



Connecticut Breastfeeding Promotion and Support: Covering All Our Bases!

Caroline Smith Cooke, RD, CLC and Marilyn Lonczak, M Ed, RD, CLC, State Breastfeeding Co-ordinators

Connecticut Department of Public Health - Community Health and Prevention Section - WIC Program



HOME PLATE = MOTHERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Connecticut chose to focus on providing consistent breastfeeding education and support to WIC mothers and their families. The State's WIC Local Agency Breastfeeding Committee developed (4) breastfeeding content sheets for WIC staff to promote consistent messaging.

- Exclusive Breastfeeding
- Building and Maintaining a Milk Supply
- Pumping: Medical Reasons
- Pumping: Work/School

These content sheets can be used in all of Connecticut's 12 WIC local agencies to train "rookies" and to refresh veteran staff. Each content sheet was developed by a sub-committee of local breastfeeding coordinators with direction from State staff.

FIRST BASE= COMMUNITIES

Already a recognized player in the community, WIC increased efforts to highlight its breastfeeding services to community partners. WIC local agency breastfeeding coordinator contact information was provided to hospital lactation committee representatives from the 10 maternity facilities participating in the Connecticut Breastfeeding Initiative (CBI) and an overview of WIC's role in breastfeeding promotion was provided during a monthly Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition (CBC) meeting. Many positive connections have been made from this simple task.

In 2011, CT-WIC expanded its peer counseling program to offer peer support services at 3 WIC local agencies with IBCLC's on staff. Previously, WIC Peer Counseling funds supported two community, hospital-based peer programs: *Breastfeeding Heritage and Pride (BHP)*.

Future plans involve increasing consistency among the WIC clinic-based and BHP programs.

SECOND BASE = EMPLOYMENT

In 2011, a collaboration between the Connecticut Department of Labor, Public Health, Commission on Human Rights and the Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition knocked one out of the park with the development of a *Frequently Asked Questions* publication focus on understanding of the State's breastfeeding legislation. Not only was a consumer resource created, but valuable relationships were formed to provide a streamlined process for mothers who felt their rights were infringed upon.



DPH also developed a comprehensive Nursing Mother's Policy including an employee lactation room orientation and supervisors' training. The program was highlighted in an internal employee newsletter from both perspectives, employer and employee.

PUBLIC HEALTH STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE

With the release of the Surgeon General's Call to Action (SGCTA) to Support Breastfeeding in January 2011, increased USDA WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling funds in FY 2010 and the receipt of a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 2009 Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grant, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT-DPH) was uniquely positioned to align its limited resources to address the six (6) areas outlined in the SGCTA to Support Breastfeeding for Public Health agencies. Internal and external partnerships were renewed and new relationships were established to ensure the Department "Covers All Its Bases" with respect to breastfeeding promotion and support activities. From expansion of the WIC peer counseling program, to oversight and support for the Connecticut Breastfeeding Initiative (CBI), a CPPW project to assist 10 maternity facilities in Connecticut in achieving five (5) of the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, all activities are tied back to the SGCTA to ensure consistency of messaging and leveraging of state and federal resources.



THIRD BASE = PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

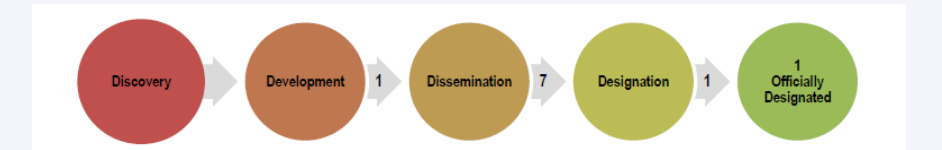
Coordination of breastfeeding promotion and support activities is crucial to forwarding the breastfeeding agenda in the State. Department administration was supportive of these connected projects and directed the formation of an internal CT-DPH breastfeeding committee. The committee, comprised of staff from WIC, Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (NAPO), and Family Health programs has the task of identifying gaps in services, expanding successful programs and prioritizing future efforts.

In 2011, a survey was sent to all DPH maternal and child health program representatives and other programs that committee members identified with some connection to breastfeeding. The survey had a 73% response rate (n=15) and feedback provided a good foundation for planning project and activities. In the batter's box, is a collaborative Child Care training program between WIC and DPH Child Care licensing to reach both providers and DPH regulators. On deck, working with DPH hospital regulatory staff to update the State's perinatal regulations to include evidenced-based maternity care.

PITCHER'S MOUND = HEALTH CARE

We're hoping to **strike out** the formula companies marketing and influence over health professionals, mothers and families. Activities in the Health Care sector include:

- Long-term goal for all maternity facilities to adopt the *Ten Steps*.
- Build on the success of the Connecticut Breastfeeding Initiative (CBI)



- Increase the consumer demand for proven maternity care practices through coordinated messaging from the Department, WIC, CBC, and other stakeholders.
- Direct education of pediatric providers through bi-annual, joint CT-AAP and CT-DPH/WIC funded teleconferences specific to breastfeeding.

SCOREBOARD = RESEARCH & SURVEILLANCE

So where is Connecticut in the standings? In order to appropriately target limited resources access to quality data is crucial. In 2012, Connecticut began receiving funding to participate in PRAMS *Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System* and in future years we hope to have enough information to put our breastfeeding Data into Action similar to OR, VT, NYC, LO, and NM.

In the meantime, Department epidemiologists are working to improve the quality of WIC MIS breastfeeding data as well as transfer the capacity for PedNNS and PNSS reporting to the state level.

2012 National WIC Association Nutrition and Breastfeeding Conference

For more information contact: Marilyn.Lonczak@ct.gov