

## Outreach

### Policy

**Iowa Administrative Code:**

641 – 73.21(135) Outreach. Outreach efforts within the Iowa WIC program shall be directed toward extension of services to the neediest of Iowans of high priority by reason of their WIC status (see 7 CFR 246.1(d)(3)). The department and contract agencies shall share responsibility for the conduct of outreach efforts.

73.21(1) *Contract agency responsibilities*. Contract agencies shall conduct any or all of the following outreach activities annually:

- a. Distribute WIC brochures to numerous community organizations and offices.
- b. Complete outreach activities as specified in the local agency contract.

**USDA Federal Regulations:**

(f) *Outreach/Certification in Hospitals*. The State agency shall ensure that each local agency operating the program within a hospital and/or that has a cooperative agreement with a hospital:

- (1) Advises potentially eligible individuals that receive inpatient or outpatient prenatal, maternity, or postpartum services, or that accompany a child under the age of 5 who receives well-child services, of the availability of program services; and
- (2) To the extent feasible, provides an opportunity for individuals who may be eligible to be certified within the hospital for participation in the WIC Program,

### Authority

**Iowa Administrative Code:** 641-73.21 (135)

**USDA Federal Regulations:** 7 CFR Part 246.6 (f)

### Procedures

Agencies must provide outreach to reach and serve priority populations, including but not limited to individuals at greatest risk, populations of color, etc. Outreach activities must promote the WIC program to new participants, promote the retention of current WIC participants, including those who are active on the program, but who are not utilizing benefits, and promote and familiarize the community and other service providers about the WIC Program to increase referrals to WIC.

Access must be maximized for the eligible population in the service delivery area through the co-location or integration of services with community partners whenever possible. In areas where the Department contracts with more than one agency to deliver services to women, children, and adolescents, those agencies must cooperate in the provision and integration of those services, including when services are co-located. Co-location of services is optimal as space allows.

Local agencies must collaborate with other programs and partners to form referral networks and develop strategies to address participants' needs. Local agencies must:

- Collaborate with other programs and service providers to ensure accurate and consistent messages following current standards of practice
- Develop plans and foster positive relationships with community partners

Appointments should be coordinated with other services delivered at the same time to the extent possible.

Local agencies must take advantage of any opportunity to inform the public and potential participants about WIC. Examples of opportunities include, but are not limited to the following:

- Participation in local community events such as health fairs or early childhood fairs
- Having an open house
- Participating in community projects
- Speaking at prenatal classes, family life science classes, women's clubs, and other community organizations
- Attending Head Start/Early Head Start activities
- Completing certification appointments at non-traditional locations. See the local agency procedure "Certifications Outside of Clinic"
- Ensuring WIC is listed in community health and social service resource guides
- Visiting local grocery vendors and pharmacies

### **Agency Contacts**

Develop a list of providers and organizations who serve or have a concern for the same population as WIC. Personal contacts with organizations are important so they know where to refer clients. Leave brochures for potential participants at organizations that will distribute them or make them available for individuals to pick up. Contacts may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Health Providers/Organizations
  - Obstetricians, pediatricians, family practitioners, and midwives
  - Public health nurses
  - Hospital nursing staff and dietitians in obstetrics and pediatric units
  - School nurses
  - Family planning agencies
  - Managed Care Organizations and insurance entities, especially those that provide services to the Medicaid population
- Social Service Providers/Organizations
  - Hospital social workers
  - Private social service agencies
  - Proteus or refugee assistance agencies
  - Homeless facilities
  - Unemployment office
  - Shelters for victims of domestic violence
  - Department of Human Services (DHS)
  - SNAP
  - Medicaid

- FIP
- Education Providers/Organizations
  - Head Start/Early Head Start
  - Area Education Agency – Early ACCESS Regional Liaisons
  - Preschools/childcare centers
  - Schools
  - Extension Service (Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and Family Nutrition Program (FNP))
  - Colleges
- Other Business/Organizations
  - Religious organizations
  - Food pantries
  - Substance abuse counseling agencies
  - March of Dimes
  - Women’s Groups
  - Men’s Groups
  - Business that employ potential WIC participants
  - Libraries
  - Long-term care facilities
  - Grocery Stores
  - Laundromats
  - Thrift stores
  - Restaurants
  - Buses

### **Outreach Materials**

Outreach materials are available through the Iowa State Distribution Center. Information about the Iowa State Distribution Center can be found on the WIC Web Portal.

### **Using Positive Breastfeeding Messages**

All outreach activities with programs, individuals and organizations should include positive breastfeeding messages that reinforce WIC’s position that breastfeeding is the preferred infant feeding method.

### **TTY Services**

An individual who is deaf, hearing impaired, deaf-blind, or has difficulty speaking may use a Text Telephone (TTY) to type their conversation to a Communication Assistant (CA), who then reads the typed conversation to a hearing person. The CA relays the hearing person’s spoken words by typing them back to the TTY user. Relay Iowa provides this service and can assist potential participants in contacting the WIC office.

When developing outreach materials, include the Relay Iowa number: 711 or 1-800-735-2942 (English) or 1-800-264-7190 (Spanish). More information can be obtained at <http://www.relayiowa.com/>.

### **Social Media**

Social media must be used for outreach efforts.

**Advertising**

Advertising must clearly emphasize the purpose of the WIC Program. See below for examples.

Example #1: Help for your kids and you. You may be eligible for nutrition advice, health screening, and nutritious foods from WIC. Call for more information.

Example #2: Healthy starts here. Call to find out if your family is eligible for nutrition advice and foods from WIC.

Advertising must not give the impression that WIC is just free food or that people merely need to be low-income to qualify. See below for examples of inappropriate media use.

Example

Example #1: Free food available for families with young children. Come to 123 Agency if your income meets these guidelines.

Example #2: Keep your tax dollars in Iowa! Free food is available from WIC. Call today to receive your share.

**Outreach Activity Logs**

Keep a log of outreach activities to document outreach efforts. Documentation may include:

- Date of contact
- WIC staff making contact
- Name of organization and contact person
- Clientele served by this organization
- Number of people reached
- Materials provided
- Summary of the success and/or barriers of the outreach effort

**Referral Documentation**

Keep a record of where clients found out about WIC to help evaluate which outreach activities are most effective. Record in the “Referred to WIC by” field in the data system to indicate how participants found out about WIC.

Note: The “Referred to WIC by” field in the data system can only be completed once. Although it can track trends of referrals to WIC, it will not indicate if returning participants are responding to a specific outreach campaign.

Asking WIC participants who call for information about WIC where they heard about it and documenting this information can also be helpful.

**Best Practices****Direct Contacts**

Follow-up for all missed appointments is strongly encouraged (See Policy “Missed Appointment Follow-up”).

Provide information to potential participants who are served by other programs within your agency, if a signed release of information form allows.

**Media Contacts**

Media such as television and radio can be utilized for outreach purposes. Consider the following tips when contacting the media.

- Radio or television stations are required to devote a certain amount of time to public service announcements. A public service announcement is more likely to be aired if a station is contacted in person rather than by mail. Paid advertising is also a possibility and can be targeted to the desired audience. However, cost is a consideration.
- Local newspapers may print “newsworthy” stories about WIC. An in-service for newspaper staff may make them more receptive to publishing WIC stories. Letters to the editor and paid advertising are other possibilities.
- Newsletters directed toward health or human service professionals may print an article about WIC.
- Billboard companies may be willing to sponsor a billboard as a public service. Paid billboard advertising is also an option.