

Substance Abuse Screening and Referral

Policy

USDA Federal Regulations: 246.7(a) Local agencies shall maintain and make available for distribution to all pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women and to parents or caretakers of infants and children applying for and participating in the Program a list of local resources for drug and other harmful substance abuse counseling and treatment.

246.11(a)(3) As an integral part of nutrition education, the State agency shall ensure that local agencies provide drug and other harmful substance abuse information to all pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women and to parents or caretakers of infants and children participating in the program. Drug and other harmful substance abuse information may also be provided to pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women and to parents or caretakers of infants and children participating in local agency services other than the Program.

246.11(b) Nutrition education including breastfeeding promotion and support shall be designed to achieve the following: (1) Emphasize the relationship between nutrition, physical activity and health with special emphasis on the nutritional needs of pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants and children under five years of age, and raise awareness about the dangers of using drugs and other harmful substances during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.

Authority

7 CFR Part 246.7(a) *excerpt*

7 CFR Part 246.11(a)(3)

7 CFR Part 246.11(b)(1) *excerpt*

Procedures

WIC participants and the parent/guardian of WIC enrolled infants and children must be offered written information about the dangers of using tobacco, alcohol, and street drugs. Additional information shall be provided at subsequent appointments as requested or if the need is identified or arises.

WIC participants who admit to using harmful substances will be offered a referral for further counseling and treatment.

If screening indicates substance use, ask the participant/parent/guardian about making a referral. (E.g., “Would you like to talk to someone about your smoking/alcohol/drug use?”)

- If they are interested, use the Authorization for Release of Information form (found in the Certification, Eligibility and Coordination of Services forms section of the WIC web portal) and once completed, scan it into the participant’s record. The participant must specifically authorize the release of information about substance abuse.

- If they are not **interested**, acknowledge that change is difficult, reinforce the importance of quitting and provide information to take home with a number to call if they want more information.

When the nutrition interview indicates that an infant was exposed to illicit drugs prenatally, make referrals to health, social service and education agencies as appropriate.

Appropriate referrals and support resources shall also be given to all families anytime substance abuse situations are realized.

Local agencies will develop a list of all substance abuse referral programs in your agency's area and distribute it to clients as needed. Help in Iowa can also be found at Your Life Iowa by calling 855-581-8111 or on <https://yourlifeiowa.org/facility-locator>.

If a participant expresses any health-related concerns involving them, their pregnancy, or family members related to tobacco use or cessation needs, WIC staff should convey the availability of cessation services provided by Quitline Iowa. Referrals can be made by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW or on <https://www.quitlineiowa.org/en-US/>.

Follow up on these referrals in the same way as other referrals. See Referrals policy for more guidance.

Best Practices

WIC personnel are strongly encouraged to provide written information to all **participants**, parents and caretakers who report substance use and/or abuse in their immediate family.

In clinics/counties that have higher alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevalence rates than the state average, provide information to all families and not just those reporting use/abuse.

Follow these guidelines for effective substance abuse screening and counseling:

- Have a non-judgmental, accepting, and concerned attitude to gain client trust.
- Be alert to clues of substance abuse during the nutrition interview.
- Use open-ended questions and a participant centered approach to make questions seem less threatening.
- Discuss the dangers of drugs, alcohol and tobacco for the mother and the baby using a positive approach.

Local agency WIC outreach efforts to local substance abuse program directors should include, at a minimum, phone contact information and a copy of the pamphlet, Nutrition Support and the Power of Family.

Staff will feel more comfortable addressing substance abuse issues with participants if they participate in local training events and review other resources.

- **Online trainings for health care providers and allied health care providers regarding serving participants who use tobacco** is available at <https://quitlogixeducation.org/iowa/>

- The following resource can be found on WIC Works- *USDA Substance Use Prevention Screening, Education, and Referral Resource Guide for Local WIC Agencies*.

Additional resources can be found at and ordered for your agency here:

- <https://hhs.iowa.gov/tupc/quitting-tobacco>
- <https://hhs.iowa.gov/substance-abuse/resources>