

Development and Implementation of a *Loving Support Makes Breastfeeding Work* Social Media Toolkit for WIC Staff

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INTRODUCTION

For 20 years, *Loving Support Makes Breastfeeding Work (Loving Support)* has been the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) national breastfeeding (BF) promotion and support campaign and the foundation for BF efforts in the *Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children* (WIC).¹ The goals of the campaign are to increase BF initiation and duration rates as well as provide support to WIC participants. The campaign is based on a social marketing approach, emphasizing the importance of the support of family, friends, health care providers, employers, and the community for BF success.

Through a contract with the USDA Food and Nutrition Service in April, 2011 and January, 2012, the Institute of Medicine (renamed the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in 2015) assembled experts to provide guidance on actions needed to update the existing campaign.¹ One aspect discussed was using technology and social media to reach millennial mothers, the 37 million women born in the US between 1977 and 1994. This group uses social media as a major tool for communication; its members' phones are "a functional tool that they cannot live without."¹

Social media crosses socioeconomic and geographic lines and can inform and empower people, increase communication speed, and mobilize partnerships.² A 2011 evaluation of state health departments found that 60% used at least 1 social media channel; of those, 86.7% had Twitter, 56% had Facebook, and 43% had YouTube.³ A similar survey conducted in 2013 of 2,565 local health departments found that 24% had Facebook accounts, 8% had Twitter accounts, and 7% had both.⁴ In addition, local health departments were more likely to have social media accounts if their state offices did.^{4,5} A 2014 focus group study of 26 *Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program* (EFNEP) graduates found that participants would be receptive to social media as a nutrition education tool if they were current and provided via a trustworthy source.⁶ Through the dissemination of standardized messages and graphics, social media can be optimized for the delivery of evidence-based nutrition information.

In 2014, the USDA launched a mobile-responsive Web site to assist WIC staff in engaging participants and community partners.⁷ Resources included posters, brochures, videos, widgets, graphics, and BF peer counseling training. Recognizing the opportunity for spreading messages via social media, the Web site was

enhanced with the addition of a social media toolkit for World Breastfeeding Week/National Breastfeeding Month (August, 2016).

DESCRIPTION

The goal of the project was to create sample graphics and messages based on the campaign that could be used by WIC agencies and partners to reach participants, eligible participants, and the public. Messages were developed using content from the *Loving Support* campaign materials and *Loving Support* Peer Counseling Training.⁷

Agencies were encouraged to link to the *Loving Support* Web site and use the hashtag #WICLovingSupport in their posts. Agencies could also customize the messages and graphics as needed to promote their own activities and events. The toolkit included Facebook covers and posts, Twitter headers and posts, a Twibbon, an Instagram post, and an e-card. A guide to using the toolkit with sample messages was created as well. The [Figure](#) shows sample images and messages.

IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

The toolkit was launched on July 12, 2016 and received 4,319 page views by the end of August. Overall there were 9,432 downloads of all *Loving Support* materials and 29,745 page views to the *Loving Support* Web site. This was a 50% increase in page views and a 17% increase in downloads over the previous month, before the launch of the toolkit. Use of the toolkit continued since August with 1,507 page views between August, 2016 and February, 2017. The number of users for that same period was 5,007 (new and returning users). There were 2,342 downloads of social

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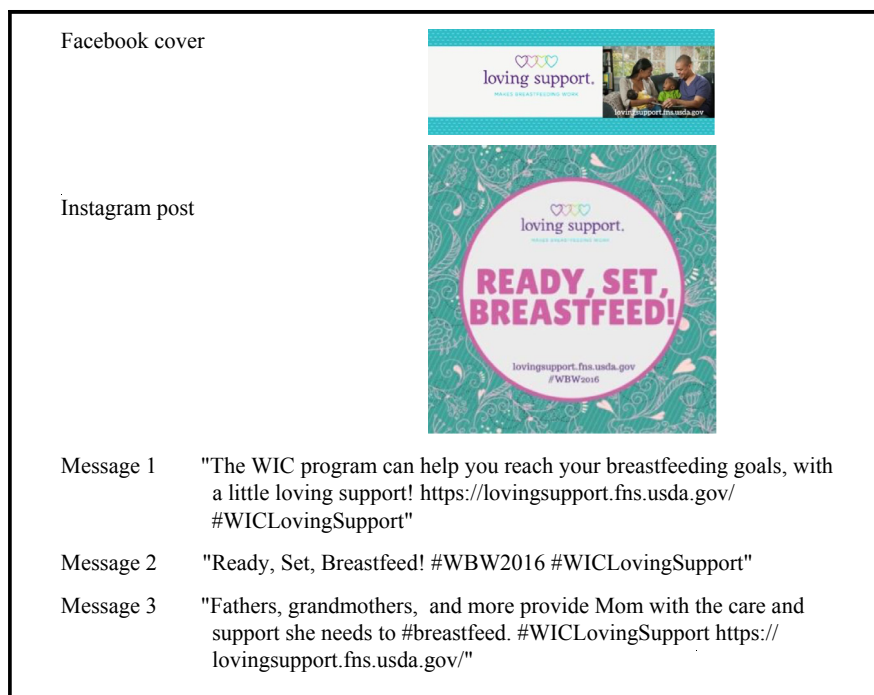


Figure. Sample social media graphics and messages of Loving Support. WIC indicates *Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children*.

media graphics, with Facebook covers and posts, the e-card, and Instagram posts as the most downloaded items.

The Twibbon campaign had 36 supporters. A TweetReach snapshot report from August 2 to August 6 (during World Breastfeeding Week) showed that the hashtag #WICLovingSupport had 60 tweets from 40 contributors, 287,820 accounts reached (the number of people who likely saw content), and 362,607 impressions (the number of times people likely reached).

IMPACT

In the month the toolkit launched, there was an increase in traffic to the Web site and there appeared to be content engagement, with (1) agencies posting social media graphics and posts and (2) their followers liking Facebook posts and retweeting Tweets. These items were visible by searching for the hashtag #WICLovingSupport.

Future steps will be to develop additional social media graphics and messages for dissemination via the *Loving Support* Web site.

Translating policy and guidance into action-oriented messages that WIC agencies can easily use and disseminate can increase the exposure of evidence-based nutrition messages. Although it is a relatively low-cost communication strategy, social media involves a high cost in time and attention needed to maintain an active presence.⁸ By providing a ready-to-go social media toolkit, the Food and Nutrition Service was able to offer consistent messaging, but it also reduced WIC staff workload and reached many people with information about BF promotion and support.

NOTES

This study did not require institutional review board approval as per

the US Department of Health and Human Services guidelines (<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html#c1>) and per agency review. More information about the USDA *Loving Support* Web site is available online.⁷

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have not stated conflicts of interest.