

Lissa Sirois, RD, IBCLC, New Hampshire WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator  
Home Visiting New Hampshire—Helping New Mothers to Successfully Breastfeed

## Training Home Visit Staff to be Lactation Consultants

*This project is a collaboration initiated by the New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services' Breastfeeding Integration Group. The purpose of the project is to increase the breastfeeding support skills and credentialing of the New Hampshire Home Visiting Program staff. The Division selected seven professional and paraprofessional home visit staff to attend a five-day Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) training in October 2012. The course, offered by the Healthy Children's Center for Breastfeeding, trained the staff on how to provide breastfeeding education and support.*

Training home visitors to be breastfeeding counselors expands WIC's reach to new mothers who are currently receiving health and nutrition education and counseling from these home visitors. The home visiting team works at sixteen sites around the state. The team includes nurses, social workers, child development specialists, family support specialists and paraprofessionals.

New Hampshire's Breastfeeding Integration Group is charged with coordinating breastfeeding promotion projects among the state's chronic disease and nutrition programs. The Group includes state Division of Public Health Services staff from the WIC Nutrition, Breastfeeding Peer Counseling, Maternal and Child Health, Obesity Prevention, Home Visiting New Hampshire and the Diabetes Education programs.

This project was funded by a Blueprint Collaborative mini-grant from the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN). New Hampshire WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator Lissa Sirois, RD, IBCLC coordinated the project.

## Outcomes and Successes

The Division invited all state-funded home visitors and educators to apply to attend the CLC training. In their applications, the home visit staff were asked to describe how they would use the training to support breastfeeding families. Many families are dually enrolled in WIC and Home Visiting New Hampshire, allowing for comprehensive breastfeeding support and continuity of care across multiple programs.



**Pictured:** Lissa Sirois, RD, IBCLC

## About Lissa

Lissa has been the state Breastfeeding Coordinator since 2007. Before she joined the New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services, she worked as a nutritionist, supervisor and then program director in the Massachusetts WIC Program. When she is not championing breastfeeding, Lissa enjoys swimming, bike riding and playing outside with her four and eight year-old girls!

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***"Thank you again for sending me to get my CLC. I use the information every day and feel I can empower our clients to breastfeed!!"***

*— Shauna McMenimen,  
Home Visiting  
New Hampshire staff*

Seven home visitation staff attended the Center for Breastfeeding's Certified Lactation Counselor training in October 2012. All seven passed the CLC exam. The Group surveyed the attendees four months after the training to assess its impact. In response to the question, "How often are you using the information you learned at the training?" three participants responded "always," two said "mostly" and two said "sometimes." All seven attendees indicated that they were interested in obtaining additional information to better support breastfeeding moms.

The Division is committed to offering continuing education for the home visitation staff. Since the CLC training, the Division invited the home visitors to attend three WIC breastfeeding trainings. Six of the seven CLC home visitors attended at least one training. The Division also made available to these home visitors the WIC breastfeeding self-study modules and the Division's extensive breastfeeding library.

As the State WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator and an international board certified lactation consultant, Lissa is available as a resource and mentor for all home visitation staff. Local agency breastfeeding counselors are also available to mentor the staff. Lissa and her colleagues are building a relationship with the home visitors and helping to build their competency.

Lissa is currently working with the home visitation program and with the community health centers to collect breastfeeding outcome measures, including length and duration. They plan to collect data over a two year period.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

Although the project was a success, the Division did not receive as many applicants for the CLC training as they had hoped. They learned that it is very difficult for home visitation staff to take five days away from their work to attend the training. The Division may not have conveyed clearly enough the value this training would bring to the home visitors' work.

Lissa and the WIC staff initially found that staying in contact with the home visitation staff was challenging, as the staff are in different state programs. With all the outreach and opportunities for continuing education that WIC has offered, the WIC staff and the home visit staff have now established a strong working relationship.



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## The Important Role of the Public Health Nutritionist

Lissa's role as a public health nutritionist was critical to the project. New Hampshire's Maternal and Child Health Program does not have a nutritionist nor a breastfeeding position. Lissa plays a lead role in breastfeeding advocacy in New Hampshire. She believes that building strong relationships across the Division's programs is key to improving breastfeeding outcomes in the state.

## ASPHN in Action

ASPHN is a non-profit membership organization that provides state and national leadership on food and nutrition policy, programs and services aimed at improving the health of our population. Our vision is to create new environmental norms where healthy eating and active living are the easy and natural choices for all Americans.

At ASPHN, we build our members' skills as public health nutritionists by providing key resources and professional development. Funding from our Association's Blueprint Collaborative mini-grant program helped Lissa, an ASPHN member, launch the breastfeeding training project in New Hampshire.

To learn more about ASPHN, please visit us on the web at [www.asphn.org](http://www.asphn.org).