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Module Six

**Peer Support Volunteer –
Ready Set Go!**

*best start
meilleur départ*

by/par health *nexus* santé

- Peer support volunteers: Roles and responsibilities
- Helping mothers in different ways
- Peer support volunteer opportunities
- Support for peer support volunteers

Peer Support Volunteer: Roles and Responsibilities

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Peer Support Volunteer: Roles and Responsibilities

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- Support and encourage women through their breastfeeding journey with non-judgemental, empathetic listening
- To act as a link between parents and existing breastfeeding and parenting resources in the community
- Share current breastfeeding resources with mothers to help them make informed decisions
- Encourage mothers to participate in community breastfeeding events such as the Quintessence Challenge, LLL meetings, and breastfeeding cafés
- To help normalise breastfeeding and create a vibrant breastfeeding culture
- Connect with assigned peer match on a regular basis; set a mutually agreed upon time and frequency for calls or meetings
- Recognize when breastfeeding challenges/questions are not within the scope of their training and make appropriate referrals
- Maintain contact with the peer support program coordinator
- Maintain contact logs or paperwork required by the program

Confidentiality

- Information about a mother is not to be shared with other peer support volunteers, health care providers, or friends without consent from the mother
- Keep all information about a mother and her family in confidence unless legally required to report a problem
- Information can be shared with program staff or coordinator if necessary

Activity: Body parts

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Think about when you felt supported by someone – this does not have to be in a breastfeeding situation

Consider the following:

- “What qualities did this person demonstrate?”
- “What made you feel supported?”
- “Would you go back to that person for help again and why?”

Helping Mothers in Different Ways

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Helping Mothers in Different Ways

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Helping by Telephone

Significantly more mothers receiving telephone peer support continued to breastfeed at three months postpartum compared to the group of moms who were not matched with a peer volunteer

University of Toronto study



Helping by Telephone

Challenges of telephone helping

- It is difficult to get a clear picture of what is happening when you can't see a mother's face or observe a baby's latch
- There are no body language cues to follow for mother or baby
- It can be challenging to describe things like latch without visual aids
- Language barriers can be more difficult

Helping by Telephone

The Love Method – a strategy for helping by telephone

L is for listen

O is for observe (ask probing questions to get a clear picture)

V is for validate

E is for empower and educate

Activity: Role Play

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Activity: Role Play

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My baby is 2 weeks old, and I am very worried that he is not getting enough food! How do I know?



Helping Mothers in Different Ways

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Helping in Person



Helping in Person

When helping in person remember:

- Your facial expressions and body language
- Personal biases; share information not advice
- Practice a “hands off” approach to helping mothers with breastfeeding
- Demonstrate using visual tools (e.g., knitted breast, doll, or your baby)
- Your language (the words you use): positive, non-judgemental, and empowering
- Your speech (how you say the words): tone, speed, and volume

Helping Mothers in Different Ways

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Helping in Person

We learn by example!



Helping in Person

Video: Breastfeeding Baby Sounds (Mama Cabbage)

Helping Mothers in Different Ways

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Helping in a Group



Helping in a Group

Tips for leading a group

- Greet group members as they arrive
- Be friendly and show enthusiasm for the program and activities
- Respect the ideas, opinions, values, and confidentiality of all group members (and your co-facilitator)
- Use appropriate body language:
 - Face the group
 - Smile
 - Make eye contact
 - Nod to indicate understanding
- Ask questions and encourage comments
- Listen to group members and be responsive to their needs
- Review where the washrooms are

Activity: Group Dynamics

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Peer Support Volunteer Opportunities

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Peer support volunteers can promote breastfeeding in their community by:

- Providing a display of your program at community events
- Offering a breastfeeding-friendly space for breastfeeding mothers at community events
- Presenting information about your program to other organizations or at programs for pregnant women or new mothers
- Participating in groups or networks that promote breastfeeding and/or BFI

Support for Peer Support Volunteers

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Where to get support as a peer support volunteer

- Connect with your program coordinator
- Call your public health unit for resources
- Seek out your local La Leche League Group
- Look up online resources (e.g., Best Start Resource Centre)
- Ask for support from fellow peer support volunteers

Note that support for peer support volunteers will vary depending upon the program structure and resources

Support for Peer Support Volunteers

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Remember to practice self-care!

Avoid over involvement

Avoid emotional burnout

Avoid over commitment
of your time

Make personal well-being
a priority

Make family well-being
a priority



