



New Jersey WIC Services

FFY 2023

Statewide Nutrition and Breastfeeding Education Plan

CONTENTS

FFY 2022 OVERVIEW	3
Trainings	5
NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR FFY 2023	5
NJWOW Nutrition Risk Data.....	5
Healthy People 2020/2030 Goals	6
COVID-19	6
Onsite Review Findings and Observations 2022	7
NUTRITION AND BREASTFEEDING GOALS FFY 2023	8
EVALUATION.....	10
LOCAL AGENCY NUTRITION EDUCATION PLAN.....	11
Collaborations	11
Interns and Students	11
Nutrition and Breastfeeding Education	11
Social Media.....	11
LOCAL AGENCY IMPLEMENTAION OF STATE PLAN (SNEP).....	11
Review	11
Planned Activities or Events	11
Evaluate.....	11
RESOURCES FOR STAFF	12

FFY 2022 OVERVIEW

In FFY 2022, New Jersey WIC continued to concentrate on planning the implementation of the conversion from paper vouchers to electronic benefits transfer (EBT/eWIC). Three State nutritionists participated in the project as members of the Core Team, with the manager and supervisor reviewing documents, attending meetings, and providing feedback to the project management team. A State nutritionist reviews and updates the Universal Price Code (UPC) data base, which informed the WIC Approved Product List (APL). In addition, food categories, subcategories and food packages are being updated for eWIC. The Nutrition and Breastfeeding Unit was active in user acceptance testing (UAT) for eWIC, preparing materials for participant and eWIC local agency staff training. The Nutrition and Breastfeeding Unit lead the Participant Communication Committee which saw the development of videos, participant education handouts and inserts to be utilized during the eWIC implementation.

Along with the required adaptations required for eWIC, there were ongoing enhancements in response to software releases to the NJWOW system. The increased Cash Value Benefit was welcomed by our participants but required creation of all new WIC food packages in the NJWOW system. There were New Jersey WIC agencies who had not converted to eWIC and therefore, were still using checks. The Nutrition and Breastfeeding Unit are actively involved in reviewing and providing input on changes to the system, along with user acceptance testing releases to the WOW system. The State agency continues updating policies and procedures to accommodate changes in procedures required for the NJWOW system.

FFY 2022 saw the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on New Jersey WIC services at both State and local agencies. Remote services continued with the extension of USDA waivers and the State agency continued to provide guidance to the local agencies. Many agencies returned to their offices but continued to provide remote or hybrid services. Two agencies have returned to full in-person WIC services.

The NJWIConline nutrition education website continued to be improved to be more user responsive and additional Covid-19 information was included. Increased usage is expected for secondary nutrition education with COVID-19 restrictions in place. In FFY 2021, the number of lessons completed was 14,000 for the entire year; FFY 2022 surpassed that number during the second quarter with 14,780 participants receiving credit for completing NJWIConline lessons. New Jersey Nutrition unit is in the process of updating the food list and the NJ WIC Food and Program Guide. There is a food list work group that includes State and Local WIC staff. The guide will be smaller, more convenient to carry and will remain colorful and provide key information for participants to use their WIC benefits. It will continue to be available on the NJWIC website and the WICShopper App; it has been well received by both staff and participants.

Collaborations have continued and grown; NJ WIC has presented on WIC services, with a focus on changes related to COVID-19. These presentations were provided to The Department of Children and Families, New Jersey Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, SNAP-Ed

Department of Family Health Services Oral Health Program, and the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN). As a result of these presentations NJ has seen an increase in inquiries regarding WIC services from both potential participants and professionals working with low-income families. NJ WIC continued collaborations with Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Healthy Women, Healthy Families, Head Start, and NJ birthing hospitals.

The Teletask texting app was piloted in 2021 and is now in use at 13 of our 16 local agencies; two agencies utilize another platform. Having access to a texting app proved to be efficient during the pandemic. It was easier to reach participants individually, but also helpful in notifying participants via group messaging. Those who participated on the App received messages on breastfeeding support, clinic hours, and availability of zoom groups to name a few. In addition, the texting apps were used for appointment reminders.

Efforts to improve nutrition education and service delivery in FFY 2022 included, but were not limited to:

- Ability of local agencies to print materials for participants directly from the internet, utilizing materials available on NJWIConline, the NJ WIC website and WIC works
- Increased use of technology to provide group education virtually. Twelve agencies provide education via Zoom, WebEx and Go to Meeting.
- Continued use of technology for communicating education messages (group and individual texting education messages and education materials sent via pdfs).
- Targeted trainings for local agencies on counseling, documentation, and formula issuance due to the shortage.
- Collaboration with local health departments, Healthy Women Healthy Families, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Family Success Centers, vendors, farmers markets, Head Start programs, hospitals, and community groups including non-profits serving similar populations
- Increased communication with participants via Facebook, Facetime, WhatsApp, and YouTube.
- All 16 agencies have incorporated the WICShopper app in the certification process to educate participants on the food list and assist with shopping in the store. Participants have been receptive, specifically with the scanning option.

