



*Protecting, maintaining and improving the health of all Minnesotans*

# Memo

To: **WIC Coordinators**

From: **WIC Program Unit**

Date: **July 25, 2012**

Subject: **Ideas for Addressing “No Show Rates”**

Many local agencies have expressed concern over their “no show” rates, both for certification appointments and nutrition education contacts. There are various considerations when addressing this.

## **Assess “no show” rates**

- Use the *Missed Appointment Follow-up* function, available in the *Activities* menu of the HuBERT *Participant Search* screen, to identify participants who have missed their appointments.
  - This function tracks appointments made in the HuBERT scheduler. The participant’s appointment is automatically marked as “kept” when benefits/vouchers are issued. Those not marked as “kept” are displayed on the *Missed Appointments List*. For more information, see:
    - [HuBERT Hints, November 2011, #3](#)
    - [HuBERT Training Session #8, Training Module #5](#)
- Use the *Benefit Pickup Report* in the *Clinic Reports Environment* to identify participants who are due or overdue to pick up their benefits for a specified date range.
  - See [Pre-Defined Reports Guidance: Benefit Pickup Report](#)
- Review daily appointment schedules to look for trends and appointment times that have higher no show rates. For example, if 8:00-8:30 a.m. appointments are often missed, it may not be efficient to offer appointments then.
- Monitor for frequently requested appointment times that fill up quickly. For example, if many participants ask for a 3:30 p.m. appointment, it may be necessary to provide more appointments at that time.

**Schedule all appointments in the HuBERT scheduler.**

**Adjust your appointment schedule to provide the appointment times most needed by participants.** Participants are more likely to keep appointments made at the time that works best for them.

- Consider an early (7:30 a.m.) and/or late (10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.) clinic for working families, depending on need.
- Stagger staff lunch times so the clinic remains open during the lunch hour to better accommodate walk-ins and participants needing lunch hour appointments.
- Consider providing nutrition education contacts on a walk-in basis, rather than by appointment. Some agencies designate certain days or half days for N.E. contacts/benefit pickup. One or more CPAs are specifically available to see those participants who may come any time during the designated hours. Contact your Nutrition Consultant for more ideas about this.
- Consider “flexible scheduling” at least one day a week. Flexible scheduling uses a variety of appointment types, including same-day appointments.
  - See *“WIC Appointments: Flexible Scheduling Choices”*, Wednesday Update memo, June 20, 2012.
  - If interested in this model, contact your Nutrition & Program Consultants to set up an implementation plan before starting this.
- Conduct a participant survey, asking about preferred hours and reasons why participants might miss appointments. Allow participants to respond anonymously.
  - From other surveys, including Altarum interviews in Minnesota, we know that some participants do not express concerns or complain about difficulties with availability of WIC appointments. They assume there’s nothing they can do about it and try to make it work. But if this becomes too difficult, they may miss appointments or not return to WIC.

**Send reminders to participants. Ask how the participant would like to be contacted.**

Using a variety of methods can be more effective and includes:

- Send reminder letters/cards before appointments.
- Use the e-mail option in HuBERT as an appointment reminder.
- Consider text reminders. Some agencies have the use of an agency cell phone for texts. Others use an online text service. For more information, see:
  - *“Using Google Mail to Send Text Messages from a Computer”*, Wednesday Update memo, November 9, 2011.
  - *“Local Agencies in the Spotlight – Using Text Messages for Contacting Participants”*, Wednesday Update memo, April 18, 2012.
- Make reminder calls the day before and/or the day of the appointment.

**Assess your clinic environment for ways to improve customer service.**

- See [WIC Clinic Environment Assessment form](#)
- Place a Suggestion Box in the waiting room and encourage participant feedback.