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Mississippi WIC Telelactation Program: *Assessing the impact of 24/7 video lactation support*



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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 video on personal smartphone devices. Pacify provides professional lactation support on-demand, **24/7**, in both English and Spanish.

Mississippi Telelactation Program

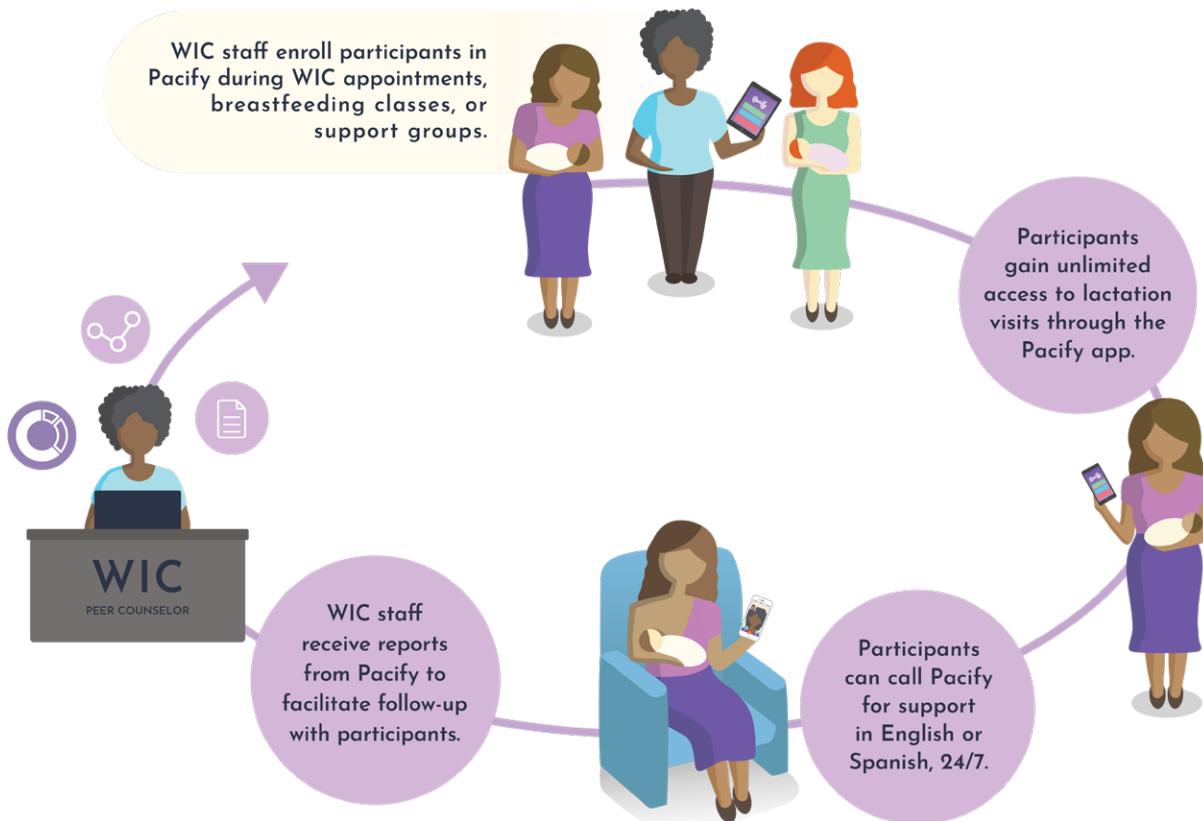
In 2016, the US. Department of Agriculture (USDA) awarded funds to three states, including Mississippi, to offer telelactation services to participants in each state's Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. The goals of the MS WIC Pacify Program were to:

- 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 communities.

PROGRAM DESIGN

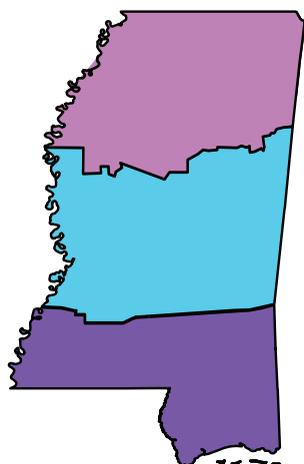
Mississippi WIC participants and peer counselors receive free telelactation support through the Pacify app.



