

ASSESSMENT OF

California Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program Goals for Federal Fiscal Year 2012

The major goals of the California WIC Program for FFY 2012 are to:

1. Fully utilize federal funds to support local agency program operations and food delivery systems via WIC authorized vendors and farmer's markets, including monitoring for program integrity and allocating funds as available to sustain caseload.
2. Complete planning efforts to implement new MIS and EBT systems in California.
3. Support local agencies and vendors in providing quality services through a variety of learner-centered modalities.
4. Effectively manage the vendor community and promote a positive and healthy shopping experience for WIC families and the general public by authorizing grocery stores that offer a full range of nutritious foods at competitive and affordable prices.

To accomplish these goals, the California WIC Program has established the following FFY 2012 program objectives:

Goal One: Fully utilize federal funds to support local agency program operations and food delivery systems via WIC authorized vendors and farmer's markets, including monitoring for program integrity and allocating funds as available to sustain caseload.

Objective I: Enhance program linkages with the California Department of Public Health, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Division (MCAH) to refine the use of data sources in order to maintain current participation and identify underserved but eligible populations.

Assessment:

In June, 2011, we provided all local WIC agencies with maps based on the 2009 birth file data identifying areas of unmet need. MCAH staff conducted hot spot analyses to identify statistically significant high areas of need in which a new site or expanded services might be needed. In July 2012, we provided local WIC agencies with updated maps based using the 2010 birth file data.

We hosted several training webinars for local WIC agencies on what the maps mean and how to use them. We also discussed ideas on how they could be used to help identify targeted unmet need. In addition, we conducted a webinar on navigating the American Community Survey information maps as well as the decennial census data maps to help local agencies gather more information about their communities including income, age, ethnicity and unemployment.

MCAH staff expanded the birth file (2010) data linkage this past year to include both infants and postpartum women in addition to prenatal women who were eligible for WIC but did not participate in the program. With the old linkage we would have been able to identify about 22,000 eligible non-participating individuals or 4.4% of all births. With the new linkage methodology we were able to expand the number to 30,000 eligible non-participating

individuals or 6.1% of all births, an increase of about 8,000 potential WIC eligible participants.

We oversampled both WIC eligible non-participants and WIC participants in the 2011 Maternal, Infant Health Assessment Survey (MIHA). This made it possible for us to collect valuable information on why people don't participate in WIC. This information will help us target outreach messages and activities.

In partnership with MCAH, we provided several presentations about using maps to identify unmet need including, the annual California WIC Association Conference, the annual National WIC Association Conference, the 6th Biennial Childhood Obesity Conference, the ESRI International GIS Users Conference and the Western Maternal Child Health Epidemiology Conference.

Objective III: Utilizing the Invitation for Bid process, select a manufacturer to supply contracted infant formula to vendors for WIC participants and to provide us a rebate for each container of formula purchased.

Assessment:

Our current rebate formula contract expires on July 31, 2012. A successful Invitation for Bid for rebated contract infant formula was conducted in late 2011. Separate solicitations were sought for milk-based and soy-based formulas. Bids for both types of infant formula were placed by three companies: Mead Johnson and Company, Gerber Products (Nestle), and Abbott Nutrition. Our current contractor, Mead Johnson and Company, won the bid for both types of formula (milk-based and soy-based), by providing the lowest total net cost per month. The winning bidder's rebate amounts were significantly higher than the current contract's rebate amounts, which will result in an estimated \$26 million increase in rebate revenue for the 2012-13 fiscal year.

The new agreement (contract # 12-10020) has been fully executed and will commence on August 1, 2012 and will expire on July 31, 2015. Upon expiration of the initial contract term, the contract provides the option for the parties to mutually extend for up to 24 additional months.

Goal Two: Complete planning efforts to implement new MIS and EBT systems in California.

Objective I: Conduct, submit and gain approval of the California State Feasibility Study Report for replacement of our MIS system.

Assessment:

CA WIC developed planning documents detailing the plan to replace the California MIS. Due to CA WIC's efforts to implement an EBT system, the completion and submission of planning documents to the USDA were put on hold.

Objective II: Secure a contractor to begin the Feasibility Study for implementing WIC EBT in California.

Assessment:

CA WIC released a Request for Offer (RFO) in November 2011, to secure a contractor to begin the Feasibility Study for implementing WIC EBT in California. Due to the receipt of only one bid, CA WIC revised the RFO to include soliciting bids from a broader pool of vendors. The revised RFO was submitted to the USDA for mandatory review. Upon receiving approval from the USDA, a new RFO will be released to secure a contractor.

