

Peer Counselors

Support Breastfeeding During the Pandemic

This year's World Breastfeeding Week's theme is Protecting Breastfeeding: A Shared Responsibility. Breastfeeding Peer Counselors (BFPCs) more than shared the responsibility for protecting breastfeeding! BFPCs were readily available to help families navigate breastfeeding challenges during the pandemic. When clinics closed their doors, BFPCs quickly opened their hearts and minds to new ways of helping participants! Take a look at the innovative ways BFPC staff supported participants during the pandemic.

- Virtual staff meetings
- Text messaging through Teletask
- Virtual classes
- Social distancing pump dispensing and returns
- World Breastfeeding Week drive-thru celebrations
- Facebook live events
- New engagement strategies — monthly raffles, creating and providing breastfeeding videos
- cdphwic.doxy.me — Virtual lactation consults through video conferencing with the PC, the IBCLC and the participant

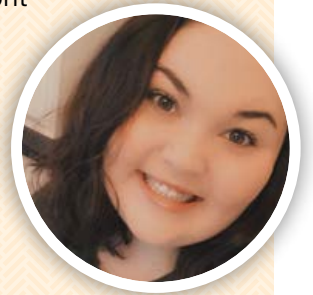




**BFPC staff
are finding
Doxy very
useful! This
is what they
are saying
about the new
platform:**

“As a peer counselor, Doxy has been very convenient for our Shasta Moms Circle. Mothers still come together to talk and receive support from each other through this virtual platform. It has been very helpful in these uncertain times. We still feel connected as a group, which has been very beneficial for us and the mothers we support.”

Vanessa | BFPC, Shasta County WIC



“In Shasta, we found that meeting parents on Doxy for lactation consultations, when they can’t come in person, has been a great benefit for birthing families. This is such an important time in people’s lives, they need all the support they can get, and the easier it is to get that support, the better!”

Sarah | IBCLC and Breastfeeding Coordinator,
Shasta County WIC



August is Breastfeeding Awareness Month



August is Breastfeeding Awareness Month. Let's look at how WIC BFPCs support breastfeeding traditions all year long and see what WIC participants think too!



World Breastfeeding Week, 1–7 of August (2021 Theme — Protecting Breastfeeding: A Shared Responsibility)

“Our participants come from all kinds of different backgrounds and beliefs. Each one is special in their own way and being able to help them meet their feeding goals fills my heart with joy. I want to normalize breastfeeding and teach my daughter that “breast is best.” And that it’s important to be part of our community because together, we can affect change one step at a time, or in the spirit of breastfeeding, maybe one or two breasts at a time.”

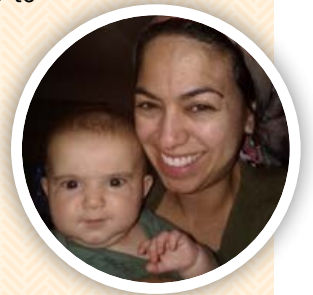
Rosio | BFPC, Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center



“The support from my BFPC has helped me so much. I was very nervous to go back to work after maternity leave.

She quickly helped me to get a good quality double electric breast pump. It made such a difference! I have been able to reach my goal to provide only breast milk for my baby without having to supplement. I plan to continue to nurse till my baby is at least 1 year old. Nursing my baby for the past 7 months has increased our bond 10-fold! We feel so much love for each other and I am so grateful for all the special time we have together.”

Hilary | WIC Participant, Community Resource Project Inc. WIC



Native American Breastfeeding Week, 8–14 of August

(2021 Theme — Nourishing Our Futures)

In many Native American cultures, breastfeeding is viewed as more than a way to feed babies; it is viewed as a way to nourish a baby’s mind, body, and spirit.

“I had a mom planning to combo feed. I helped her the first week after having baby. Mom was so happy she decided to exclusively breastfeed her baby! Helping moms with their breastfeeding journeys makes me happy too!”

Mayra | BFPC, Native American Health Center



“My motivation is to see happy mothers breastfeeding babies. I am motivated to work with mothers from different cultures, as well as my people from Guatemala. We have the best communication practicing our native language.”

Victorina | BFPC, Native American Health Center



“Before breastfeeding Isabella, there was a hole in my heart. Breastfeeding her has filled that space in my heart. I made a special connection with her that I never felt before. The BFPC Program helped me reach my feeding goals.”

Christina | WIC Participant



Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders Breastfeeding Week, 15–21 of August (2021 Theme—Reclaiming Our Tradition)

This year is the first national celebration of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders Breastfeeding Week! Breastfeeding is a traditional practice seen in many Asian and Pacific Islander communities as not only providing the best nutrition to an infant, but also strengthening the newborn’s mind and spirit while enhancing cultural connections between the generations. WIC is excited to be part of this inaugural celebration!

