

STAFF ROLES - PEER COUNSELORS: PRACTICE SETTINGS

LEVEL 2 HANDOUT: TELEPHONE TIPS

Preparing for Telephone Calls

- Getting ready to make phone calls is an important step. Take time to get ready!
- Before making calls, make sure your home situation will not distract you.
- Pick a time when your children are occupied or napping, and when you are not busy with other responsibilities.
- Some peer counselors prepare a special box of toys they only bring out when they are busy on the phone. Children often regard these toys as a special treat.
- Peer counselors often use evenings after their children are asleep to catch up on paperwork or necessary reading.
- Get your workspace ready. Lay out materials and supplies so you are prepared.
- Keep Handout, "Conversation Starters," handy.
- Pull out the contact log for the mother you are going to call and review her information and what you talked about with her previously.
- Make a note of her baby's name so you can use it in your conversation.

Making the Call

- When beginning your call, introduce yourself at the beginning since people are often hesitant to talk with a stranger on the phone.
- Let the mother know you are a WIC breastfeeding counselor from the local WIC clinic. (Not all mothers will know what a "peer counselor" is.)
- Tell the mother you breastfed your own baby and are ready to help her with any questions she has.
- Ask her if this is a good time to talk. If she says it is not a good time, ask her when you can call her back.
- Get to know her. Listen to her answers to your open-ended questions about her feelings about breastfeeding.

More Telephone Tips

- Don't be afraid of silence. Some silence is okay because it gives mothers time to think about their answers.
- Sprinkle a few "mmm" and "uh-huh" responses so she knows you are still there and listening.
- Don't interrupt. Respect her by allowing her to finish her thoughts before jumping in with your ideas.
- Handle disruptions carefully. If you must end your call because of something that needs your attention at home, explain carefully why you must call her back.
- Reassure her that you are interested in her and will get back to her as quickly as you can. Ask what a good time would be to call her back.
- Use her name and her baby's name often.
- Identify something she is doing right and praise her. You may be the only one in her life who tells her she is a good mother and is doing a good job.