All Local agencies provide services in English and Spanish with additional languages targeted to the needs of their participants.

Topics for participants' nutrition education were determined by reviewing surveys, nutrition risk factors, post-training evaluations, comments received from staff during meetings and onsite reviews. Specifics are listed in the needs assessment section.

During the first half of FFY 2022, the most frequently selected individual education topic was Child Nutrition, followed by Healthy Weight and Age-Appropriate Feeding. We also noted an increase in discussion and selection on-line of Fruits and Vegetables correlating with the increased

CVV/CVB. The most frequently selected online lesson was Eating Healthy, other popular topics included Babies 0-6 months, Being Active, and Fruits and Vegetables.

Local Agency staff Social Media presence has increased in 2022 with six agencies having current Facebook posts, and two additional agencies who have WIC posts on their Sponsor's Facebook page. This an increase from a total of four agencies and Sponsors who posted WIC information on Facebook in 2021. In addition, six posts in August were about breastfeeding and Breastfeeding month.

NJWIC provides food packages that can be tailored to the individual needs of homeless and migrant participants. All agencies offer referrals to assist with social, medical, dental, and other needs identified during certification. Staff most frequently made referrals to health care and dental providers.

Trainings

All State WIC trainings have been virtual using either Teams or Go to Training platforms. The State Nutrition and Breastfeeding Unit conducting monthly meetings. The meetings include important updates, such as formula recall and eWIC conversion (especially formula and food package issuance). The eWIC formula and food package training provided was presented during these monthly meetings and included on our LMS system so all CPAs could have access.

Local agency Chief Nutritionist, Breastfeeding Coordinators and Coordinators were surveyed regarding their preference of topics. Evaluations were sent to attendees after the meetings, these included suggestions for future meetings. Overall, the evaluations were positive. In addition to eWIC other topics included promoting the increased Fruit and Vegetable benefits, Planning and Implementing Nutrition and Breastfeeding Education Plans, Providing Nutrition and Breastfeeding education and Support virtually along with available platforms and Planning and Transitioning to In-person Services. We also included time for local agency staff to ask questions and discuss solutions.

Local Agencies were required to provide motivational interviewing training to counseling staff; most utilized the Molly Kellogg "Step by Step" program. An emphasis was placed on practicing the techniques provided in the modules.

The Civil Rights training PowerPoint is available on the New Jersey Learning Management System (LMS) and is available to state and local agency staff.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR FFY 2022

The State WIC office evaluated the following data and statistics to determine the statewide goals for FFY 2022.

NJWOW Nutrition Risk Data

The most common risks assigned to participants in the second quarter of FFY 2022 were:

- Risk 114 - Overweight or at risk of overweight was the most common risk for

children ages three and four.

- Risk 425.3 - Improper use of bottle/cups/pacifiers was the most common risk for children 1, and 2 years of age.
- Risk 428 - Dietary Risk Associated with Complementary Feeding Practice was the most common risk for exclusively breastfeeding infants.
- Risk 111 - Overweight was the most common risk for postpartum and pregnant women and the third for partially breastfeeding and fourth most common for exclusively breastfeeding women.
- Risk 603 - Breastfeeding Complication was the most common risk for partially breastfeeding infants

Healthy People 2020/2030 Goals

Based on the most recent CDC Breastfeeding Report of infants born in 2019, overall breastfeeding rates in the US and New Jersey are lower than recent years. In 2019, New Jersey's rate of ever breastfed was 82.5% (the national rate was 83.2%). The New Jersey rate for exclusive breastfeeding through three months was 41.2% (the national rate was 45.3%). New Jersey's rate for exclusive breastfeeding through six months was the same as the US: 24.9%.

The only Healthy People 2020 objective New Jersey met was for any breastfeeding: the target was 81.9%. For Healthy People 2030, WIC will continue efforts to meet the MICH-2030-15 objective of 42.4% of infants exclusively breastfeeding at six months of age. This has been an ongoing goal for New Jersey WIC.

COVID-19

Due to COVID-19, the WIC community continues to follow current USDA/FNS Waiver guidance and mostly provides services remotely.

Although New Jersey WIC has allowed telephone counseling in the past, it was rarely used by agencies; participants preferred in person or group nutrition education sessions at the clinic sites. The State has conducted a participant survey and data suggested participants now prefer remote WIC services.

