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DATE: January 25, 2021

TO: Health Care Providers

FROM: Kate Franken, MPH, RD, Minnesota WIC Director
Michael Georgieff, MD, Department of Pediatrics, University of Minnesota Medical School
Nathan T. Chomilo, MD FAAP, Medical Director, Medicaid & MinnesotaCare

SUBJECT: Minnesota WIC Services during COVID-19

The Minnesota WIC Program continues to provide services to over 100,000 participants each month. These services include food benefits, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals. The vast majority of WIC clinics are providing these services remotely to protect the health of families and staff during the pandemic.

As you are aware, a WIC screening typically includes a health and nutrition assessment, height and weight measurements, and a hemoglobin test. Since WIC is not able to see families in person, the requirement to perform the anthropometric and hematological assessments is waived at this time. We anticipate the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will continue this waiver throughout the current and potentially future Public Health Emergency Declarations related to the pandemic.

WIC staff routinely promote well child visits as outlined in the [American Academy of Pediatric Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care, Periodicity Schedule](#). The importance of preventive health care is emphasized during this pandemic.

We share a common goal and would like to partner with you to meet the unique needs of WIC families during this unusual time.

- 1. Please consider providing additional hemoglobin testing for children** until the pandemic has subsided.
 - Low socioeconomic status is a risk factor for iron deficiency anemia. Data from 2018 indicates anemia in Minnesota WIC children is 1.7 times higher than the rate of children in the US general population. [WIC Weight Status, Growth & Anemia Reports and Data](#).
 - WIC performs hemoglobin tests at the recommended ages of 9 months, 18 months, 2 years, 3 years and 4 years to screen for risk of anemia. This schedule follows the CDC [Recommendations to Prevent and Control Iron Deficiency in the United States](#). Participants with a hemoglobin below 10 mg/dl are referred to the health care provider for additional evaluation. Unfortunately, this screening and referral process is not currently occurring for WIC children.

- Consider hemoglobin testing per the WIC schedule during this public health emergency for children participating in WIC. According to Dr. Michael Georgieff, University of MN: “Iron deficiency in the first years is associated with neurodevelopmental delays and poorer immune function. Infants who were low birth weight and those on low iron diets postnatally without iron supplementation are at increased risk of earlier onset of iron deficiency and should be screened between 6 and 9 months.”

2. Please encourage WIC families to share height, weight, and hemoglobin results with the WIC clinic. This information is used to determine nutrition risk and for tailoring WIC education and counseling to the specific needs of the child.

- If a family has online access to this data via a medical record portal such as MyChart, WIC will ask them to provide their recent data.
- If a family does not have online access to their records, please provide patients with a visit summary that includes this information.
- See [Minnesota WIC Medical Data Form](#). This form may be used to provide medical data to the WIC Program.

For more information about the Minnesota WIC Program, see [WIC Information for Health Care Providers](#). To find your local WIC agency, go to the [Minnesota WIC Local Agency Directory](#).

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[American Academy of Pediatric Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care, Periodicity Schedule](https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/periodicity_schedule.pdf) (https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/periodicity_schedule.pdf)

[WIC Weight Status, Growth & Anemia Reports and Data](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/reports/wtstatus/index.html)
(https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/reports/wtstatus/index.html)

[Recommendations to Prevent and Control Iron Deficiency in the United States](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr4703.pdf)
(https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr4703.pdf)

[Minnesota WIC Medical Data Form](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/hcp/mdhmedical.docx)
(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/hcp/mdhmedical.docx)

[WIC Information for Health Care Providers](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/hcp/index.html)
(https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/hcp/index.html)

[Minnesota WIC Local Agency Directory](https://www.health.state.mn.us/forms/cfh/wicdirectory/index.html?localAgency)
(https://www.health.state.mn.us/forms/cfh/wicdirectory/index.html?localAgency)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program,
85 E 7th Place, PO BOX 64882, ST PAUL MN 55164-0882;
651-201-4444, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us;
to obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-4444