

“Combining WIC Policy & LLL Philosophy to Create a Sustainable Lactation Community Support”

Author: Tammy Lantz RD, IBCLC
Co-Author: Angelena Martinez, CLC

Denver Health WIC

Contact: Angelena Martinez

Email: angelena.martinez@dhha.org

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The goal of this initiative was to collaborate two great breastfeeding programs, WIC and La Leche League International (LLLI). By accrediting five WIC staff (four Breastfeeding Peer Counselors and one Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Coordinator) as LLL leaders, we created and maintained a sustainable infrastructure for mother-to-mother support groups and peer counseling programs in hospitals, community health sectors and other community settings in the Denver community.

This initiative was an opportunity to reach out and support breastfeeding mothers utilizing the same vision as LLLI, “to help mothers worldwide from any economic background to breastfeed through mother-to-mother support, encouragement, information and education, and to promote a better understanding of breastfeeding as an important element in the healthy development of the baby and mother. This poster provides outcomes achieved and lessons learned while embarking on this collaborative partnership, which combines WIC policy and procedures with the LLLI philosophy.

COMBINING WIC POLICY & LLL PHILOSOPHY TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE LACTATION COMMUNITY SUPPORT

BACKGROUND:

Denver WIC has a positive reputation of lactation support in the community and amongst other Colorado WIC agencies. They have had support groups in the WIC clinics (tied to food benefit pick up) since 2008, with moderate rates of attendance. However, it became typical that groups were time intensive for the WIC clinics. There were also several processes that needed to be completed to ensure WIC compliance, & often discussion steered into talking about formula amounts on food benefits rather than focusing solely on lactation support. With the 2013 WBW theme, "Close to Mothers", staff viewed the history of LLL <http://www.llli.org/lllihistory.html>. With this, the thought arose... why re-create the wheel of mother to mother support, let's bring it into WIC. And with this thought, started our journey...

LESSONS LEARNED:

- This may not be possible at any WIC clinic and with any WIC staff. The journey of becoming a LLL leader is a personal one and may not be for everyone.
- There are several steps involved in becoming a leader & the time frame of this happening is extremely variable, likely no less than 9 months.
- Peers came with a high level of BF knowledge and a low understanding of LLL. LLL leadership was accustomed to the opposite with leader applicants (strong understanding of LLL with additional knowledge needed).
- A collaboration amongst different lactation programs is vital to best supporting the families in our communities and **IT CAN BE DONE!**



METHODS:

- Discussion amongst WIC leadership & LLL leadership to discuss...is this possible and what do we need to think about to make this work. (June 2013)
- WIC leadership to learn about LLL philosophies
- LLL leadership presented to the WIC peer counselor team about LLL and what it means to become a leader
- LLL leadership had individual conversations with each peer counselor regarding their interest in becoming a leader or how they may be interested in being involved in LLL. All expressed interest in becoming leaders and so the journey begins ☺.
- Peer counselors started attending LLL meetings of their choice around town.
- Personal reading and monthly group educational series started.
- Development of LLL meetings in WIC, at local hospital, and other Denver area locations.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Creation of a new Colorado LLL group: LLL of Denver Community
- 5 meetings offered per month
- All meetings are bilingual in English and Spanish
- Meetings are demographically and socioeconomically diverse within our community
- Development of <http://www.lllofdenvercommunity.org/>

Denver WIC Mission:

"We promote growth of strong families and healthy lifestyles through breastfeeding support, nutrition education, food assistance, and referrals. We empower Women, Infants, and Children with compassionate care."

La Leche League International Vision

"To help mothers worldwide from any economic background to breastfeed through mother-to-mother support, encouragement, information, and education, and to promote a better understanding of breastfeeding as an important element in the healthy development of the baby and mother."



WIC peer counselor group & their children

