

January 23, 2023, Advisory Group Meeting

Notes

Agenda Items

Housekeeping for Advisory Group (Tina) – review roles & responsibilities of Advisory Group, agenda items, sharing/round robin on Items for discussion

Reviewed the [WIC Advisory Group](#) webpage and the various resources for Advisory Group such as agenda, meetings notes, member definitions, responsibilities, and duties. Also, will include “round robin” on future agenda for agenda items that we will give each member an opportunity to provide input for the group they represent.

State Staff Updates (Tina/Tami)

Breastfeeding, Training, Communication Unit: Nadia Anderson joined MN WIC and the CFH Director’s Office as an Office and Administrative Assistant Senior in January. Shared administrative position is located within the Breastfeeding, Training, and Communication Unit of the SNP Section and the Director’s Office within the Child and Family Health Division. Nadia comes to us from the Minneapolis Veterans Home in Minneapolis where she served as a Scheduling Coordinator and prior to that a Customer Service Specialist. She has more than 5 years of experience as a legal administrative assistant and a total of 10 years of administrative experience.

MIS/Data Unit: There is an opening from Emily Gomez’s position, and Tami hopes this will post in the next 1-2 weeks.

Share Final Reimbursement FFY 2022 (Kate) and seeking feedback and perspective on cost increases this past year. Are you seeing increases in staffing, equipment/supplies, other expenses, etc.?

The federal fiscal year closeout is completed annually in early February. Once all final expenses are accounted for and we have set aside 3% of funds for carry forward, we look at what is left in Nutrition Services Administrative (NSA) funds to cover as much of the local agencies unreimbursed WIC expenses. Keep in mind that for the first time, we provided additional WIC grant funding in the amount of \$1,500,000 to local agencies during the year, contributing to a lower amount available for final reimbursements. Local agencies also reported approximately \$1,000,000 in claimed WIC costs for FFY 2022 compared to FFY 2021. Given the lower amount of NSA funding for final local agency reimbursements, 28 of our 56 local agencies will not be fully reimbursed. Final payments will be issued to local agencies in the coming weeks.

The state agency asked local agency staff about what was contributing to higher WIC grant costs for 2022 to better understand the current trend. Local agencies reported that staffing was the biggest contributor to higher grant costs. Several agencies had increases in salary for staff

in response to the current economic factors and since staffing costs for the program are the largest portion of program costs, this really impacted overall program costs. These increased costs included salary, benefits, increase in cost of living, having to compete with wage increases at places like Target and Mayo Clinic. Some stated they need even more staff to keep up with increasing caseload demands. In person services will also be more expensive due to the cost of lab supplies, gloves, masks, rent, heat. Some items were covered with COVID funding like masks and gloves and that will be discontinued as we move forward from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participant WIC Advisory Group (Tina) - any experience, any ideas for how we can recruit members, willing to help recruit? **ROUND ROBIN**

We hope to start a WIC Participant Advisory Group (AG) in the future. Thoughts from AG members were to consider having representation from a foster parent, grandparent, and LEP representatives. The plan right now is to have regional representation. We still plan to ask for more broad-based feedback in surveys from all participants; and the participant AG will be a way to get input on WIC services on a smaller scale across the state. Tina and Kate met with NWA to discuss the recruitment of members and structure of the NWA Participant Advisory Council. Tina will meet with Michigan about their participant AG to gather lessons learned. There is more to come and plans to share as we develop a plan and strategy over the next year. A request was made about sharing information from the participant AG within the AG group once it is implemented. We would plan to share through various channels like regional meetings, weekly update, and AG.

Shopping Experience (Jessie/Erin)—requested by AG member

There will always be challenges with shopping with a mixed basket transaction. We want to do the best we can to help improve benefit redemption and help improve the shopping experience for WIC participants. We do have some plans with the ARPA grants to create some educational videos covering topics like setting the pin, using the app, the importance of the midpoint receipt, transaction issues, etc.

Most questions and/or concerns we receive submitted through the helpdesk and/or vendor inbox are about transactions and formula. Transaction issues are generally due to fresh produce and mapping. We have a module, [WIC Produce Mapping](#) that helps explain mapping. Since this topic is generally the number one transaction issue; we want to offer some extra information to inform our agencies ahead of the ARPA grant project to address and improve the shopping experience. Stand beside terminals at small stores don't require mapping of fresh produce, but major chains and small independent stores are required to map fresh produce. Universal Product Codes (UPC) need to be linked to a 4 digit (PLU) that are all included in the WIC APL. There are thousands of UPC's that are generated by the grower or the store so WIC does not have much more than common fruit/vegetable UPCs in our APL. The challenge is that at large stores, produce (packaged) goes to the floor before the corporate office gets it in the APL and then the participant tries to buy it. Participants cannot use the app for fresh produce since the UPC is not in our APL it is linked through mapping the UPC to the PLU (this occurs on the store side). It is critical to check the mid-point receipt because that is where you can check to see if the produce went through. Otherwise, if a participant waits until the balance is due, it is a lengthy process to undo it. LA staff should report suspected mapping issues or unknown transaction issues to the helpdesk. Information needed includes, household ID, date shopped,

what trying to get (photo with UPC) and ideally a receipt. Then a store can be contacted that items need to be mapped. Produce that is bulk (with a PLU sticker), and that you bag yourself, should not have any issues. Berries are the biggest issue because there are vast numbers of UPCs. Other states are dealing with mapping as well and many states don't follow up like we do since it is not an easy fix. Part of the issue is WIC is tiny business for stores so not quick to map or check that items are set up properly. We all want the shopping experience to go well for participants. Keep reporting concerns and reaching out to the helpdesk as necessary to report issues.

