

DRAFT Phase I Recruitment Letter to Sampled Local WIC Agencies

Dear [Name of Local WIC Agency Director]:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is conducting a national study of the implementation of the Loving Support peer counseling program. This important study will collect information on how Loving Support peer counseling has been implemented at the State and local level in those States that have received FNS peer counseling grant funds. The information gathered will include the evolution of the local programs, challenges faced during implementation, strategies for addressing those challenges, program expenditures, and collaborations with other organizations.

Through a recent survey of all 86 State WIC agencies and ITOs, (a first step in this study), your local WIC agency was selected to be part of a sample of 40 local WIC agencies across the country with an operational Loving Support peer counseling program. I have discussed your selection with your State WIC Director, and you may already have heard that you would be requested to participate in this study. Participation is voluntary. The information needed to understand how Loving Support is implemented can only be provided by local WIC agencies, and their associated local clinics and collaborative organizations. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent provided by law. A decision to participate will not affect your agency or your employment status. I hope that you will agree to participate.

The study design, activities, and time frame are briefly described in the enclosed study overview. On-site data collection will begin in [name of month]. The site visit would last one to two days (depending on the size of your local agency) and would require brief interviews with the you, the breastfeeding and/or peer counselor coordinator, budget staff, and peer counselors, and a staff member at an organization collaborating on Loving Support peer counseling (e.g., hospital), so we could hear about the program from their perspective.

If you have one or more WIC clinics or service delivery sites that implement the Loving Support peer counseling program differently or independently from the peer counseling in your local WIC agency, we would also like to talk to you about spending part of a day with clinic staff. We want to get a sense of the different ways that Loving Support is implemented in the various settings of your local agency. We would be interested in talking with clinic staff who are involved in Loving Support peer counseling, including the clinic director or supervisor, breastfeeding or peer counseling coordinator, and peer counselors.

Within the next two weeks, a study coordinator from Abt Associates, the organization conducting the study on FNS' behalf, will contact you to discuss your agency's participation in the study. If you agree to participate, study staff will ask you to nominate one of your collaborators in peer counseling activities for a brief interview. We would also like hear if you have any WIC clinics that are implementing the Loving Support peer counseling model in a way that differs substantially from other sites in your agency. In the meantime, if you have any questions, you can contact me at 703-305-2122 or john.endahl@fns.usda.gov, or Joan McLaughlin, the Abt Project Director, at 301-634-1833 or joan_mclaughlin@abtassoc.com. Calls made to these numbers may require a toll.

I hope you will agree to participate. Your participation and support of this pilot study will make a positive and lasting contribution to the success of the peer counseling program.

Sincerely,

John Endahl, Ph.D..
Acting Branch Chief
Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation
Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture