

Background

Breastfeeding promotion and support is a central tenet of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). The *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Program is an initiative designed to increase breastfeeding initiation and duration rates for WIC participants, as well as to increase community support for WIC participants who breastfeed.

This study provides a comprehensive and systematic picture of the implementation of the *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Program. Phase I, the Implementation Study, describes the process of the *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Program implementation in those States that accepted breastfeeding peer counseling grants. Phase II, the Impact Study, will address the research question of what intensity of peer counseling is necessary to increase duration of breastfeeding once the program has met the standards of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) model.

The Final Implementation Report describes Phase I, the Implementation Study. The report summarizes information collected from States, Indian Tribal Organizations and Territories (ITOTs), as well as from 40 Local WIC Agencies (LWAs) that implement peer counseling programs using the *Loving Support* model. Also, the report describes how *Loving Support* Peer Counseling funds are being used at the State and ITOT level. General characteristics of LWAs implementing the *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Program and the nature of local program operations in the 40 LWAs are also described. In addition, the report provides five local case studies of the *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Program.

Method

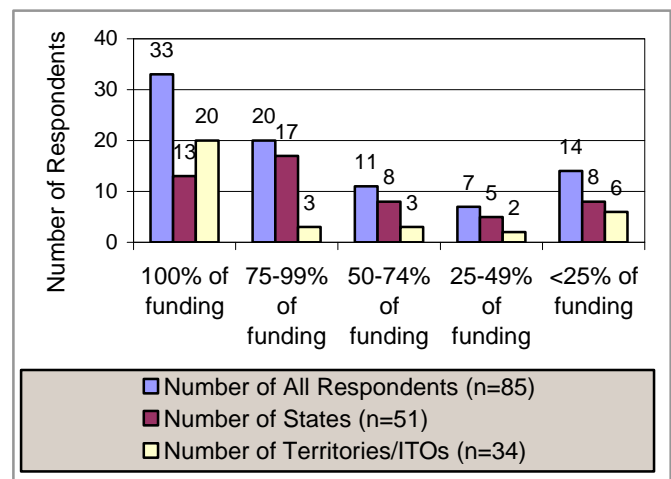
In 2008, a Web-based survey was administered to all of the States and ITOTs receiving the FNS *Loving Support* grant to obtain information on how the program is being implemented and maintained. For the site visit component of the study, a nationally representative sample of 40 LWAs was selected randomly, and 5 LWAs from the 40 site visits were selected to be the focus of the case studies. General

characteristics of LWAs implementing the *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Program were generated by merging collected information with data from the *WIC Participant and Program Characteristics (WIC PC) 2008 Report*. WIC PC summarizes the demographic characteristics of WIC participants nationwide.

Findings

The FNS grant is not the only source of funding for the *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Program. States and ITOTs were asked to estimate the percentage of funding for the *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Program that came from the FNS breastfeeding peer counseling grant. Thirty-nine percent of respondents (33 out of 85) reported that 100 percent of the funding came from the FNS grant, and 21 respondents indicated that the FNS grant paid less than half of the implementation costs for the *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Program (Figure 1). In most States, all additional funding provided to LWAs for the *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Program comes from core Federal WIC administrative funds.

**Figure 1
Proportion of Funding for State *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Program Coming From FNS Grant: Web Survey, Fiscal Year 2007**



Most States with FNS-funded *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Programs concentrate on selected LWAs. The majority of States (59 percent) focus grant funds

on a small number of LWAs, rather than trying to make funding available to all sites. Sixteen percent of the 51 States provided FNS funds to 75 percent or more of their LWAs.

The dollar amount of FNS Loving Support grants per pregnant WIC participant varies widely. State-level estimates of the FNS grant amount per pregnant WIC participant ranged from \$5 to \$117, with an average amount of \$26. In 16 percent of the States, the FNS grant amount per pregnant WIC participant was less than \$10; in 20 percent of the States, the amount exceeded \$40.

Well over half of pregnant WIC participants were enrolled at LWAs that offered Loving Support. The LWAs that offered *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Programs served well over half of pregnant WIC participants (Figure 2). About 46 percent of participants were served by LWAs receiving FNS grants for *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Programs, and another 10 percent of participants were in LWAs supported by other funding.

A nearly equal percentage of contacts occur in the WIC office as over the telephone. Across all LWAs that were visited, 36 indicated that more contact occurs over the telephone (44 percent), and a nearly equal percentage of contacts also occur in the WIC office (41 percent) in an average month. Some, but not all, of the 36 LWAs included letters to WIC participants in their definition of “contacts,” and 12 percent of contact occurs by mail (Figure 3).

Breastfeeding outcome data collected. The majority of the States and ITOTs collected data about breastfeeding initiation and duration. Only a small percentage of respondents collected data about breastfeeding exclusivity, which is not part of FNS reporting requirements for FY 2008. Breastfeeding outcome data collected by States and ITOTs tended to include all WIC participants.

Next Steps

A second report on Phase II, the Impact Study, will provide the results of an enhancement of the *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Program on breastfeeding outcomes for WIC participants.

Figure 2
WIC Participants Served by LWAs Implementing *Loving Support* Peer Counseling, Fiscal Year 2008

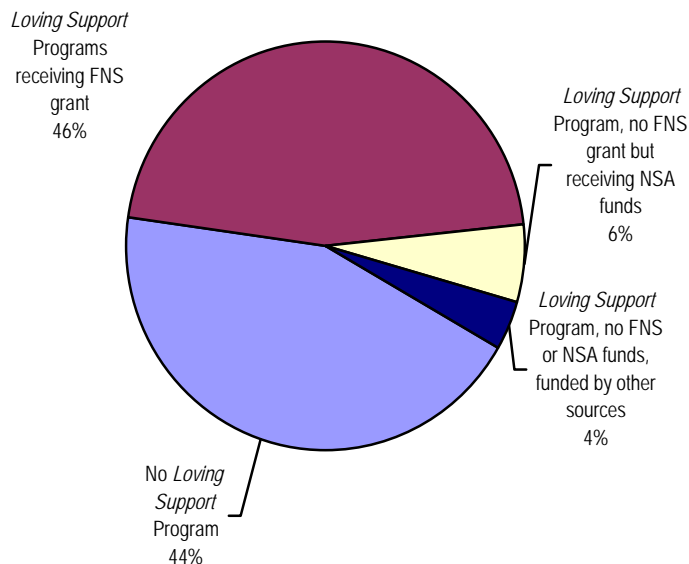
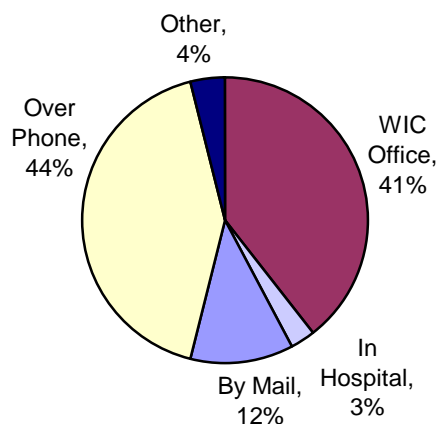


Figure 3
Proportion of Total Contacts Between WIC Participants and Peer Counselors by Location, Fiscal Year 2009



Download the full Final Implementation Report at:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora>

2010 - U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, *WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Study, Final Implementation Report*, by Ann Collins, Catherine Dun Rappaport, and Nancy Burstein. Project Officer: Tracy K. Palmer, MPH. Alexandria, VA: June 2010.

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