

DRAFT Notification Letter to State Directors About the Web-Based Survey

Dear [Name of State Director]:

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is conducting a national study of the implementation of the *Loving Support* peer counseling program. As described in the enclosed Study Overview, the WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Study will include two phases: one that looks at how *Loving Support* peer counseling has been implemented nationwide, and one, to be done later, that will examine the effects on breastfeeding duration of various ways of providing peer counseling using the FNS *Loving Support* peer counseling model. In the fall of 2006, you and/or your FNS regional contact helped provide background information for this study by sending information from the State Plans to Abt Associates Inc., the contractor FNS has chosen for this project. The purpose of this letter is to ask your help again.

Specifically, we are asking you and other relevant staff working on *Loving Support* peer counseling at the State level, to complete a web-based survey. The survey asks about how *Loving Support* peer counseling is being implemented in your State (or ITO), and includes questions on State staff that work on *Loving Support* peer counseling, training that the State receives or provides, policy guidance provided by the State, and which local WIC agencies are currently receiving FNS peer counseling grant funds. Participation is voluntary. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent provided by law. A decision to participate will not affect your agency or your employment status.

The web-based survey takes about 150 minutes to complete. It has been designed so respondents can save their responses at any time and go back to the survey if necessary, allowing the survey to be completed as time allows. The survey can also be accessed by multiple respondents per location, allowing the most suitable agency member to respond to certain questions.

Study staff from Abt Associates will be contacting you in the next few weeks by e-mail (or phone if they have trouble reaching you by e-mail) to provide you with your unique password to access the survey and give you any technical assistance you may need to complete the survey. Your timely participation in this study effort is very much appreciated, and is critical to the success of the study and to the peer counseling program. The surveys need to be completed by [date.]

Within the next two weeks, a study coordinator from Abt Associates will contact you to discuss your participation in the study. In the meantime, please contact me at 703-305-2122 or john.endahl@fns.usda.gov, or the Abt Project Director, Joan McLaughlin, if you have any questions about the survey. She may be reached at 301-634-1833 or joan_mclaughlin@abtassoc.com. Calls made to these numbers may require a toll.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

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