can make an _____ decision.
- (2 points) 4. If a woman tells me she is not going to breastfeed, I should:
 - a) discuss other feeding options
 - b) ask her how she has come to that decision
 - c) discuss the benefits of breastfeeding
 - d) respect her decision and discuss formula-feeding
- (2 points) 5. T or F Repetitively providing breastfeeding education has a bigger impact than total amount of time spent discussing a topic.

Answers
1. 75%, 50%, and 25%
2. 70% and 30%
3. informed
4. b
5. T

How Do I Rate?

10 points = Expert!
8-9 points = Good Job!
6-7 points = Go Back and Look Over Major Points
<6 points = Review Entire Section