

WIC Local Agency Conference Call

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2024, 8:30-9:30 AM

Agenda and Summary Notes

Agenda Items:

- National Updates - Kate
- Operation New Minnesotans – Kate
- Management Information System (MIS) – Tami
- WIC 50th Anniversary Staff History – Tina
- Coffective Projects – Rosie
- Research Study on Weight Stigma – Laura Hooper, University of Minnesota
- Participant Centered Services (PCS) Project Work – Bernadette Flores

National Updates- Kate

WIC Funding

President Biden signed an Appropriations package on Friday, March 8, that was negotiated on a bipartisan basis between Congressional leadership and key Appropriators. The compromise package included \$7.03 billion in funding for WIC, an increase of more than \$1 billion over prior year funding, averting a crisis which would have forced the program to revert to waiting lists for the first time in more than two decades. In addition to maintaining the longstanding, bipartisan precedent of “fully funding” WIC so that every eligible family that seeks WIC services can receive them, the bill extended WIC’s enhanced fruit and vegetable benefit through the end of the fiscal year.

This is a monumental achievement for the WIC community and would not have been possible without the tireless advocacy of WIC participants, staff, and community partners.

Last week the White House unveiled the President’s Budget Request for fiscal year 2025, outlining the Administration’s funding and policy priorities for the year ahead. The Request includes an increase in funding for agriculture programs over fiscal year 2024, despite tight spending caps imposed as part of last year’s bipartisan agreement to raise the federal debt ceiling. This includes a proposed \$7.7 billion in funding for WIC, a roughly \$700 million increase over FY24 funding, which the White House indicates would provide funds to support every eligible family who seeks WIC services, implementation of updated food packages, and investments in new technology and modernization initiatives.

WIC Food Package Changes

USDA is expected to make public the WIC Food Package final rule early in April. The final rule would make permanent revisions to the food packages into the future, we hope including the expanded fruit and vegetable benefit. As a reminder, the rulemaking process revises regulations governing the WIC food packages to align them with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and reflect recommendations made by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) in its 2017 report, “Review of WIC Food Packages: Improving Balance and Choice,”. The changes are also aimed at promoting nutrition security and equity and taking into account program administration

considerations. In the past USDA has provided a period, such as 18 months, for state agencies to implement changes. Some changes will require code changes to our WIC MIS, and some can be implemented more easily.

Other Program Updates

Operation New Minnesotans – Kate

Timeline:

- May 2023: MDH was asked to participate in a EO led multi-agency workgroup to plan and coordinate (primarily information sharing between state and local agencies)
- July 2023: Approximate month arrivals started increasing.
- October 2023, select counties started seeing emerging needs:
 - Housing/Shelter
 - Access to primary care/preventative care
 - Legal/Immigration Services.
- November 2023: Governor authorized an inter-agency task force (not an emergency response) – MDH representative: Myra Kunas.

Newcomer Background:

- Immigration status: primarily undocumented, many are seeking asylum (some may have received temporary parole status to be admitted in the U.S.).
- Approximately 200-500 a week are arriving at border indicating that MN is their intended destination. This is an undercount as it does not include newcomers relocating from other states or those who crossed the border without detection from ICE.
- Majority are from #1: Ecuador, #2: Venezuela, #3: Honduras
- According to the World Health Organization: Varicella vaccine is not routinely given in Venezuela or Honduras.

ICS Operational Goal: Coordinate across MDH program areas who work with potential asylum seekers to maintain situational awareness and share information to ensure a consistent message from MDH to the GO and partners in an effort to protect the health of the newcomers and the communities in which they live.

Outputs: MDH has convened a level 1 Incident Command System activation (ICS) (Level 1 means a “Response requires activation of resources outside a single division, program area, or usual working relationship.” This effort is to assure situational awareness, sharing of information and consistent messaging across the agencies and with partners) to coordinate the weekly Governor’s Office messages.

We can see in our participation data over the last 6 months that our overall participation has dropped, but our participation of Hispanic individuals has remained steady across the state.

