Memo

To: WIC Coordinators
From: WIC Nutrition Unit
Date: April 1, 2015
Subject: Using PCS Skills to Support Breastfeeding Moms

The March Mentor webinars focused on using PCS skills and techniques to support and protect exclusive breastfeeding, and to minimize formula supplementation when staff determine that it is appropriate to issue formula. Prior to the webinars, Altarum staff surveyed WIC mentors about formula supplementation for breastfed infants. Here is a summary of the responses:

Question 1: Why might WIC staff sometimes feel compelled to give a mom and baby more formula than she is using? Three main categories of responses were:

- **Participant-led reasons** -- such as “I want formula just in case”; “I am going back to work soon”; and “I want the maximum amount of formula I can get”.
- **Staff-led reasons** -- such as “I want to make sure they have enough and don’t run out”; “I don’t want them to have to come all the way back for more”; and “I know they don’t have a lot of money and they’ll need more formula later and it’s expensive.”
- **System or materials-led reasons** -- such as “HuBERT defaults in the maximum amount of formula allowed” and “materials display formula as available to breastfed infants.”

Question 2: What would help staff feel more confident in providing the least amount of formula possible? Common themes included:

- **Staff training & coaching** – ensure staff have BFg knowledge and reassure them that they’re better supporting BFg by giving less formula;
- **Increase frequency of early contacts** – to affirm & support moms, & monitor her milk supply;
- **Reassure Moms, offer a “safety net”** - build staff skills to let Moms know that we want them to succeed, and will help them in any way possible. Rather than providing formula, reassure them that formula is always an option.
- **Change default formula** amounts in HuBERT
- **Revise Food Package pictorials**, so that they don’t show formula.
• **Assess infant’s need accurately**: train staff to determine an appropriate food package;
• **Build mom’s confidence** – developing staff skills to build Moms’ confidence.

Participants’ concerns that they won’t have enough breastmilk is common, and if they are unsure, they may want to have formula on hand “just in case”. Staff often respond by giving Moms what they “want”, but in doing so, reinforce Mom’s insecurity, and may inadvertently undermine her plans and hopes to breastfeed. Participants (and their families) may view formula as particularly valuable. Your guidance can help them realize the value of their breastmilk.

Mentors provided lots of great suggestions for helping staff feel more confident in addressing Moms’ fears. Altarum framed it this way:

• **Building Importance**: Encourage women to verbalize why breastfeeding is important to them. For them to verbalize it, reinforces its importance and increases their commitment.
• **Identifying Strengths to Build Confidence**: Help moms identify their own strengths and share with her how those strengths will contribute to her success.

A Mom who believes BFg is important to her and her baby, and feels confident in her ability to BF, will be more motivated & committed to trying to feed without formula.

**Next steps for Mentors: Share this information with co-workers!**
Mentors are encouraged to share the webinar information with their co-workers. The following resources are available:

• Webinar PowerPoint -- available on the PCS Mentor SharePoint site.
• Webinar audio will be made available -- Watch the Wednesday Update.
• “Staff Development Activities for Mentors” -- also on the PCS Mentor SharePoint. The packet provides lots of activities and resources for building the skills addressed on the webinar.

In addition to these activities, your agency could discuss what practices you might change to create a feeling of abundance for breastfeeding moms – an abundance of breastmilk!

**Next steps for state office:**

• **Training opportunities for WIC staff**. A variety of WIC trainings are planned: Grow & Glow, 5-day CLS course, and more. Watch the Wednesday Update.
• **Changing the formula default in HuBERT**. The default is currently set at the maximum amount allowed for each BFg category, “Mostly” & “Some”. In late May, we will change the default for contract formulas to the minimum amount for each category. After accurately assessing need, CPAs can adjust the amount as appropriate.
• **Review of Food Package Pictorials**. These materials will be reviewed and modified to better support breastfeeding.