Objective III: Develop and implement an online vendor application process to promote vendor use of technology as we move toward EBT.

Assessment:

During the National WIC Association Fall 2011 Technology Conference, attendees from CA WIC were able to take part in a demonstration of Pennsylvania WIC's Online Vendor Application system. After some technical discussion about the technology used for the web application it was determined that California could possibly utilize the software for our needs.

CA WIC and Pennsylvania WIC are working on a Memorandum of Understanding for the transfer and possible use of the system code in California.

Once CDPH ITSD receives the code, technical staff will analyze the configuration of the technologies and code to determine the feasibility of quickly integrating the system into our existing vendor web based portal. If the customization of the software will not work for CA WIC, a development process will be initiated to create a custom application within our existing vendor portal.

Goal Three: Support local agencies and vendors in providing quality services through a variety of learner-centered modalities.

Objective I: Complete second year and begin evaluation of online education.

Assessment:

During July 2011 CA WIC surveyed local agencies that were offering online education. Of the 38 agencies surveyed at the time, 29 (76%) responded. Agencies were asked to: (1) rate the enrollment process, staff assistance, materials, and lessons and (2) provide information on procedures, satisfaction, and suggestions for improvement. Overall, 86% of the agencies rated wichealth.org as either "excellent" or "good". In addition, participant satisfaction was perceived as "very satisfied" (38%) and "satisfied" (45%).

Currently 52 California local agencies offer online education through wichealth.org. To date, 71,486 participants have completed 122,869 lessons. With over 90% of participants in the early stages advancing at least one stage of change, participants indicate their intentions through such action statements as, *"It reminded me to give my child fruit. I don't give her enough fruit, so I'm getting some fruit today. It also reminded me to not force my child in eating food,"* and *"I will work on trying to be more active with my children and go walk to the park at least 3-4 days a week."*

Objective II: Implement Baby Behaviors training refresher course for staff and lessons for participants

Assessment:

A Baby Behavior workgroup consisting of local agency, UC Davis Human Lactation Center and CA WIC staff developed strategy and materials for implementation of the California Baby Behavior Campaign.

Baby Behavior implementation started with developing staff refresher trainings on Baby Cues, Crying and Sleep. All 84 local WIC agencies provided the refresher trainings to their staff between April and August 2011. Each module included a DVD, Facilitator's Guide, handout, PowerPoint presentation, worksheet, take-home activity and evaluation sheet.

In September 2011, CA WIC launched the Baby Behavior prenatal participant education curriculum throughout the state. Participant education is offered in the third trimester. The post-partum participant education has just begun and will be implemented state-wide by December 2012. Education for participants included a Baby Behavior Booklet and a Baby Behavior DVD for home support.

We are currently working with wichealth.org developing two online education modules on Sleep and Cues. These modules will be available in English and Spanish and are anticipated to be launched by August 2012.

Objective III: Promote breastfeeding as the norm by providing WIC mothers the support of Breastfeeding Peer Counseling throughout the state.

Assessment:

CA WIC has 50 well-established Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (BPC) Programs. Across the state there are 65 BPC Supervisors, 103 International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) and 224 Peer Counselors promoting breastfeeding as the norm and providing mother-to-mother support. CA WIC staff support these local programs by providing technical assistance in the form of on-site visits and regular contact through emails and phone calls. Local and state BPC staff meet bi-annually for breastfeeding training and networking.

Objective IV: Develop and conduct video conferencing-based training for local agency and vendors.

Assessment:

In March 2012, CA WIC began field testing the *New Employee and WIC Nutrition Assistant (WNA) Training* (NEWT) videoconference-based training modules. NEWT is designed for staff in the process of becoming WIC Nutrition Assistants, recently hired nutritionists and other new staff, and closely follows the content in the WNA Certification Modules. The NEWT modules are designed as half-day sessions for learners to immediately begin using their knowledge in the office later the same day.

The current sessions include:

- Session 1: *Let's Get Started - Orientation and Overview of WIC*
- Session 2: *Let's Get on WIC Part A - Certification*
- Session 3: *Let's Get on WIC Part B - Certification (Continued)*

- Session 4: *Let's Go Shopping - WIC Foods and Food Instruments*

To date, 35 local agencies have participated in the sessions. Responses to training evaluations were very positive. Staff found the training engaging and easy to follow and felt the material was valuable for new WIC employees. Over the next several months CA WIC plans to follow up with both learners and their supervisors to find out how well the training prepared them for WNA certification and their jobs.