“I remember having trouble breastfeeding my first child. I got so much support from my family and a WIC IBCLC that I was able to breastfeed all my 4 children over 2 years. In my years working as a BFPC, I have seen how important support is to breastfeed successfully.”

Ya | BFPC, Ampla Health Center



“I want to support new mothers and share what I have learned. I want to be there to listen to their concerns and provide tips for making healthy feeding choices. As a Vietnamese American, I want to support and remind our Vietnamese mothers that breastfeeding is a healthier choice.”

Ngoc | BFPC, Community Resource Project Inc., WIC



Black Breastfeeding Week, 25–31 of August (2021 Theme — The Big Pause: Collective Rest For Collective Power)

Black Breastfeeding Week was created in 2013 to address gaps in breastfeeding rates, which are lower, among African American individuals, when compared to other communities. WIC BFPC programs help to increase breastfeeding rates and improve health outcomes for Black families enrolled in WIC!

“I was so grateful to have someone that knew my family and was on my side even though I was still in the hospital. I’ve always been compelled by all the information and stories that were shared by other mommies and the PCs. After receiving amazing help from my PC, I will be joining the team as the newest PC and provide the same care and support I received.”

Charita | WIC Participant (soon to be a BFPC),
Sistah Connection, Riverside WIC



“When I had my daughter 19 years ago, I had to call my WIC lactation consultant my first day home. With her help, I was able to successfully breastfeed for over two years. I never used formula! For the past 17 years, I have been providing amazing supportive services to Black women helping them to meet their breastfeeding goals. I love breastfeeding!”

Liza | BFPC, Sistah Connection, Riverside WIC



From Peer Counselors to Agency Leaders



One of the WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program's goals is to provide an upward path for BFPCs to advance their careers. Over the years, many BFPCs have successfully climbed the career ladder and are creating breastfeeding legacies within their community and beyond! Let's celebrate a few of our WIC staff and learn about their journeys to becoming breastfeeding champions and more!



"In my 20-year career with WIC I have been: a WIC participant, Nutrition Aide, Peer Counselor, WNA, PC Supervisor, Breastfeeding Coordinator, IBCLC, and now WIC Director. WIC has been a part of my life since I was 8 years old, when my mother started working for WIC. The work I do daily is to honor my mother and all the mothers like her, in my community. The WIC program, more specifically the Peer Counselor Program sees the value of taking someone from a vulnerable population and offering them education, support, and opportunities. This, along with my passion for WIC, is the key to my success."



Sasha | WIC Director, The Resource Connection WIC

“I was still breastfeeding my 18-month old daughter, Isa when WIC called to offer me the peer counseling position. I was thrilled to work for an organization that valued the importance of breastfeeding and understood the intricacies of being a mom. WIC had put me through the UC Davis CLE course, sent me to conferences and over the years, I learned so much! But everything I learned only validated something that deep down I believe I already knew; how essential breastfeeding is to both the health and evolution of our species and our planet. WIC steered my life in a direction that I hadn’t foreseen. I am forever grateful and proud of all the progress I’ve made. I couldn’t have done it without WIC!”



Mary | IBCLC and Regional Breastfeeding Liaison, formerly at San Joaquin County WIC

“WIC has been an essential part of my life since I enrolled pregnant about 20 years ago with my first child. After having my second child, I became a peer counselor in 2009. With the support of my former co-workers and my former WIC Director, Rose McIsaac, I fulfilled my dream of becoming an International Board Lactation Consultant. This opened new doors for me. I loved being able to train WIC staff, work in the community as a breastfeeding leader, and support new mothers when they have breastfeeding difficulties. Without WIC’s support, I would not be able to help new mothers to reach their breastfeeding goal. Thank you, WIC!”



Lizeth | Breastfeeding Coordinator, Yolo County WIC

“I started my WIC journey as a participant, while pregnant with my first son, who is now 24 years old. Then in 1997 I was hired as a WIC receptionist and later became a Nutrition Assistant (WNA) and BFPC. I am blessed to have had a supportive team, my family, my inspiring coworkers, and my Director, Rose McIsaac for the support and work flexibility provided to complete my coursework. With that support, I became an IBCLC in 2014. I sincerely enjoy working with families, providing a helping hand, and supporting them in their breastfeeding journey. I strive to continue to improve my skills and reach out to make a positive difference. I know how important it is to have a caring hand when you need it the most.”



Rosario | Breastfeeding Coordinator, Ampla Health WIC

To learn more about the
WIC program, visit
<http://www.wicworks.ca.gov>.



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