Results

ENROLLMENT AND UTILIZATION

- Over **2,300** participants enrolled in the Pacify program from all corners of the state.



Northern Region:

711 Enrollments

Central Region:

675 Enrollments

Southern Region:

944 Enrollments

- Participants and peer counselors completed over **1,800** **telelactation consultations** through the Pacify app.



Users connected with an IBCLC in an average of

22 seconds



On average, participants rated their experience

4.8/5 stars.



63% of calls were made outside of normal business hours

WIC STAFF FEEDBACK

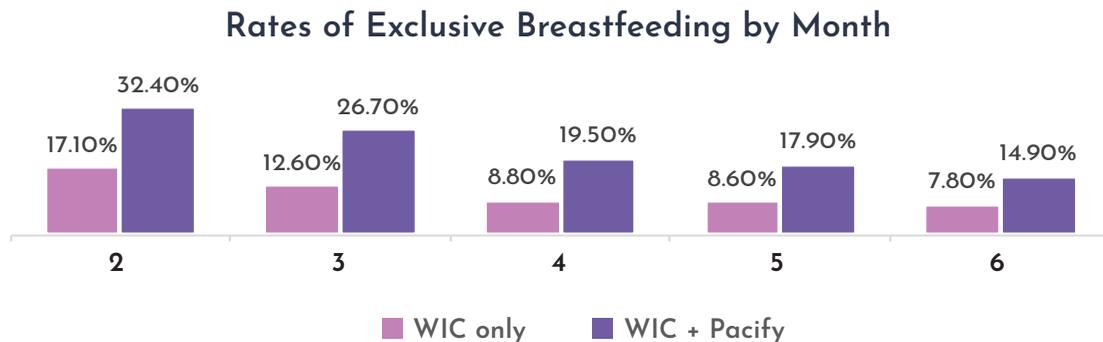
“ I am very thankful for Pacify! I think that it is an awesome service to be able to provide for our WIC clients. For clients...who need help in the middle of the night, or anytime, to have professional...help available 24/7 is exactly what our clients need to **protect and support breastfeeding.**”

INCREASED RATES OF BREASTFEEDING

In 2018, researchers at the University of Nevada conducted a retrospective cohort study to determine if WIC participants who enrolled in Pacify had higher rates of breastfeeding at three and six months postpartum compared to participants who did not.

Data were analyzed with logistic regression to control for demographic factors and only WIC participants who reported breastfeeding in the first two months after giving birth were included in the study.

The study found that participants in the WIC + Pacify group had significantly higher rates of any and exclusive breastfeeding at all months:



Compared to participants who were not enrolled in the WIC Pacify Program, participants who had access to the Pacify app were approximately:

1.5X

More likely to breastfeed at 3 months.

2X

More likely to breastfeed at 6 months.

2.5X

More likely to exclusively breastfeed at 3 and 6 months.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

“ 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!”