Objective V: Conduct a statewide assessment of learner-centered education principles and practices that local agencies have adopted and sustained.

Assessment:

CA WIC incorporated a goal in the Nutrition Services Plan (2012-2014) to identify, pilot, evaluate, and implement minimum standards for participant-centered education (PCE) statewide. The goal requires local agencies to 1) assess their strengths and opportunities for improving the use of PCE, 2) develop, implement, and monitor a plan to sustain PCE, and 3) assist the state agency in piloting new tools for establishing minimum PCE standards.

In the first year, FFY 2012, local agencies used standardized tools to determine baseline PCE competency by observing individual and group education sessions. Based on these observations, local agencies completed PCE Learning Needs and Resource Assessment (LNRA) and Tool Pilot Surveys. The LNRA allows the agency to assess aggregate information obtained from observing their educators. The Tool Pilot survey offers local WIC agencies the opportunity to provide the state agency with feedback on the tools the state is piloting for standardization. Based on the observations and LNRA, local agencies will be prepared to develop a PCE Implementation Plan by September 2012 to improve and sustain PCE practices.

Goal Four: Effectively manage the vendor community and promote a positive and healthy shopping experience for WIC families and the general public by authorizing grocery stores that offer a full range of nutritious foods at competitive and affordable prices.

Objective I: Secure a contractor to revise the Peer Group and Maximum Allowable Department Reimbursements (MADR) methodology.

Assessment:

In FFY 2011, CA WIC solicited and received a proposal from the Agricultural Economists at the University of California, Davis. In FFY 2012, a scope of work was designed based on the major objectives identified in the proposal. Two of the deliverables in the scope of work are to recommend modifications to the current peer group system and to the statistical calculation of the Maximum Departmental Reimbursement (MADR) rates to further contain California's food costs.

On March 2, 2012, the California Department of Public Health entered into a contract with the University of California, Davis. The deliverable date to CA WIC for the recommended modifications to the current peer group system and to the statistical calculation of the MADR rates is July 2012. CA WIC will review these recommendations and send them to USDA by September 30, 2012. The anticipated implementation of these recommendations is in FFY 2013.

Objective II: Evaluate the revised authorization criteria introduced in the fourth quarter of FFY 2010-11 and modify further if necessary.

Assessment: CA WIC was not able to revise authorization criteria in the fourth quarter of the FFY 2010-11 due to time sensitive issues relating to vendor management. CA WIC is evaluating authorization criteria options and is working with CDPH and USDA on long-term solutions for vendor selection criteria.

Objective III: Design and implement a process for collecting shelf price data.

Assessment: CA WIC is currently working with CDPH-ITSD to develop a web-based application to allow authorized vendors to submit shelf prices for a defined market basket of foods as a way of monitoring food costs. The shelf price data collected will allow CA WIC to calculate and standardize a Market Basket Average Food Costs (AFC). Additionally, CA WIC researched and analyzed shelf price collection options. The short-term solution is as follows: In April 2012, USDA set the cost competitive measures at 15 percent above the competitive statewide average for 1-2 register stores and at 11 percent for the 3-4 register stores. Starting in July CA WIC will train Local Vendor Liaisons (LVLs) to collect the high and low shelf prices for a market basket of foods that are based on the most commonly redeemed food instruments, during their quarterly technical assistance visits. CA WIC will calculate the redemption value of the most common food instruments, using the average of the vendor's high and low shelf prices, and compare those redemption values to the April 2012, USDA MADR levels of 15 percent above the competitive statewide average for 1-2 register stores and 11 percent for the 3-4 register stores. When vendor shelf prices result in projected FI redemption values that exceed the MADR for their peer group, state staff will schedule the vendor for routine monitoring.

Objective IIV: Review and modify the vendor price competitiveness process to improve cost containment.

Assessment: CA WIC engaged a team of economists from the University of California, Davis to evaluate and provide recommendations on vendor price cost competitiveness and cost containment methodology. CDPH will work with USDA to fully implement those recommendations by September 30, 2012. Additionally, WIC has revised several processes to improve cost containment including, enhancing the process for reviewing of FI redemptions to determine a vendor remains cost competitive, strengthen the peer group re-assessment process and training LVLs to collect shelf prices.