



Memorandum

#12-120

TO: WIC Regional Directors
WIC Local Agency Directors

FROM: Linda Brumble, Unit Manager
Nutrition Education/Clinic Services Unit
Nutrition Services Section

DATE: November 12, 2012

SUBJECT: Texas Ten Step Star Achiever Breastfeeding Learning Collaborative

This memo announces the launch of the **Texas Ten Step Star Achiever Breastfeeding Learning Collaborative** (Star Achiever) and expectations for WIC staff involvement.

The Star Achiever, a statewide quality improvement initiative for hospital practices in infant nutrition and care, is an initiative of the WIC Program, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and the National Initiative for Children's Health Care Quality (NICHQ). The purpose of the Star Achiever initiative is to increase exclusive breastfeeding throughout Texas in the immediate postpartum period and continuing through six months of age by creating environments in which women's choices concerning breastfeeding can be supported best. More specifically, NICHQ will enable facilities to complete the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding (see www.texastenstep.org) and effectively connect mothers to post-discharge community supports for breastfeeding.

Texas will be divided into three cohorts (A, B, and C) based on the state's designated public health regions as follows:

- Cohort A will include Public Health Regions 1, 2, and 3 (north Texas).
- Cohort B will include Public Health Regions 4, 5, 6, and 7 (central and east Texas).
- Cohort C will include Public Health Regions 8, 9, 10, and 11 (south central, valley and border).

Twenty-seven facilities will be selected from each of Cohorts A, B, and C for a total of 81 facilities. Cohort A's facilities are currently in the application process, and those facilities accepted into the Star Achiever Learning Collaborative will be engaged from January 2013 – December 2013. Cohort B's facilities will apply in 2014 and Cohort C's in 2015.

Each of the 27 participating facilities will be required to form an improvement team. Recruitment guidance recommends facilities include a WIC representative on their improvement team in some manner. This might involve WIC staff attending occasional meetings at the facility or participating in conference calls. Having a WIC representative on the improvement team helps birthing facilities meet requirements for:

- Step 2 – Train all health-care staff,
- Step 3 – Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding, and
- Step 10 – Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them upon discharge from hospital or clinic.

The role of the WIC representative on an improvement team is to participate in the collaborative by providing information on WIC and DSHS resources, such as breastfeeding trainings, materials, and other education resources, by answering questions regarding the WIC enrollment process and scope of WIC breastfeeding support that will improve patients' continuum of care, and by acting as a WIC voice as the team test strategies to improve care.

WIC involvement on these improvement teams is crucial for building bridges among hospitals and with WIC and for closing gaps in services between hospital discharge and postpartum WIC support. If your LA is in Cohort A (Public Health Regions 1, 2 or 3 in north Texas), please reach out to your local birthing facilities to offer your assistance on their Texas Ten Step Star Achiever Breastfeeding Learning Collaborative improvement team and anticipate requests for involvement from them.

If you would like a spreadsheet of contact information for those birthing facilities that have been invited to apply for the Texas Ten Step Star Achiever Breastfeeding Learning Collaborative in Cohort A, please contact Veronica Hendrix, Texas Ten Step Program Coordinator, at Veronica.Hendrix@dshs.state.tx.us or 512-341-4592. If you have questions about the Texas Ten Step Star Achiever Breastfeeding Learning Collaborative or involvement on the improvement teams, please contact Veronica or Tracy Erickson, WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator, at Tracy.Erickson@dshs.state.tx.us or 512-341-4521.