

Breastfeeding Volume  
Peer Counseling Section

Local Agency Cell Phone Usage

ER# 6.01700

Authority Loving Support Model for Successful Peer Counseling Programs  
Issued 1/15  
Revised

**POLICY:** A local WIC provider (LWP) may provide a cell phone to their peer counselor(s) for use in making participant contacts for the Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (BFPC) Program. The LWP shall ensure that the peer counselor is aware of expectations associated with the phone and shall provide monitoring and oversight to ensure appropriate use and participant confidentiality.

**PROCEDURES:**

A. Providing a cell phone enhances breastfeeding services to participants by making peer counselors available outside of normal clinic hours and will give them the flexibility to provide breastfeeding support from locations other than the WIC clinic.

1. If a LWP allows the peer counselor to provide breastfeeding support beyond normal clinic hours, it is recommended she be provided a cell phone instead of using her personal phone for the following reasons:
  - a. Prevents participant contact information from being stored in personal cell phone. If the peer counselor leaves her position, the agency would still have access to the information.
  - b. Prevents participants from contacting a peer counselor that is no longer employed and prevents having to provide a new phone number to participants.
  - c. If the peer counselor is not available to take after hours breastfeeding support calls, the phone can be given to another peer counselor or WIC staff member.
2. The LWP shall be responsible for all costs associated with the cell phone and will be reimbursed by invoicing appropriate charges on either BFPC Special Funding 1 or 2. Prior approval either through the Local Agency Plan (LAP) or directly from the BFPC Program Coordinator is required.
3. The LWP shall ensure that a peer counselor using an LWP owned cell phone understands the expectations associated with using it. LWPs may request the peer counselor(s) to sign a usage agreement ([see sample](#)).

B. The LWP shall ensure that a cell phone issued to a peer counselor is used appropriately by monitoring usage on a regular basis. The following information shall be discussed with the peer counselor:

1. The device and any accessories provided shall remain the property of the LWP.

2. The peer counselor shall have no expectations of privacy in the use of an LWP issued cell phone.
  3. The peer counselor shall only allow authorized personnel to use the cell phone issued by the WIC agency.
  4. The cell phone shall be used only to contact WIC participants and to conduct business related to WIC.
  5. The peer counselor shall not use the phone for any reason while operating a motor vehicle.
  6. Reasonable precautions, including a device/screen lock and secure passwords, shall be used to prevent theft, vandalism, or unauthorized access to client information.
    - a. In the event that a device is lost, stolen, or vandalized due to the peer counselor's failure to use reasonable precautions, the LWP may require the peer counselor responsible for the cell phone to reimburse them for reasonable costs to replace the device.
    - b. Failure to maintain and use a secure password for the phone may result in breach of confidentiality and corresponding disciplinary action may be taken against the employee.
    - c. The LWP shall notify the district technical assistance team and the BFPC Program Coordinator of a possible breach of confidentiality, if the phone is lost or stolen.
  7. If contacts are maintained on the device, the peer counselor shall review the contacts list, at least monthly, to purge information for participants who are no longer breastfeeding, who have transferred out of the agency, or those whose contact information is no longer valid.
  8. If a peer counselor anticipates she will be unable to respond to participants outside normal WIC clinic hours as expected, she must notify her supervisor as soon as possible so that alternate arrangements can be made.
  9. Peer counselors must document contacts made by a cell phone in the "Peer Counselor Contacts" function of MOWINS.
- C. The LWP should purchase a phone that is compatible with the activities and needs of the BFPC program.
1. When purchasing a phone for peer counselors, the LWP should consider the service area and signal range as well as the location the peer counselor will be making calls from.
  2. It is recommended that the LWP consider expected use of the phone, including texting and social media when determining the type of phone and services to purchase.