

Enhancing Participant-Centered Services Between the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Head Start Programs

Suggested strategies and resources for State and local program partnerships to improve program coordination and customer service for low-income children and their families.

STATE-LEVEL COLLABORATIONS*

Partnership Agreements



Establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or agreements to foster coordination of services and working relationships at the State/tribe and local levels.

The Osage Nation WIC Program developed an MOU with Osage Nation Head Start and the Oklahoma Caring Foundation, Inc. The MOU sets forth terms for WIC and Head Start program participants to receive recommended preventive health immunizations at Caring Foundation, Inc., sites, and guides program reporting and sharing of participant information between programs.

Information Sharing



Enter into written agreements authorizing the use and disclosure of confidential participant information. Share eligibility, medical, and statistical information to the extent that confidentiality policies permit.

The Arizona WIC Program and the Arizona Head Start Association developed a guide for data sharing between local programs. The guide helps ensure coordination of services and confidentiality of data while streamlining administrative procedures for staff and program participants.

Cross-Program Referrals



Develop procedures for sharing and jointly gathering participant and certification data to coordinate services and referrals. Programs may consider using a joint application form in an effort to improve efficiency, time, and cost-effectiveness when gathering this information.

The New Hampshire WIC Program uses a universal health assessment form that was developed in conjunction with the New Hampshire Department of Education Early Childhood – School Age Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Head Start, and the New Hampshire Pediatric Society. The form includes appropriate consents for release of information to exchange health and program eligibility information.

Cross-Training



Develop opportunities for program staff to cross-train and share materials on program operations and best practices. Joint training opportunities should focus on providing quality nutrition education and materials that deliver accurate, relevant, and consistent messages to participants.

The Colorado Department of Health and Environment WIC Program provides Lactation Management training to certified child care programs, including Head Start, on a biannual basis. Colorado WIC has also developed 'Breastfeeding in Child Care Toolkits', with versions for center-based and family child care providers, that provide breastfeeding knowledge and supportive practices that may increase the length of time babies are breastfed.

WIC Special Project Grants

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) competitively awards grants to support special projects and innovation in State WIC Programs. These grants can fund projects that have the potential to improve and enhance participant-centered services. Coordinate with your WIC State agency to develop collaborative projects for consideration.



The Connecticut Department of Public Health WIC Program was awarded a WIC Special Project Grant to strengthen and maintain a formal partnership between State and local WIC and Head Start programs through co-location of services, systemizing referrals, and co-enrollment through electronic platforms. An online toolkit, developed by Connecticut WIC to bolster and/or initiate collaboration across programs, highlights and provides access to training, tip sheets, and best practices.

*State level includes Indian Tribal Organizations.

LOCAL-LEVEL COLLABORATIONS

Co-Location of WIC Services at Head Start or Child Care Centers



Coordinate the co-location of nutrition services for program participants. Identify ways to support cross-program operations, and streamline similar participant-centered services.

The Mississippi Department of Health conducts WIC enrollment at Head Start. WIC staff visit Head Start programs on pre-scheduled days to provide WIC certification, mid-certification nutrition assessment, benefit issuance, and nutrition education.

Nutrition Education



Exchange educational approaches and materials, including breastfeeding promotion and support, designed to improve health status and achieve positive change in dietary and physical activity habits.

The Georgia Department of Public Health WIC Program and Head Start developed a formal system of collaboration in three targeted school districts to enroll and provide nutrition education to all WIC-eligible children between the ages of 1 and 5. WIC staff are able to provide nutrition education to students and parents that meet nutrition requirements for WIC and Head Start.

Nutrition Services



Develop and implement processes to promote the exchange of information and standards for providing nutrition services.

Rhode Island's Children's Friend WIC local agency has coordinated with Head Start to train nutritionists that provide nutrition services in both the WIC and Head Start programs. As a result, parents and children receive consistent nutrition education messages and followup.

Health and Nutrition Screening



Coordinate health and nutrition screening processes between programs.

Puerto Rico WIC clinics share participant medical and nutrition assessment information through an individualized Care Plan Report with Head Start. Head Start uses the Care Plan Report to tailor developmental services to the participant. WIC and Head Start nutritionists coordinate and discuss the Care Plan Report of participants in both programs.

Community Resources and Public Education



Head Start programs are required to have a Health Services Advisory Committee to guide the development of health policies and procedures, and connections to community resources. WIC programs can be effective committee participants with other community health and social service providers.

The Washington, DC, Office of the Superintendent of Education Head Start Program, in partnership with the Washington, DC, WIC Program and other child and family service agencies, is leading an effort to build a neighborhood-based quality improvement system for early childhood development providers in the District of Columbia. The Quality Improvement Network (QIN) is a citywide effort to build capacity, increase access, and enhance the quality of infant and toddler care.

Food and Nutrition Service

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