



## WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Study

### Overview

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has awarded a contract to Abt Associates Inc. to study the implementation of the *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Program across the country, as well as to test the effectiveness of higher-intensity (higher cost) versus lower-intensity (lower cost) peer counseling on breastfeeding duration. Phase I of the study will describe how *Loving Support* peer counseling has been implemented in states and Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) that accepted peer counseling funds, including challenges faced and strategies used to overcome these challenges, evolution of the peer counseling program over time, and peer counseling program costs. Phase II of the study is designed to examine the effects on breastfeeding duration of various ways of providing peer counseling using the *Loving Support* model. This component of the study is not designed to be nationally representative, but will focus on a small number of programs serving WIC participants with low rates of breastfeeding.

### Study Methods and Timeframe

In Phase I, all 86 States and ITOs receiving *Loving Support* peer counseling funds will be asked to complete a web-based questionnaire. In-person interviews will be conducted in 40 local WIC agencies and local agencies that collaborate with these agencies in carrying out the peer counseling model. Staff from local clinics associated with a sample of these local WIC agencies will also be interviewed. Data for Phase II will be collected from local WIC Directors, site peer counselor coordinators, peer counselors, and from a sample of WIC women assigned a peer counselor. Data collection for both phases will begin in the summer of 2007, and a final report is due in early 2009.

### Uses of the Results

The results of this study will be used to:

- Disseminate information on implementing peer counseling programs using the *Loving Support* model;
- Assess technical assistance and training needs of State agencies; and
- Provide a report to Congress and other stakeholders demonstrating how State agencies are using the peer counseling funding.

### How You Can Help

If you are involved in the implementation of *Loving Support* peer counseling at the State or local levels, you may be asked to participate in a survey, or an in-person or telephone interview. Your participation and support of this effort will ensure that we obtain the most accurate and comprehensive information on the program, which is critical to the future of the peer counseling program.

### Who to Contact for More Information

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