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**

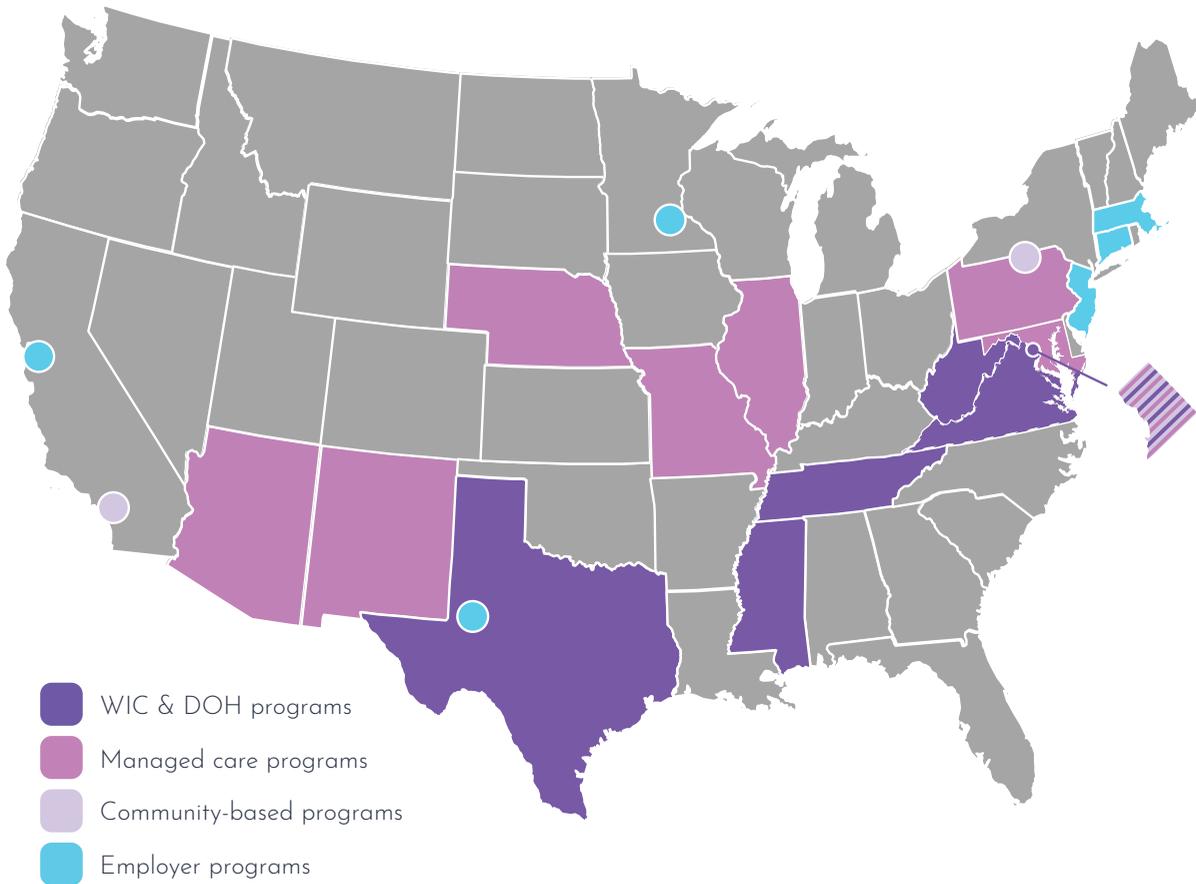
As a mobile technology, Pacify scales extremely well and is already being used as a regional strategy for improving access to IBCLC support. The unit cost of telelactation services (cost per consultation) decreases substantially as the target population increases.

- **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.

Conclusions

JOIN US TO MAKE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO LACTATION SUPPORT A REALITY FOR THE MOTHERS YOU SERVE



Appendix

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK (gathered after each clinical consultation)

- “ 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 and **thank God for Pacify!**”

- “ Much gratitude. **Love Pacify** and all your help!”

Appendix

- “ 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.”
- “ 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.**”
- “ She was great! Engaging, friendly, informative :) I really appreciated the info and will be trying her tips!”
- “ She was very helpful on my call with her about the work I can put in to **build up my milk supply.** Thank you!”
- “ Absolutely awesome, very helpful and a total sweetheart. I left the conversation feeling very hopeful and completely calm. **All my worry just left.**”

BREASTFEEDING COORDINATOR & PEER COUNSELOR FEEDBACK

- “ 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.”
- “ Very knowledgeable and sweet. I enjoyed her visuals and the way she explained everything. very good at building confidence.”
- “ The Pacify app is a contributing factor in helping our [breastfeeding rates] 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.**”

Appendix

“ 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.”



Mississippi WIC staff promote Pacify to their participants in the Northern Region Annex. From left to right: Jacqueline Lambert, Shavonda Quinn, Christine Powell and Tawanda Logan-Hurt.

“ This is a great addition to services clients receive through WIC. It does not replace WIC assistance. It is also reassurance that clients will have access to immediate help when WIC staff might be unavailable. The reports we receive from Pacify are very detailed and help us know ways our clients are utilizing the Pacify service so we can verify their concerns were addressed.”

**-Tawanda Logan-Hurt, BSW, CLC
Region I Breastfeeding Coordinator
Mississippi State Department of Health**

To learn how your organization can partner with Pacify, contact:

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Pacify