



# The Phyllis A. Bramson Advocacy Award



**Community Resource Project WIC Program**  
Samantha Slaughter, IBCLC, First 5 & Peer Counselor Program Coordinator/ Regional Breastfeeding Liaison; Jennifer Pettus, IBCLC, Regional Breastfeeding Liaison; Maureen Clark, MS, RD, Health Division Director; Jeannette Newman-Velez, formerly CRP WIC Breastfeeding Promotion Coordinator

Presented to  
*Sacramento County WIC Program*  
&  
*Community Resource Project WIC Program*



**Sacramento County Department of Health Services WIC Program**  
Amelia Schendel, RD, IBCLC, WIC Program Director; Lisa Mathews, MS, RD, IBCLC, Breastfeeding Program Coordinator; Sandy Damiano, PhD, Deputy Director of Sacramento County Primary Health Division (not pictured)

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## The Sacramento County WIC Program and the Community Resource Project (CRP) WIC Program

have been strong proponents of breastfeeding support services within the health care setting.

The journey started when the Sacramento County WIC Program received funding from First 5 Sacramento to expand its lactation support services in 2002. The funding for this project expanded Sacramento County WIC's breastfeeding support services from basic breastfeeding promotion and education to include advanced lactation care and breastfeeding assistance at the WIC Sites. In 2004, Sacramento County WIC subcontracted with CRP WIC so that both WIC agencies could administer these lactation services to all WIC participants in Sacramento County.

Continuing their advocacy for better breastfeeding support services in the health care setting, both agencies engaged with the local hospital systems to adopt breastfeeding friendly practices and policies. From 2007 – 2011, the Sacramento County WIC Program assisted First 5 Sacramento with their Baby-Friendly® Initiative, which coordinated and funded the trainings and fees required for hospitals to pursue the Baby-Friendly® designation. The Sacramento County WIC Program was instrumental in coordinating with the local hospital systems to provide the SOFT Approach training (mother baby skin-to-skin care) to hospital staff and in removing barriers to participation in the Baby-Friendly Initiative. The SOFT training was pivotal in initiating the changes needed to implementing better breastfeeding support policies and protocols within the hospitals. The effort to support the local hospital systems continued through the collaboration of the Sacramento County WIC Program and the Regional Breastfeeding Liaison Program (RBL) hosted by the CRP WIC Program. The RBLs have provided technical support for hospitals pursuing Baby-Friendly® designation and infant feeding trainings to nursing staff through hospital skills labs. In addition to their advocacy work within the local hospital systems, both WIC agencies have broadened their work under the First 5 Sacramento and RBL funding to include the reinforcement of evidence-based breastfeeding education and training among healthcare providers, community partners, and educational institutions.

In recent years, both agencies have shifted their attention to program sustainability, as First 5 funding continues to decrease statewide. Their current advocacy efforts are multifaceted. To begin with, the Sacramento County WIC Program and CRP WIC Program have collaborated together throughout the years to champion and secure First 5 Sacramento funding for breastfeeding support services. Securing continued lactation funding was accomplished through their combined efforts to coordinate public testimony at First 5 Sacramento Strategic Planning Meetings and First 5 Sacramento Commission Meetings. Furthermore, both agencies utilized these meetings as a platform to educate the First 5 Sacramento Commission and key stakeholders about WIC services, the importance of providing advanced breastfeeding support services in WIC clinics, and the need for additional health reform for lactation support services to be reimbursable at WIC clinic sites.

Another facet of their advocacy work comes from both of their participation in First 5 Sacramento 18-month sustainability training program to become Certified Sustainable. During this training program, each agency developed a sustainability plan for their lactation assistance program and became Certified Sustainable. These sustainability plans focused on the development of partnerships with health care providers, Federally Qualified Health Centers, and medical groups in order to implement lactation reimbursement models. For the Sacramento County WIC Program, their partnership with the River City Medical Group has led to the development and implementation of a Lactation Support Service Reimbursement Pilot, where their lactation consultants are billing the medical group for lactation support services provided to their members. Additionally, the Sacramento County WIC Program has been networking with key stakeholders from the Sacramento County Medi-Cal Managed Care Advisory Committee; as well as negotiating new ways to collaborate with local Independent Physician Associations for lactation program sustainability. With the assistance of the Regional Breastfeeding Liaisons from CRP WIC and the guidance of the Sacramento County's Deputy Director of Primary Health Division, the Sacramento County WIC Program continues to navigate the development and implementation of lactation support services reimbursement models at WIC.

Lastly, the efforts of both agencies to advocate for WIC breastfeeding support services to exist within the healthcare setting has led to staff from First 5 Sacramento and CWA to engage in conversations with Assemblyman Cooper's office and the Department of Health Care Services. These conversations target changes needed to the current Medi-Cal reimbursement regulations. The goal of these changes would allow Lactation Consultants to receive reimbursement for providing lactation support services without having to work in a clinic directly under a licensed healthcare provider. These efforts have the greatest potential of bringing reimbursable lactation care into the WIC clinics, not only in Sacramento County, but also across the state of California.

**THE PHYLLIS A. BRAMSON  
ADVOCACY AWARD**

*To honor the memory of an inspiring and effective champion for the WIC Program, the California WIC Association has established the Phyllis A. Bramson Advocacy Award. A generous bequest from Phyllis herself will enable CWA to continue her amazing legacy of feisty and passionate activism on behalf of California children. The Bramson Award will recognize an outstanding WIC employee whose advocacy efforts on behalf of the California WIC Program achieved a demonstrated impact at the local, state, or national level. Bramson Award recipients will be honored at our conference, and receive a cash scholarship to help cover the costs of participating in national and state WIC legislative conferences in Washington, DC, and Sacramento.*

## About Phyllis A. Bramson

As California's State Director from 1992 to 2002, Phyllis Bramson ushered California WIC out of crisis into an era of unprecedented growth and modernization. A unique and feisty administrator/advocate, she oversaw the implementation of ISIS and aggressively pursued increased federal funds to support maximum service to needy families, resulting in caseload growth of over one million WIC participants per month. Phyllis understood the critical importance of close collaboration with California's local WIC agencies, the backbone of the program. She established the California WIC Advisory Task Force and strongly supported CWA.



Phyllis left a lasting legacy of transparency and community engagement that kept WIC community members united and excited about their service to families. She partnered with CWA to operate WIC annual conferences and worked on numerous state and federal policy reforms, including WIC Farmer's Market funding and food cost containment efforts. As a new mother, she was passionate about WIC's critical role in improving breastfeeding, and helped create the Breastfeeding Policy Advisory Committee and its groundbreaking publication, *Breastfeeding: Blueprint for California's Future*.



In a unique career move, Phyllis left WIC for the California Department of Education to take on the administration of the National School Lunch Program and its companion meal programs: School Breakfast, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program. She brought the same highenergy, passion and creativity to that role and oversaw nutrition improvements for millions more kids. Phyllis passed away on January 23, 2013 after a valiant struggle with ovarian cancer.

