Scope of Practice/Skills Checklist for the WIC Peer Counselor

A peer counselor provides basic breastfeeding information, encouragement and support to WIC participants and performs within the peer counselor scope of practice.

1. **Perform in a professional manner in all aspects of the peer counselor role.**

* Respect the participant’s privacy, dignity and confidentiality.
* Respect and respond sensitively to cultural attitudes and practices of participants and the community.
* Work within the policies and procedures of the WIC program.
* Maintain records according to legal requirements and ethical practices.
* Recognize when assistance is needed and consult with the supervisor, Breastfeeding Coordinator and/or Peer Counselor Coordinator and other lactation specialists.
* Identify situations outside the Scope of Practice and refer as appropriate in a timely manner.
* Yield to the WIC designated breastfeeding expert (such as the local agency breastfeeding coordinator, local agency WIC coordinator, or International Board Certified Lactation Consultant [IBCLC]) for situations out of breastfeeding peer counselor Scope of Practice.
* Acquire ongoing breastfeeding education to maintain and build knowledge and skills.

1. **Encourage and support participants to breastfeed.**

* Use participant-focused communication techniques to best meet participant needs.
* Help participants identify the support available to them and educate family members.
* Help women identify their breastfeeding concerns, barriers, and solutions.
* Teach the reasons to breastfeed and the risks of not breastfeeding.
* Teach the importance of exclusive breastfeeding in the early weeks.
* Teach participants about the WIC food packages for breastfeeding mothers.
* Assist in infant feeding classes and peer support groups.
* Be available to WIC participants outside of usual clinic hours and outside of the clinic environment.
* Refer mothers to resources for support.
* Promote breastfeeding in the community, workplace, and health care system.
* Support breastfeeding participants from pregnancy through growth spurts, introducing solid foods, and weaning.

1. **Teach basic breastfeeding to participants and help them when difficulties occur.**

* Teach basic, evidence-based techniques that help ensure a successful start in breastfeeding, including milk production, skin-to-skin care, positioning and latch, and milk expression and storage.
* Identify signs of the normal course of breastfeeding, including breastfeeding frequency and duration, infant feeding cues, and normal infant weight gain and stooling patterns.
* Provide anticipatory guidance to help prevent the occurrence of problems.
* Provide guidance to mothers regarding non-evidence-based breastfeeding information they receive.
* Help mothers plan for a return to work/school that supports the continuation of breastfeeding.
* Provide basic and timely problem-solving and support.
* Yield mothers experiencing difficulties to the WIC designated breastfeeding expert.

Adapted from Scope of Practice for Peer Counselors materials from Michigan, California and Virginia WIC.