



PC Program Policy #1: Training Requirements

Purpose: *This policy outlines the training, mentorship, and continuing education requirements for Peer Counselors (PCs) in the New Mexico WIC Peer Counseling Program. Training ensures that PCs are adequately prepared to provide basic evidence-based, high-quality breastfeeding support to WIC participants.*

Training Overview

The WIC Peer Counselor Program provides paid training to Peer Counselors (PCs) in preparation to receive client referrals. Training includes, but is not limited to, PC program orientation and on-boarding, required courses on *TRAIN NM*, skill-building exercises, and continuing education.

Training Requirements

1. *TRAIN* New Mexico

The NM Department of Health uses *TRAIN NM* for completing required courses upon hire and can be accessed at https://www.train.org/nm/training_plan/6108

Account Creation

- PCs must create a *TRAIN NM* account using a *personal email* address.
- PCs *should not* use their assigned PC @nmwic.org email.

Required Enrollment

- Once the *TRAIN NM* account is established, PCs must register for the personalized NM WIC PC Training Plan, where all required PC courses will be available.

Required Course Completion

- PCs must complete the following trainings the *NM WIC PC Training Plan*:
 - Breastfeeding Curriculum Level 1 within 30-days of hire.
 - Breastfeeding Curriculum Level 2 within 60-days of hire.

If additional time is needed to complete required coursework the PC must communicate with the Lead Peer Counselor Coordinator (LPCC) as soon as possible.

Training Notifications

- PCs must notify their LPCC upon initiating and completing a course to ensure accurate and timely invoicing.

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- PCs must email to their LPCC upon the completion of each Breastfeeding Curriculum level in *TRAIN NM*.

Renewal Training

- LPCCs will notify PCs of any required renewal trainings on *TRAIN NM* that needs to be renewed on a case-by-case basis. (DOH, USDA, WIC, etc may require varied training in-advance to be completed).

2. Mentorship and Shadowing Provided by LPCCs

LPCCs will mentor PCs by providing on-going training and practice through various learning platforms and approaches that aim to strengthen the PC's counseling skills. This includes:

- Using diverse teaching and learning methods, such as case studies, scenarios, role play, polls, discussion and test questions to provide support and guidance.
- Providing additional guidance to PCs on responding to client concerns, which may occur through one-on-one or group training.
- Mentoring PCs with on-boarding training and exercising *how to* effectively carry out PC job duties, responsibilities and administrative tasks.

Shadowing and Skills Development

- LPCCs manage the referral process and caseload for new PCs.
- LPCCs will shadow PCs by listening to counseling calls when contacting new referrals in order to provide feedback and help PCs develop appropriate counseling skills.
- After completion of Level 1 training, the LPCC will authorize the PC to begin receiving prenatal referrals and will coordinate with the TL on referral processes. New PCs may receive up to 5 new prenatal referrals, or more as authorized by the LPCC.
- After completion of Level 2 training, the LPCC will authorize the PC to begin receiving breastfeeding referrals and will coordinate with the TL on referral processes. New PCs may receive up to 5 new breastfeeding referrals, or more as authorized by the LPCC.

Ongoing Support

- LPCCs will provide ongoing management support of the referral process and caseload of PCs
- Mentoring and shadowing can continue for up to 6 months from date of hire to support the PCs development in their new role. The LPCC will approve when the PC is ready to perform their duties independently.

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3. Shadowing another Peer Counselor

To support the development of counseling skills and proper documentation practices, an LPCC may assign a new PC to shadow another experienced PC during their client contacts. Shadowing provides real-time observation, modeling of effective counseling techniques, and opportunities to learn accurate documentation of client interactions.

4. Orientation to WIC Clinics and WIC Staff

PC Team Leaders may provide a virtual or in-person orientation to PCs assigned clinic(s). Orientation includes an overview of the WIC Program, introductions to WIC clinic staff and a review of other public health programs and services in-clinic that are relevant to the PC role.

5. Continuing Education

On-going education and training is provided to ensure PC practices and counseling remains current and evidence-based, and aligned with high-quality service standards. As funding permits, additional education and training will be available through the approval by the WIC Peer Counseling Manager and WIC Breastfeeding Manager.

Annual Breastfeeding Conference Requirement

- PCs are required to attend the New Mexico Breastfeeding Task Force Annual Breastfeeding Conference in a **virtual format**, unless otherwise instructed or approved to participate in another format.
- PCs may not attend the conference in person independently, as virtual attendance is provided and required by the WIC Peer Counseling Program.
- Attendance will be documented as part of the PC's continuing education requirements.
- PCs are expected to apply the knowledge and skills gained through continuing education to enhance breastfeeding support services and maintain best practices. Some conference sessions may address topics outside the PC scope of practice. PCs must recognize these boundaries and remain within their defined scope of practice at all times when providing breastfeeding support and education.



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6. Higher Education and Credentialing

- In compliance with USDA policies and procedures, if a PC obtains a higher education (health education, nutrition, lactation, or any health related field) or training gaining credentials or certifications they will become ineligible to continue as a NM WIC PC. If a PC chooses to pursue certification or licensure to become higher credentialed the PC must notify the WIC Peer Counseling Manager and/or the WIC Breastfeeding Manager to get further guidance. The NM WIC PC Program cannot pay for any type of higher education.