

**DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT NO. 4  
PEER BREASTFEEDING COUNSELOR**

**NATURE OF WORK**

A Breastfeeding Peer Counselor is a role model, educator and support person with a commitment to promote breastfeeding as the method of infant feeding to primarily WIC pregnant/breastfeeding women and their families. They provide encouragement and act as a resource to women who plan to breastfeed or are currently breastfeeding. Duties are performed according to state and local policies. The employee may also receive written or verbal instructions from the Peer Breastfeeding Coordinator, WIC staff or other clinic staff. This person will attend Peer Counselor Training. Services provided will assist clients in making an infant feeding decision and in having a successful breastfeeding experience. There could be serious consequences to the maternal and/or infant health if the Peer Breastfeeding Counselor provided inappropriate or incorrect information or failed to recognize and refer mothers and infants with problems. The Peer Counselor receives day-to-day direction by the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Coordinator and supervision by the Personal Health Nursing Supervisor/Director.

**EXAMPLES OF WORK**

Counsels primary WIC pregnant and breastfeeding mothers by telephone or in the WIC clinic/office;

Receives a caseload of primarily WIC clients and makes routine periodic contacts with all clients assigned throughout their breastfeeding experience;

Provides close contact and follow-up to mothers during the early postnatal period;

Provides information and promotes breastfeeding to primarily WIC clients;

Provides the mother with advice on aspects of normal breastfeeding;

Provides anticipatory guidance to reduce the occurrence of problems;

Organizes and leads/teaches breastfeeding classes or support groups;

Advocates for breastfeeding women in the health care system, community and workplaces;

Teaches use, cleaning and assembly of breast pumps and expression and storage of human milk;

Identifies the need for referrals to the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Coordinator;

Keeps accurate documentation of contacts with mothers;

Respects each client by keeping her information strictly confidential;

Attends staff meeting and breastfeeding conference/workshops as appropriate;

Other duties as assigned.

## **KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

Ability to relate to District Health Department No. 4 (DHD4) staff and administration along with other agencies and staff in a constructive and mutually enhancing manner. Must have ability to work in a team situation.

Interpersonal skills for establishing rapport and relating to both the population to be served and to a variety of service disciplines (physicians, mid-wives, OB personnel, nutritionists, nurses and lactation consultants as applicable.

Knowledge of and ability to develop good working relationships with referral sources.

Ability to apply Peer Breastfeeding training and experience to incorporate the goals of pregnant/breastfeeding women and their families into a plan under the guidance of and utilizing the expertise of the Peer Breastfeeding Coordinator.

Ability to work independently by: utilizing training and experience to process information and problem solve according to various situations presented; self-motivated; sets goals for self and strives to achieve.

Knowledge of own personal abilities along with the aptitude to know when to ask for assistance.

Demonstrates ability to apply basic communication skills. Shows continuing motivation to learn new skills.

Ability to follow written and verbal instructions.

Ability to clearly speak, read (visual acuity), write and understand English.

Good listening skills.

Basic knowledge of the social, economic and environmental conditions of the clients to be served.

Working knowledge of the WIC program and other applicable services offered by the Health Department.

Working knowledge on the use of manual and electric breast pumps. Training will be provided. Standard A-V equipment, telephones, pagers, voicemail and pc (computer) may also be used.

Demonstrates ability to apply basic communication skills. Shows continuing motivation to learn new skills.

Ability to learn counseling techniques and therapeutic communication skills.

Ability to lift/carry supplies up a flight(s) of stairs.

Ability to represent the Department in a professional manner including appearance and mannerisms.

## **TRAINING**

Attends Loving Support or Breastfeeding Basics Training;

Observes other peers or lactation consultant helping mothers breastfeed;

Reads assigned books or materials about breastfeeding;

Completes orientation to the WIC program and;

Attends on-going breastfeeding training;

Taught procedures for documenting clients contacts and completing activity reports.

## **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 through phone contacts.

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

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

Must be a high school graduate or equivalent.

Must have breastfed at least one baby.

Is enthusiastic about breastfeeding and wants to help other mothers.

Is familiar with WIC.

Has good communication and organizational skills.

Is fluent in English.

Acceptable background check including protective service involvement, police and license, if applicable.

Personal qualities needed include: maturity, warmth, tolerance, flexibility and self-confidence.

Must have a telephone.

Minimum of 1 year of college level courses preferred.