Remarks of the Rev. Douglas A. Greenaway  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
National WIC Association  
to  
the IOM Workshop on Updating the USDA National Breastfeeding Campaign  
Tuesday 26 April 2011  
Washington, DC, National Academy of Sciences, Keck Center  

Thank you for inviting me to offer a few opening remarks as together we seek to update the USDA National Breastfeeding Campaign.

First, I want to acknowledge the fine work of our partners at the Institute of Medicine who have now helped the WIC Program respond to three important challenges – the review of and effective transition of the WIC food packages, recommendations on research priorities for WIC, and now updating the USDA national breastfeeding campaign.

Science based decisions, while not always embraced by all of our policymakers, have certainly provided credibility and gravitas to the careful decisions that USDA staff and leadership have made in partnership with the National WIC Association and other stakeholders as we have sought to continually improve the quality of WIC services to mothers and young children.

Second, I applaud our federal partners at USDA for their foresight and leadership in enlisting the respected professionals of the Institute of Medicine's Food and Nutrition Board to assist the Department in sorting out the challenges and opportunities to offering meaningful support to WIC program administrators and staff in the field. And, I applaud our partners at the CDC for their leadership on, commitment to, and support of breastfeeding.

Third, I am in total admiration of the National WIC Association's professionals and their awesome commitment to achieving breastfeeding success for WIC mothers and their infants. I applaud their decision to promote WIC as the nation's go-to breastfeeding support program.

We are all well aware that WIC has improved at-risk children's health, growth and development, and prevented health problems for over 35 years. We all know that families turning to WIC for nutrition assistance are vulnerable and at-risk, and meeting their nutritional needs is an essential priority of the WIC community.

The National WIC Association, NWA, represents the 12,200 service provider agencies and the over 9 million mothers and young children as their education arm and advocacy voice on Capitol Hill, before USDA and other Federal Agencies, the White House, and with other stakeholders and collaborating partners.

NWA enthusiastically and energetically supports, promotes, and encourages breastfeeding as the first and most important form of infant feeding and to help improve the overall health and nutritional well-being of WIC moms and infants. Assisting our WIC mothers to achieve their breastfeeding goals is a top priority for our community.
Our new WIC food package encourages exclusive breastfeeding beyond 6 months by providing more and varied foods for breastfeeding mothers. And we now have data that shows that this food package has made a dramatic and positive difference in improving breastfeeding rates.

With the enactment of the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act, NWA succeeded in fully integrating nutrition education and breastfeeding promotion and support, so that for anyone who is implementing the Act, there should be no mistake that breastfeeding promotion and support are part and parcel of WIC nutrition education efforts. We succeeded in assuring funding support for mother-to-mother breastfeeding peer counselors.

And most recently, NWA has released a comprehensive National Breastfeeding Strategic Plan for the WIC Program accompanied by a blueprint of “Six Steps to Achieve Breastfeeding Goals for WIC Clinics.”

This workshop will offer leaders in this room an important opportunity to effectively build on the successes of the existing Loving Support campaign, furthering WIC’s breastfeeding promotion and support efforts. I would like to briefly offer a few thoughts on the current campaign that have been shared by some of our members as you look towards the future:

Some commendations:

- The branding has been terrific, and is widely recognized;
- The materials are attractive, of professional quality, and appealing to both participants and the general public;
- The interactive/group activities are engaging;
- WIC agencies are empowered to integrate the brand into their own materials;
- The peer counselor curriculum offers positive overall training, at an appropriate depth for the new breastfeeding peer counselor;

Some recommendations to consider:

- A more frequent refresh of the campaign based on emerging evidence;
- Develop avenues or time-lines for peer counselors to access clients soon after giving birth so as to not lose new moms prior to their first post-partum certification;
- Provide more role playing tools for peer counselors, addressing more issues that breastfeeding mothers deal with daily e.g., the pressure to wean early, dealing with difficult employer situations, and managing breastfeeding, and working;
- Provide tools for facilitating or implementing breastfeeding support groups in the WIC clinic or community setting;
- Incorporate social marketing tools and electronic media – what can and should be done, and how best to do it;
- Expand the campaign to encourage partnerships with WIC, including community groups and particularly physicians;
- Make the campaign the nation’s brand, expanding the reach to all families, not just WIC families.
We hope that these comments are helpful. Thank you for your support of the WIC Program and its efforts to promote and support breastfeeding across the nation. I wish you much success with today’s agenda and the work ahead. NWA looks forward to our continued partnership with you and to receiving your recommendations.