Great resources on our website.

[WIC Transaction Troubleshooting Guide for Local Agency](#)

[WIC Shopping Help](#)

YouTube: [Using Your WIC Card](#)

Module: [The WIC Shopping Experience](#)

[Using Self-Checkout with the WIC Card](#)

MA Recertification After Waivers End (Kate/Rebecca) – what are you hearing, resources from your county, what do you need from us? (Kate, Rebecca) **ROUND ROBIN**

MA Recertification After Waiver Ends – Communication Toolkit

A toolkit has been developed for counties and partners to help families stay enrolled in Medical Assistance (MA) after the Public Health Emergency (PHE) ends: link was shared [Planning for the end of federal continuous coverage requirements: Preparing for renewals.](#)

This toolkit provides county and tribal eligibility workers, health plans and navigators with messaging and resources to encourage MA and MinnesotaCare members to update their contact information. The campaign to update contact information is critical to successfully restarting renewals in public health care programs when the federal continuous coverage requirements end.

Waivers will be discontinued in April; participants will have to provide income for recertifications for MA and this may be a challenge for some families.

One concern is that many of the addresses might not be up to date so any mailed communications about the waivers ending might be missed. WIC Local Agencies can help remind families to update their contact information. Some counties already have a plan in place for notifying families. One agency stated they have paper applications in their WIC clinics. Some agencies are notifying families that Emergency SNAP benefits are ending this spring as well. A suggestion was made to have some app messages to help remind families to update their information. Also, for WIC staff to connect with their county to see what they are doing to help address this.

Strategic Priorities (Kate) –discuss what it is, what it involves, history, how it was used, would we want to consider a new one, etc.

In October 2018, the WIC Advisory Group participated in a 2–5-year visioning activity with an outside facilitator. The goal was to help envision what WIC could look like in the future. The top areas identified were technology, streamlining administrative tasks, outreach and retention, and flexible program delivery. Kate provided progress and status reviews in 2019, 2020, and 2022. It will be 5 years since the original activity in October 2023. Does the AG want to do another visioning/strategic activity? It was decided to wait until this fall until various decisions are made that might impact future WIC flexibilities and changes.

Advisory Group Members Participating:

Chair: Katlyn Hubbard (Becker Co.); **Regional Reps: Northeast:** Jenny Barta (Carlton Co.); **Southeast:** Jessica Holst (Fillmore Co.); **South Central:** Arlin Penner (Nicollet); **Southwest:** Alli Orr (Nobles)**West Central:** Sue Olson (Clay Co.); **Northwest:** Kristy Rott (Polk Co.); **Metro:** Marianne Nelson (Bloomington Co.); **Caseload Group Reps: Group 1:** Kathy Duffy (Ramsey); **Group 2:** Cindy Jacobson (Dakota Co); **Group 3:** Wendy O'Leary Olmsted Co.); **Group 4:** Vacant; **Group 5:** Catherine Birr (Meeker Co.); **Group 6:** Vacant; **CHB Administrators:** Kristine Klopp; **LPHA Rep:** Marlee Morrison (Hubbard Co.).

MDH Team: Kate Franken - WIC Director; Tami Matti: MIS & Data Unit Supervisor; Tammie Edmundson: Financial Management Analyst; Jessie Zins: Food Delivery Unit Supervisor; Rebecca Gruenes: Nutrition & Clinic Services Unit Supervisor; Tina Breitenbach: Breastfeeding, Training & Communication Unit Supervisor

AG members not able to attend: East Central: Kristen Bricko (Sherburne Co); **Tribal Agency Rep:** Ariana Matakis;

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[WIC Advisory Group](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/advisory.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/advisory.html>)

Module: [WIC Produce Mapping](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/training/cfh/wic/vendor/modules/producemapping/index.html>)

[WIC Transaction Troubleshooting Guide for Local Agency](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/vendor/troubleshoot.pdf>)

[WIC Shopping Help](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/shopforwic/index.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/shopforwic/index.html>)

YouTube: [Using Your WIC Card](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02jqNfDVW2Y) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02jqNfDVW2Y>)

Module: [The WIC Shopping Experience](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/training/cfh/wic/ewic/wicshoppingexperiencetraining/index.html>)

Using Self-Checkout with the WIC Card

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

Planning for the end of federal continuous coverage requirements: Preparing for renewals

(<https://mn.gov/dhs/mycontactinfo/communications-toolkits/>)

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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