CDC Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) Guidelines

Strategies that businesses could use include:

- Allowing flexible worksites (such as telework)
- Allowing flexible work hours (such as staggered shifts)
- Increasing physical space between employees at the worksite
- Increasing physical space between employees and customers (such as a drive-through and partitions)
- Implementing flexible meeting and travel options (such as postponing non-essential meetings or events)

- Delivering services remotely (e.g., phone, video, or web)
- Delivering products through curbside pick-up or delivery
- Consider scheduling handwashing breaks so employees can wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Onsite Review Findings and Observations 2022

Seven local agencies have been reviewed in 2022, two additional reviews will be completed in 2022. Onsite reviews include virtual observations via Teams and in-person observations of local agencies that were providing in-person certifications and recertifications. Several areas of improvement have been identified. All seven received findings regarding participant-centered, VENA nutrition and breastfeeding assessment and counseling. In addition, three agencies had a finding on assigning nutrition risk appropriately. Training in both these areas, including the updated VENA guidance is planned for 2023. Four agencies received findings for not fully satisfying the guidelines pertaining to race and ethnicity, primarily not explaining the purpose of collecting race and ethnicity information. An annual training was provided by the USDA in 2021 and it is available on LMS; the state office is updating that training in 2022-2023 with knowledge-based questions.

NUTRITION AND BREASTFEEDING GOALS FFY 2023

- Utilize the revised USDA VENA guidance to improve participant-centered nutrition and breastfeeding services (education and referrals) to pregnant, postpartum, breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five. Provide targeted training to local agency counseling staff. Utilize the Learning Management System (LMS) to provide consistent statewide training when feasible.

Objectives:

- To expand the nutrition and breastfeeding knowledge of local agency staff who provide education and counseling to WIC participants.
- To provide guidance and training targeted to incorporate revised VENA guidelines for nutrition education and breastfeeding support.
- To provide training and technical assistance on Motivational Interviewing and other participant-centered assessment tools

Activities:

- Survey local agency staff on topics on which they would like for training
- Establish a work group consisting of local and state agency staff to identify areas of need and best educational materials and presentations.
- Offer virtual training for counseling staff. The focus will be participant centered counseling for both Competent Professional Authorities (CPAs), lactation consultants and peer counselors.
- Develop at least one webinar on a subject that will assist local agency staff in providing improved service to WIC participants and post to LMS.
- Continue to update New Jersey WIC/DOH Nutrition and Breastfeeding webpages with current resources.
- Assist the individual who is at nutritional risk to achieve a positive behavior change resulting in improved nutritional status and prevention of nutrition-related problems through optimal use of supplemental and other nutritious foods. Training will focus on areas with the most common risk including overweight and obesity risk and oral health.

Objectives:

- Provide at least one statewide training to nutrition and breastfeeding counseling staff on motivational interviewing to help the participant develop a plan that will lead to behavior change in order to reach their goals.
- LA staff will recommend specific NJWIConline lessons during certification, recertification, mid-certification, and secondary education appointments that relate to the participant's nutrition risk and correspond with the nutrition education provided by the CPA. To assist with this, a webinar will be developed that focuses on the resources available to both staff and participants.
- Continue to reinforce the availability tools available on both LMS and NJWIConline as a resource for all local agency staff on eWIC to optimize participant buying experience.
- Review WIC risks and importance of assigning all applicable risks including those

related to medical documentation and need for exempt infant formula or WIC-Eligible Nutritionals. Include trainings that address the common risks including overweight and improper use of bottles/ cups and pacifiers.

Activities:

- Provide ongoing support/technical assistance on resources available through NJWIConline.
- Send WIC monthly newsletter to local agencies and WIC authorized vendors
- Provide targeted local agency trainings on EBT in the WOW system if issues arise.
- Be available to local agency for support regarding eWIC issues.
- Update NJ WIC website with accessible WIC education resources.
- Continue to update UPC data base.
- Update current Program Guide to adapt to eWIC.
- Encourage local agency staff to include plans to work with their local Farmers Markets and focus on fruits and vegetables in their Nutrition/Breastfeeding education plan.
- Provide nutrition and breastfeeding education with consideration of the ethnic, cultural, and geographic preferences of the participants as well as their educational and environmental limitations.

Objectives:

- To provide education materials in various languages to meet participant needs.
- To provide written materials that meet the literacy levels of the population WIC serves.
- To evaluate the recently launched updated NJ WIConline.org usage with the new voice option and need for additional languages.
- To provide retail store options via the WICShopper App.

Activities:

- Evaluate current or revised educational materials to make sure that reading level is 6th grade or lower.
- Continue to translate educational materials into various languages based on local agency needs assessments.
- Update NJWIConline.org as needed to continue to meet the needs of WIC participants.
- Local staff will promote WIC Shopper App during all WIC appointments.
- State New Jersey WIC website will be updated to include WIC materials and promote WIC Shopper App.
- Continue to promote, support, and protect exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and continued breastfeeding with the addition of complimentary foods for one year or longer as long as mutually desired by mother and child.

