

Abt Follow-Up Letter to Selected State WIC Agencies

Dear [Name of State WIC Agency Director]:

This is a follow-up letter to one you recently received from the Food and Nutrition Service of the US Department of Agriculture (FNS) asking for your assistance in a study. As you may recall, the study will evaluate the impact of the new WIC food packages on breastfeeding initiation, duration and intensity among Program participants to help FNS understand how WIC can optimize these aspects of breastfeeding. Abt Associates has the contract to do the study. We have attached a one-page description.

As indicated in the letter from FNS, [name(s) of local WIC agency(ies)] [was/were] among the 16 local WIC agencies randomly selected to participate in the study. We would like to follow up and schedule a telephone call with you to provide you with more information about the study, obtain some general background information about your State and its implementation of the new food packages, and discuss the three major ways that your assistance is needed. These include:

- Assisting in obtaining agreement to participate in the study from [LWA name(s)];
- Participating in interviews several months prior to and after the relevant food package changes are implemented in your State; and
- Obtaining thirteen months of administrative data records about food packages for mothers and infants receiving assistance from [agency name(s)] during the study period. (It may be the case in your State that these would be most efficiently obtained at the local level.)

During our telephone call, in addition to answering your questions about what the study entails for local WIC agencies, we can also describe our planned data collection at the State level. Specifically this will involve having an Abt team member conduct individual 60-minute telephone interviews to learn about how your State is preparing to implement the food package changes. These interviews will be conducted with 1) you as the State WIC Director; 2) the State breastfeeding coordinator; and 3) the MIS administrator. Approximately three months after the new food package changes have been implemented, we will be on-site at your agency for one half day to conduct another 60 minute in-person interviews with the same staff to hear about the implementation process, food packages selected, and your insights about the impact, if any, on breastfeeding outcomes. On-site interviews will begin in [early/late Month]. In addition, during the call we would like to identify the most efficient and least burdensome way that we could obtain needed administrative records, either at the State- or local-agency level.

Participation in this study is voluntary. We hope that you will join us in this effort but there are no penalties if you decide not to participate. We realize that this will be a busy time for staff and to help offset the additional administrative burden of participating for local agencies, we are offering \$4,000.

Within the week, someone from Abt Associates will contact you to schedule a follow-up call with you about the study. In the meantime, if you have any questions you can contact me at (617) 349-2664 or Ann_Collins@abtassoc.com or the data collection task leader Andrea Brand at (617) 520-3080 or Andrea_Brand@abtassoc.com. You can also use the study's toll-free number xxxxxxxxx.

I hope that you can support us in this effort to look at the implementation and impact of the WIC food package changes in various sites across the country. The information will help policymakers at FNS understand the implications, if any, of the food package changes on breastfeeding practices. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ann Collins
Project Director

Evaluation of the Birthmonth Breastfeeding Changes to the WIC Food Packages Study
Abt Associates Inc.

cc: Ted Macaluso, Chief, Special Nutrition Evaluation Branch, ORA, FNS, USDA