Management Information System (MIS) – Tami

This weekend we will be moving servers. All HuBERT environments (Production/Clinic, Training, Reports, and Infoview) will be **unavailable beginning at 8:00 PM on Friday, March 22 until Monday, March 25 at 7:00 AM**. Gainwell will be transitioning some of our servers to their new data center. Any users that are

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still in the system at 8:00 PM will have their session terminated, so please ensure all activities are done prior to 8:00 PM.

This is the last move for servers. Watch the HuBERT Hints and Weekly Update for more information.

WIC 50th Anniversary Staff History – Tina

The Midwest Regional Office plans to highlight WIC's 50th year celebration in their At the Table newsletter this summer and/or a post in USDA's X account by featuring staff interviews from each Midwest state. They are asking each state to identify and collect information from long-tenured local and state agency staff. We will submit multiple staff for consideration, and they will select some to highlight. If you have worked 30 years or longer, please fill out the [My WIC Journey](#) survey **by Friday, May 24** and send a photo to tina.breitenbach@state.mn.us.

Coeffective Projects – Rosie

A group we partner with, last year provided five \$5,000 Community Partnership Collaborative scholarships for agencies to promote breastfeeding.

- Des Moines Valley provided training to community partners and focused on labor and delivery staff.
- Fillmore County WIC developed library outreach breastfeeding friendly materials and trained childcare providers.
- Nicollet County WIC started a lactation support group in collaboration with Maternal Child Health nurses and community health workers.
- Olmsted County WIC set up a virtual outreach learning opportunity with Mayo Clinic staff. They created a presentation about WIC and offered trainings for staff.
- Todd County WIC offered lunch and learn opportunities with medical clinics in their area about WIC breastfeeding resources. They worked to support Amish families with lactation support.

Grant application resources and funding information can be found at [Additional Funding for Local WIC Agencies](#).

Questions?

Contact Rosie Pierce-Martin, 651-201-4428, Rosie.Pierce-Martin@state.mn.us.

Research Study on Weight Stigma – Laura Hooper, U of MN

We are partnering with the University of Minnesota to help prevent weight stigma among our participants. We want to hear your perceptions of weight stigma as an issue among our participants and challenges and strengths agencies have in preventing weight stigma. Your feedback will be used to develop professional trainings and identify any needed changes to our agency environment and participant-facing materials. If you are interested, complete the University of Minnesota [Qualtrics survey](#) to schedule a zoom interview. Interviews will last 60-75 minutes and will occur outside of working hours. Participants will receive a \$50 gift card for their time.

Participant Centered Services (PCS) Project Work – Bernadette Flores

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Introducing Flores & Associates who will be supporting our Revitalizing Participant-Centered Services initiative. The goal of this project is to support PCS activities and staff skill development in the short term and long term with activities such as:

- Support and development of local agency staff to 'Champion' the cause through written tools, webinars, conference calls, etc.
- In-person trainings to support PCS engagement and skill development via the Statewide Conference in September 2024 and regional trainings in the summer of 2025.
- Advance site visits to inform training content and provide one-on-one coaching in May 2024.

Questions & Answers

With the final rule coming out potentially in April, would states be able to implement parts of the food package changes - like increase to CVB right away, or would you need to do the whole thing at once?

We will have to wait for additional guidance from USDA before implementing changes. We are uncertain how long that might be.

Is there any consideration to having the weight stigma staff interviews during work hours? My agency would allow work time to participate. I am not sure how many will want to participate on their own time.

WIC staff time is paid for by federal funds to do WIC work. This research project has separate funds to offer a gift card to help cover staff time outside WIC work hours for the interview and contributions to the research study.

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[My WIC Journey \(https://forms.office.com/g/dwv6MuJYEh\)](https://forms.office.com/g/dwv6MuJYEh)

[Additional Funding for Local WIC Agencies \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/addfunding.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/addfunding.html)

[Qualtrics survey \(https://umn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6mLjUnbViFHyEC2\)](https://umn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6mLjUnbViFHyEC2)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 625 Robert St N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.

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