

WIC Local Agency Conference Call

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2023, 8:30-9:30 AM

Agenda and Summary Notes

Agenda Items:

- National Updates - Kate
- WIC Modernization Projects – Kate
- CVB Levels – Tami
- WINNIE Rollout and Pilot – Tami
- Microsoft Changes to Encrypted Emails – Rachel
- Local Agency Outreach Projects - Megan
- Online Shopping Project Update – Kate, Jessie, Mary

National Updates- Kate

Congress Passed a Last-Minute Continuing Resolution (CR) on September 30

Congress passed and President Biden signed a last-minute CR, extending government funding through November 17. The CR also maintains the Cash Value Benefit (CVB) bump, allowing WIC to continue issuing fruit and vegetable benefits at the higher, inflation adjusted levels (\$26, \$47, \$52). Additional funding legislation, either another CR or a full-year appropriations package, will need to be advanced before the new November 17 funding deadline. We have increased CVB benefits for October and November at this point and are awaiting next steps after November 17.

WIC Funding

WIC State Agencies received an initial allocation of funding after the CR was passed and we are expecting another allocation to provide more funding under the current CR. Funding under the CR extends our grant level from FFY 2023, which may not be sufficient to cover anticipated caseload for this next year. The program is hoping additional funding will be made available to states when an annual appropriation is passed by Congress.

Congress and Appropriations

This week the Senate is anticipated to consider a three bill “minibus” package of full-year Agriculture, Veterans, and Transportation funding. In recent months, leading Senate Appropriators have reiterated their commitment to providing full funding for WIC, despite projections that their Agriculture Appropriations proposal would fail to provide the resources necessary to serve projected caseloads. The House still does not have an elected Speaker, and until a Speaker is voted in legislation likely cannot move forward in the House.

Other Program Updates

WIC Modernization Projects - Kate

Minnesota WIC has received approval from USDA to use the WIC Modernization Grant funds \$,1279,761.00 for the following projects:

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- Spirit Participant Portal
- Vendor Integration Grants
- PCS Training for Local Agencies
- WIC Shopping Peer Project
- Online Shopping Expansion
- HemoCue Equipment Grants
- Data Direct 2.0 Access Fees

These projects focus on enhancements that improve the WIC participant experience by improving WIC shopping experience, supporting redemption of benefits, and increasing participant enrollment and retention. The grant funds can be utilized through September 30, 2027.

CVB Levels – Tami

The CVB will be updated on Thursday Oct. 17, 2023, with the higher levels for November only. More to come on the status of the December benefits.

WINNIE Rollout and Pilot – Tami

Minnesota WIC is set to pilot the new Information System, WINNIE, on Oct. 31, 2023, in Dakota County. The pilot will last for three months and have three phases to test its functionality and performance prior to statewide rollout. Visit [WINNIE Information System](#) for more information about WINNIE pilot and rollout schedule.

Microsoft Changes to Encrypted Emails – Rachel

Microsoft Outlook will be changing the look of the encrypted email received for online applications. It will now say in the body of the email “Read my message” for users to click on instead of the attachment itself. No other changes were made, and users will still view the message using the one-time passcode option. For any encrypted email issues, please go to your local IT first. Any other online form questions please contact Rachel.freund@state.mn.us and tobi.afolabi@state.mn.us.

Local Agency Outreach Projects – Megan

MDH WIC submitted an operational funding grant proposal to FNS for \$25,000 to support local agencies with WIC promotion & outreach efforts; 14 applications were submitted and 10 were approved. Megan reviewed how each local agency used their funding. The Local Agencies included – Becker, Bloomington, Brown, Chisago, Human Services of Faribault and Martin, Le Sueur, Ramsey, Scott, CHI St. Joseph’s, Wright. The total spent was \$22,988.12 by the 10 agencies.

Online Shopping Project Update – Kate, Jessie, Mary

The Midwest States WIC Online Ordering Pilot (MSWOOP) project includes Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska WIC state agencies. The project aims to implement a WIC online ordering and payment solution with regional grocery retailer Hy-Vee and online WIC EBT processor. The online work that Hy-Vee has done is near completion. User Acceptance Testing (UAT) will begin later this fall. According to the preliminary timeline, Iowa will pilot in January, Minnesota in February, and Nebraska in March.

The online shopping will be piloted in one Hy-Vee store in each state. For Minnesota, the store will be the Brooklyn Park Hy-Vee on Zane Avenue. The Hennepin County WIC clinic nearest to the store will be the pilot clinic. We will focus on promotion and evaluation efforts of this project and will provide updates on project status.

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

WINNIE Information System

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/winnie/index.html>)

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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