



Telelactation Case Study:

Mississippi WIC



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BACKGROUND

Increasing access to professional lactation support is an evidence-based method for improving breastfeeding rates. The Office of the Surgeon General recommends communities have **8.6** International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC) for every **1,000** births to ensure adequate support for women throughout the perinatal period. However, Vermont is the only state to meet this guideline. On average, states have **less than half** the recommended number of lactation consultants (**~4 per 1,000** births).

Pacify's telelactation services were developed as an innovative way to address this nationwide shortage of lactation consultants. The Pacify app **instantly connects users with IBCLCs** through live, 2-way video on personal devices. Pacify provides professional lactation support on-demand, **24/7**, in both English and Spanish.

Piloting Pacify

In 2016, the US. Department of Agriculture (USDA) awarded funds to the Mississippi State Department of Health to pilot the use of Pacify's telelactation services among participants of the state's Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. The goals of the MS WIC Pacify Program were to:

- 1 Increase WIC participant and peer counselor access to IBCLCs
- 2 Improve breastfeeding rates within the WIC population

The program was also designed to **collect feedback** from participants and staff to **assess the feasibility and acceptability** of telelactation as a strategy for improving access to lactation support in low-income and minority communities.

IMPLEMENTATION



Local agency staff received training from Pacify on how to enroll participants as well as materials to promote the program to clients in the clinic.



Participants were offered free access to Pacify during individual appointments, breastfeeding classes, community events, and support groups. Peer counselors and other WIC staff also gained access to the Pacify app to ensure their ability to yield and refer to IBCLCs when necessary.



Detailed reports on Pacify enrollment, utilization, and quality were delivered to local agency staff on a monthly basis.

Participant Feedback



Feedback was collected from participants after each video visit on the Pacify app. On average, participants rated their experience **4.6/5** stars.

Participants also shared comments that demonstrate how valuable the service was to them. Their enthusiastic feedback suggests that the Pacify program positively impacted the overall perceived value of WIC and improved overall customer satisfaction.

- “ Excellent! She answered all of my questions and was encouraging. Overall, I feel much **more confident** about continuing to breastfeed after speaking with her!”
- “ This here is the best experience to have as a **first time mother**. Glad to know that when it’s late in the night we help that’s close by to help instead of going to the ER for every little thing. When just a simply helping hand is **on stand by**. Thanks!”
- “ Very sweet and informative. She gave me info on some things I didn’t know about. Thank you for **being available**. This app and program is truly a blessing!!!”
- “ She answered my question and was very polite and helped me out. Thank you for having this app. It is awesome!!”
- “ I’m so thankful for this app! Christine has assisted me since my daughter has been born I was excited to see her answer! Thank you Christine and **thank God for Pacify!**”

Participant Feedback

- “ She was great :) Engaging, friendly, informative :) I really appreciated the info and will be trying her tips :)”
- “ My questions were **fully answered** and the nurse Maria transferred me to was very helpful, friendly, and courteous! Thank you all for everything you do!!”
- “ Very helpful and comforting for this momma’s paranoia! She answered ALL my questions and reassured me that me and my little one were headed in the **right direction!** Thank you so much for all your help!”
- “ Really relatable and thorough. VERY **practical information** and knowledgeable.
- “ She was very helpful and provided me with a lot of great information on how to boost my milk supply **after I thought I’d give up** on breastfeeding. She was also very encouraging and uplifting about my efforts & gave me facts to help me realistically manage my expectations without stress. She was great!
- “ She was very helpful on my call with her about the work I can put in to build up my milk supply. Thank you!
- “ Much gratitude. **Love Pacify** and all your help!
- “ Absolutely awesome, very helpful and a total sweetheart. I left the conversation feeling very hopeful and completely calm. All my worry just left.
- “ I love having someone to talk to when I have a concern or are worried about something. I love this app. **It’s a mother’s dream helper.**

WIC Staff Feedback

Local agency staff also provided feedback about the Pacify program. Overwhelmingly, staff felt that the Pacify program improved the quality and accessibility of breastfeeding support available to low-income families in Mississippi. Their feedback reveals their intense support for the program and explains their perspectives on how it benefits their participants.

