



Breast-feeding Peer Counselor Program

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Fast facts

- ▲ The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breast-feeding at least one year or longer.
- ▲ WIC statistics show that many participants stop breast-feeding within the first two weeks, often in the first seven to 10 days, if they do not get the support they need.
- ▲ Complex breast-feeding problems are referred to a lactation specialist.
- ▲ Participants report that being able to talk with someone in their own language and in a timely manner can make the difference between continuing or stopping breast-feeding.

What is the Breast-feeding Peer Counselor Program?

Breast-fed babies are healthier, yet new mothers may be hesitant to begin or continue to breast-feed because of concerns about lack of milk, positioning the child and conflicts with active lifestyles. Public Health encourages new moms to begin and continue breast-feeding through the Breast-feeding Peer Counselor Program. Peer counselors help by sharing their personal breast-feeding experience, providing information, and giving much needed support.

Hennepin County's program began in 2005 with a grant from the Minnesota Department of Health, which was funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

What do peer counselors do?

Peer counselors contact pregnant women who are participating in Women, Infants and Children (WIC) to encourage breast-feeding and address concerns. Counselors follow the new mothers through their deliveries and into the postpartum period to support breast-feeding, usually contacting the new mother every couple of days.

Peer counselors provide:

- Regular check-in calls to the clients at scheduled times.
- A phone number so the participant can contact them any time.
- Face-to-face visits in the WIC clinic.
- Hospital visits.
- Breast-feeding classes.
- Referrals to community agencies and social services.

Who are the breast-feeding peer counselors?

Hennepin has 13 breast-feeding peer counselors.

- Each one represents a target population, so together, they represent a variety of cultures and languages.
- All have breast-fed successfully for six months or more.
- All are trained.
- All are enthusiastic about breast-feeding.

What are the program results?

Peer programs across the country have been found to be effective in increasing the initiation and duration of breast-feeding. Since the inception of the program in Hennepin, breast-feeding rates have increased from 73 percent to 77 percent.