

## Referrals to Programs and Agencies

### Policy

**USDA Federal Regulations:** 246.7(a) To lend administrative efficiency and participant convenience to the certification process, whenever possible, Program intake procedures shall be combined with intake procedures for other health programs or services administered by the State and local agencies. Such merging may include verification procedures, certification interviews, and income computations. 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.

246.7(b) Program referral and access. State and local agencies shall provide WIC Program applicants and participants or their designated proxies with information on other health-related and public assistance programs, and when appropriate, shall refer applicants and participants to such programs.

(1) If such individuals are not currently participating in Medicaid but appear to have family income below the applicable maximum income limits for the program, the local agency shall also refer these individuals to Medicaid, including the referral of infants and children to the appropriate entity in the area authorized to determine eligibility for early and periodic screening, diagnostic, and treatment (EPSDT) services, and, the referral of pregnant women to the appropriate entity in the area authorized to determine presumptive eligibility for the Medicaid Program, if such determinations are being offered by the State.

246.7(e) Nutritional risk data shall be documented in the participant's file and shall be used to assess an applicant's nutritional status and risk; tailor the food package to address nutritional needs; design appropriate nutrition education, including breastfeeding promotion and support; and make referrals to health and social services for follow-up, as necessary and appropriate.

### Authority

7 CFR Part 246.7 (a)  
7CFR Part 246.7 (b)(1)*excerpt*  
7CFR Part 246.7(e)*excerpt*

### Procedures

Agencies and programs that Iowa WIC staff will provide information and referrals as appropriate shall include but are not limited to:

- **Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program**
- Maternal Health and Child and Adolescent Health Services (MCAH)
- I-Smile

- Family Planning Services
- Immunization Programs
- Local Public Health Services (LPH)
- Home Visitation
- Lead Testing
- First Five
- Water Testing
- Dentists and Health Care Providers
- Food Banks and Pantries
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)
- Head Start/Early Head Start Programs
- Child Care Referral and Assistance
- Insurance (i.e. Medicaid, Hawki and Family Planning Program (FPP))
- SNAP

Refer any WIC applicant who:

- Wants to apply for or who is not currently participating in Maternal Health or Child Health services when on-site enrollment is not available in the WIC clinic, and
- Women 19 years old who want to apply for Presumptive Medicaid Eligibility for Pregnant Women or Medicaid.

Referrals will be made in private, and the participant's acceptance of a suggested referral is voluntary. Referrals may be formal or informal.

- Formal referrals are for more urgent needs and are usually written and include a referral form with a release of information. An example can be found in the Certification, Eligibility and Coordination of Service forms [section of the Iowa WIC web portal](#) and is called the Referral from the WIC Program form. A formal referral would also be when the organization or office [is called](#) on the [participant's](#) behalf to enroll them or make an appointment [for them](#), whether or not they are still [present](#) in the office when the call is made.
  - If the participant agrees to a formal referral, have the participant sign the release of information section on the referral form, and scan it into the participant's record before sending [or contacting the program](#).
  - A referral form/release of information must be signed by the WIC participant to release any information, including the participant's name, to another agency, program, or individual. The exceptions to this are the named programs listed in the Confidentiality of Participant Information policy in which the director of the Iowa Department of Health [and Human Services](#) has authorized the use and disclosure of limited WIC participant data, also detailed within that policy. . This authorization is disclosed to participants in the document Your Rights and Responsibilities as a WIC Participant. A copy of this document can be found in the Certification, Eligibility and Coordination of Service forms [section of the Iowa WIC web portal](#).
  - If the referral is related to substance abuse, HIV status, or mental health, the

participant must check the box identifying the specific information **may be** released and sign the Authorization for Release of Information of the form as well. An example of this form can be found in the Certification, Eligibility and Coordination of Service forms **section of the Iowa WIC web portal**.

- Informal referrals are when the intent is to provide basic information about an agency or program. WIC personnel are encouraged to provide appropriate print materials such as program brochures when such materials are available.

Assurances must be in place that all referrals, both formal and informal, are documented in the participant's record by local agency staff.

WIC staff will follow up with the participant **or parent/guardian** for all referrals documented in their record. The outcome of the follow up will be documented in the Follow-up drop down box on the Referrals-Participant or Referrals-Family panel.

- For referrals about immediate concerns, the referring staff member will call the participant within a few days to see if the referral was completed and needed services obtained.
- For referrals of a less urgent nature, the referring staff member can follow up with the participant by phone or the follow up can be done at their next scheduled appointment by the staff person seeing them.

See Confidentiality of Participant Information policy for what WIC information can be shared without an additional release of information.

## Best Practices

Encourage all participants to follow-through on the referral(s) you've given them as soon as possible.

### Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health (MCAH) Services

If a participant expresses concerns such as not having a medical or dental home, social, **developmental** or health concerns, or difficulty paying for **or having access to** health services, WIC staff should convey the availability of services provided by the local MCAH agency.