FROM REGIONAL BREASTFEEDING COORDINATORS AND BREASTFEEDING PEER COUNSELORS

- “ I think it is part of **Gold Standard** care. Thank you for providing it and may it continue!!”
- “ As a WIC Peer Counselor and CLC, I use Pacify as back up for questions I may have. How wonderful it is to be able to discuss a case with an IBCLC on the spot. I also use Pacify with the mother present so we all may talk and give **further support** and confirmation to the client.”
- “ I think Pacify is great. The reports we receive are a **great resource** because it lets us know how many clients actually use it, who they are, and what contact resource they used and what their issue was during the conversation. I also like the quick responses the clients receive.”
- “ I recommend it to all of my clients. I **use it for myself** and I use it to help me when I have a client and I’m not completely sure what to do. It’s great for when they can’t get a hold of us. I definitely think we should keep it.”

- “ I think Pacify is a great access for our clients. When I do show or demonstrate how the [app works] and they realize that it is a **real person** and not a app that just [gives] information, the clients love it.”
- “ I am very thankful for Pacify! I think that it is an awesome service to be able to provide for our WIC clients. For clients in hospitals without IBCLCs or current available help, to the client who needs help in the middle of the night, or anytime, to have professional, at the touch of a phone, help available 24/7 is exactly what our clients need to **protect and support breastfeeding.**”
- “ Up to March 2016, the Reg. 3 Dist. 8 BF Program was growing rapidly, with a peak of **18.89%** breastfeeding clients. Then, we began to see the effects of the partially closings of health departments. Our percentages began a downward spiral until June of 2016, when we began to issue the Pacify app. Since then, we have been holding steady at about **17.00%** breastfeeding. In October of 2017 we again reached **18.00%**, which caused great excitement. My thinking is that the Pacify app is a contributing factor in helping our percentages remain steady. I personally have issued the app to many clients and they seem excited to have the additional resource, especially when I tell them that Pacify receives most of their phone calls from 11:00pm-7:00am, in those wee hours of the mornings when mothers have those panic attacks. I do believe it is [an] additional tool that **leads to successful breastfeeding experience.**”

Results

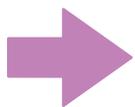
- Over **1,500** participants enrolled in the Pacify program between **June 2016** and **December 2017**
- Those participants completed over **1,800 clinical consultations** through the Pacify app
- Expert clinical advice was provided on a range of simple to complex issues:
 - Increasing milk supply
 - Infant weight gain and stool
 - Using a breast pump
 - Breastfeeding while sick/taking medication
 - Feeding positions & frequency
 - Storing breast milk
 - Returning to work/school
 - Pain and engorgement
- In just **six months** after the Pacify pilot began, MS WIC observed a **10% increase in breastfeeding rates** at 3 months.



On average, women were connected with an IBCLC in just **22** seconds



63% of Pacify calls were made outside of normal business hours



This pattern of utilization demonstrates that women **need breastfeeding support outside of normal business hours** and, furthermore, that they will use their personal smartphone device to access these services when they are made available through WIC.

Conclusions

- **Pacify promotes and protects breastfeeding**

The MS WIC Pacify program drastically increased access to professional lactation support across the state and demonstrated that smartphone technology is an effective tool for addressing gaps in lactation support in geographically and racially diverse communities. The Pacify program has enabled a historically low-capacity state with limited funds to provide an unprecedented level of lactation support to pregnant and breastfeeding women.

- **Pacify strengthens the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program**

The Pacify program also substantially strengthened the MS WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program. It empowered peer counselors and other local agency staff to discuss complex cases with an IBCLC whenever they face issues outside of their scope of practice, ensuring their ability to yield and refer to a Designated Breastfeeding Expert.

- **Pacify is cost-effective**

The Deputy Director of MS WIC reviewed the Pacify program for cost effectiveness and concluded **it would have cost the state at least 50% more** to provide in-person access to IBCLCs in a limited number of clinics during normal WIC hours. This alternative would fail to provide support overnight, on weekends, and during holidays, and is not a viable option for most states given the nationwide shortage of IBCLCs.

- **Pacify scales efficiently**

As a mobile technology, Pacify scales extremely well and is already being used as a regional strategy for improving access to IBCLC support. The unit cost of telelactation services (cost per consultation) decreases substantially as the target population increases.

Conclusions

- **Breastfeeding women depend on innovative public health leaders, like you**

Over **90% of women report issues with breastfeeding** in the first three days after giving birth. Telelactation technology holds the potential to transform the experience of those women, ensuring they have continuous access to high-quality clinical care when they need it most.

We hope you'll join us as we continue on our mission to make that vision a reality.