Objectives:

- Continue the Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program (offering mother-to-mother support).
- Increase lactation counselor contact with breastfeeding mothers through a texting application.
- Implement the new WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum with Module 1 for all WIC staff and Module 2 and 3 for CPAs.

Activities:

- Continue to offer Peer Counseling Training for new WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum for new staff
- Conduct a full day statewide in person or virtual Peer Counselor meeting to promote networking and update skills
- Encourage all agencies to implement texting applications or video platforms that are confidential and involve two-way, ongoing communications.

Objectives:

- Release the comprehensive Statewide Breastfeeding Strategic Plan (NJSBSP) to New Jersey stakeholders.
- Continue collaboration with stakeholder committee which includes the New Jersey Breastfeeding Coalition, State Departments, and programs, Maternal and Child Health Consortia, and non-traditional partners.
- Initiate a statewide marketing campaign in collaboration with SNAP-Ed.
- Create the infrastructure to begin to normalize breastfeeding in the State of New Jersey by collaborating with traditional and non-traditional partners.

Activities:

- Provide support for the implementation of the strategic plan.
- Begin implementation of plan.

EVALUATION

- Survey local agency staff regarding areas of interest and need for training.
- Conduct, review, and summarize training evaluations to determine additional or future training topics. Evaluations shall contain questions related to attitude, knowledge, behavior change, effectiveness, and applicability of the training. Ask attendees how they used the information, if they found it useful, and what they will take away from the training. Model and incorporate behavior change practices.
- Utilize NJ WOW and Adhoc reports to evaluate patterns and needs of nutrition education, referrals, and nutrition risk.
- Utilize redemption data to see what participants are buying and does it vary by certain demographics.

LOCAL AGENCY NUTRITION EDUCATION PLAN

Collaborations

Our local agencies continued and expanded on collaborations with SNAP-Ed, local hospitals, Head Start, Healthy Women, Healthy Families, their local Department of Health, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Family Success Centers, Maternal Child Health Consortium, Perinatal Cooperatives, and Sistahs Who Breastfeed support groups.

Interns and Students

Seven of our agencies reported hosting lactation, medical, dietetic, and public health interns, and students at their agencies. They all relate a positive experience, with interns crediting the experience with increasing their awareness of the positive aspects of WIC.

Nutrition and Breastfeeding Education

Remote secondary nutrition education continues to be offered and provided at all local agencies while most education is individual five provide group education and one has introduced cooking classes. Breastfeeding group education has transitioned to virtual for eight local agencies and continues to be well received. One agency consistently provides breastfeeding support groups, other agencies refer to their partners. NJWIConline or individual education are the more frequently chosen forms of secondary nutrition education.

Social Media

Eight agencies reported a focus on utilizing social media, including Facebook and Instagram. Three Sponsors of the local agencies include WIC updates on their websites or Facebook pages.

LOCAL AGENCY IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE PLAN (SNEP)

Review

Local agency coordinators, chief nutritionists, CPAs, and lactation consultants must review the Statewide Nutrition Education Plan (SNEP).

Agencies may adopt the plan in its entirety or use it as the base for development of a modified local agency plan.

Planned Activities or Events

Local agencies must include planned activities for National Nutrition Month, National Breastfeeding Month, and other significant events.

Evaluate

Local agencies submit the fillable evaluation form detailing optional activities, collaborative efforts, and innovative projects.

RESOURCES FOR STAFF

- To improve motivational interviewing skills, **Molly Kellogg's Step-by-Step: Client-Centered Skills for WIC Counselors**, is available to all staff. Counseling staff are required to complete at least one of the 5 units in FFY 2020: <http://www.mollykellogg.com/products/step-by-step-wic-log-on/> when prompted, enter the password: WIC cares.
- The **WIC Works Resource System** has resources for staff training, nutrition and breastfeeding education, and publications. WIC Works is a valuable source for State and local agency staff: <https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/>
- **WIC Breastfeeding Support: Learn Together, Grow Together** is a site for participants, family and friends, staff, and WIC partners: <https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/>
- For **oral health online resource**. [Department of Health | Children's Oral Health | About Us \(nj.gov\)](http://www.nj.gov)
- The Altarum tool kit for annual training on **customer service** and other WIC agency related topics: <http://wictoolkit.altaruminstitute.net/index.html>
- National WIC Association COVID-19 Resources: <https://www.nwica.org/covid-19-resources>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 Resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Learn the Signs. Act Early. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>
- New Jersey Department of Health WIC website: <https://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/wic/nutrition-breastfeeding/>
- For remote counseling, Telehealth.HHS.gov: how to get or provide remote health care: <https://www.telehealth.hhs.gov/>
- National WIC Association Webinars: [Webinars | National WIC Association \(nwica.org\)](http://www.nwica.org)