- Explain how MCAH services could be helpful in the areas for which there is concern.
  - **MCAH services can provide care coordination to a medical or dental home, developmental screenings or other health screenings and referrals as appropriate.**
- Ask the participant/caretaker if interested in receiving MCAH services.
  - If not, give the participant/caretaker the name, address and phone number of the MCAH agency for future reference.
  - If yes, proceed as applicable.
    - If MCAH services are available within the same agency as WIC and may or may not be available at the WIC clinic, then refer the WIC participant to the MCH staff person and complete the agency's enrollment form.
    - If MCAH services are not available within the same agency as WIC but are available at the WIC clinic, then refer the WIC participant to the

appropriate MH or CAH staff person within the WIC clinic.

- If MCAH services are not available within the same agency as WIC and are not available at the WIC clinic, then complete the Referral/Request for Information form, have the participant/caretaker sign the form and forward the referral to the MCAH agency.

### Oral Health Services

For an oral health assessment, education and referrals to a dental home for infants, children, and women, refer eligible participants to Child Health or Maternal Health.

- A dental hygienist, serving as I-Smile Oral Health Coordinator, is available in each Child Health agency to provide oral health assessments, education, preventive services, and care coordination for children.
- Medicaid, Hawki, and Title V funds will pay for a dental visit for eligible children. Medicaid and Hawki (up to the age of 19 years) will cover dental care for eligible pregnant women.
- I-Smile Coordinators can also provide training to non-dental health professionals about completing open mouth assessments.
- For more information on oral health see the “USDA Infant Nutrition and Feeding A Guide for Use in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)”.

### Family Planning

Ask every third trimester/postpartum participant if they have thought about reproductive health services (i.e. what decision she has made/or is considering regarding family planning/need for birth control, and whether she/her partner have discussed it with a physician or other health care provider.)

- Reproductive health services are intended to help people achieve their reproductive desires, such as contraception, pregnancy testing and counseling, achieving healthy pregnancy, and family building and adoption.

This is a good time to ask about a reproductive life plan and to introduce preconception planning for the next pregnancy but be considerate of religious and cultural beliefs about family planning. Family planning services or contraceptives are available from:

- Primary care providers (including OB/GYN), and
- Title X Family Planning programs funded through the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services and the Family Planning Council of Iowa (FPCI). Call the Healthy Families Line at 1-800-369-2229 to locate a clinic near a client or visit <https://hhs.iowa.gov/health-prevention/family-planning-reproductive-health>.

If the participant has not made any decisions about family planning/reproductive health services and/or are unsure, the following steps are recommended.

- Is the participant interested in information about obtaining family planning/reproductive health services?
  - If not, discontinue the topic and let them know where they can contact once they are ready to further discuss.
  - If yes/unsure, offer to make an appointment at a Title X family planning clinic

while she is at the WIC clinic but do not identify her as a WIC participant.

- Does she want you to make an appointment?
  - If yes, telephone the family planning **clinic** to make an appointment and give her the appointment information she will need.
  - If not, or if you were unable to make the appointment at that time, give the participant the name, address and phone number of the local family planning **clinic**.
- Is the participant interested in supplemental family planning insurance that can cover family planning services? The Iowa Family Planning Program (FPP) is designed to assist individuals in planning their families and accessing necessary reproductive health services. It is available to those who meet specific eligibility criteria, primarily focusing on low-income individuals aged 12 to 54.
  - If so, please have the participant contact one of the Title X Family Planning clinics to see if they qualify and/or the state Family Planning Program Consultant. More information can be found at: <https://hhs.iowa.gov/medicaid/services-care/family-planning-program>.

### Public Health Services

Public health services are available in every county. WIC agencies are strongly encouraged to develop collaborative partnerships with the public health agencies and Boards of Health in their service area to develop referral criteria.

### Drinking Water Testing

Drinking water contaminated with bacteria (total coliform and/or E.coli) or nitrate, **arsenic or manganese** may pose a health risk, especially for infants. In order to reduce health risks, the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services and Iowa Department of Natural Resources provides a program designed to assist well owners in Iowa with various well activities, including well water testing.

To refer a participant for water testing you will need to contact the local county sanitarian/**environmental health professional**. To locate **this contact** in your area go to: [Iowa Sanitarian Contact List](#) (also found here - <https://www.iowadnr.gov/environmental-protection/water-quality/private-well-program>)

- Prior to referring a participant to the county sanitarian/**environmental health professional** for a water test, the local agency should confirm referral procedures with the county specialist. Then follow these steps.
  - Generate a referral form and have the participant sign it.
  - Call the county **sanitarian/environmental health professional** with the referral to collect the sample and follow-up by mailing the printed referral.
  - Follow-up with the participant about the test results that they receive from the county **sanitarian/environmental health professional**.
    - If water testing indicates that a well is contaminated with bacteria, **nitrate, arsenic or manganese**, contact **the Sanitarian**/environmental health

- professional for that county
- Recommend an alternative water supply such as public water or bottled water.
- Discuss with sanitarians/environmental health professionals well chlorination or other treatment options.
  - Be aware Iowa's Private Well Grants Program (PWG) has funds to assist with chlorination of conforming private wells and well reconstruction.
- Follow your agency's policy for any other needed follow-up.