PREPARING FOR WIC HILL EDUCATION DAY
(POLICY WEBINAR SERIES)
NWA THURSDAY WEBINAR SERIES
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PREPARING FOR WIC CAPITOL HILL EDUCATION DAY

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AGENDA

- Current WIC Policy Landscape
- Key Messages for Hill Day Meetings
- Preparing for Hill Day
LANDSCAPE OF WIC SERVICES AND POLICY

- Four key vehicles to discuss:
  - **FY22 Appropriations**: This process, reaching a decision by February 18, will guide the future of the WIC benefit bump for fruits and vegetables.
  - **Child Nutrition Reauthorization**: This process oversees program reforms to WIC and other programs. Key priorities, including postpartum eligibility extension and remote WIC services, are decided in CNR.
  - **USDA Rulemaking**: Legislators are closely watching upcoming rulemakings for the food package and online shopping.
  - **Build Back Better**: WIC-adjacent priorities are in limbo as Congress considers next steps on President Biden’s domestic agenda.
Annual appropriations process to fund discretionary programs is delayed by partisan disputes over federal spending.

Congressional Democrats sought substantial increases in domestic programs – including a $1 billion increase in WIC funding.

Two continuing resolutions – on September 30 and December 3 – extended federal funding and the WIC benefit bump.

Federal funding now expires on February 18. The process depends on a topline agreement for overall spending. Either the Agriculture Appropriations bill or a continuing resolution needs to pass to avert a government shutdown.
The WIC benefit bump is a **transformative step to improve health outcomes.** Even the small values of WIC’s pre-increase fruit and vegetable benefit increased dietary variety and reduced childhood obesity. Doubling down on this effective, science-based intervention will ensure healthier kids, mitigate chronic diet-related conditions, and reduce long-term cost expenditures.

**Added value enhances purchasing power for WIC families, improving local economies.** Redemption rates have held relatively stable since March 2021, indicating that WIC participants are purchasing more than triple the amount of fruits and vegetables. This allows families to introduce increased variety to children, such as stone fruits and root vegetables, while also driving sales at retail grocery stores that benefit the whole food supply chain.

The WIC benefit bump **encourages sustained participation.** In a survey of 6,500 participants across 5 State WIC Agencies, 83% said that the pre-increase benefits were “not enough.” With the WIC benefit bump, only 26% of participants echoed that sentiment. Added value, especially for children, can encourage retention for the duration of eligibility and deliver sustained nutrition support.

**Families can’t wait for clarity.** The uncertainty hanging over the WIC benefit bump is challenging at the participant and local level. Long-term clarity is needed to continue the increase!
CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION

- Limited window to advance a Child Nutrition Reauthorization through Congress before the 2023 farm bill process.
- Pivotal WIC reforms are delayed:
  - MODERN WIC Act (S. 3226): Allows for remote services beyond the pandemic
  - WIC Act (H.R. 2011/S.853): Extends postpartum and child eligibility
  - WIC for Kids Act (H.R. 4455): Streamlines certifications and extends adjunctive eligibility to Head Start, CHIP, and FDPIR
  - WIC Healthy Beginnings Act (S. 3216): Establishes a database of open infant formula bid solicitations
- Additional priorities include investing in breastfeeding, the WIC workforce, and online shopping; modernizing WIC FMNP; advancing nutrition education initiative.
We cannot delay a Child Nutrition Reauthorization. The impacts to participation will be severe if a fix for remote WIC services is not passed through Congress before the end of the pandemic.

WIC needs to strike the right balances to integrate remote services in the long-term. Deferred health assessments are leaving a gap in WIC’s nutrition counseling and public health work. Increased flexibility for families and greater collaboration with healthcare providers is the path forward to maintaining WIC’s public health character while unlocking remote services.

Extending WIC’s postpartum eligibility is a critical step toward addressing maternal mortality. Consistent nutrition support in the inter-pregnancy interval will set up future pregnancy success and address chronic diet-related conditions in the adult population.
Independent of Congressional action, USDA can revise program rules through a formal rulemaking process. Two comment periods are expected in April 2022:

- Revisions to the WIC food package
- Revisions to WIC vendor regulations to enable online shopping

Legislators are keen to understand the issues at play and their intersection with legislative processes.

Building excitement, especially for the food package changes, can contextualize the role that WIC plays in addressing broader public health priorities, including childhood obesity and maternal mortality prevention.
USDA RULEMAKING: FOOD PACKAGE

- Food package review, based on the 2017 NASEM report, could expand the value of the benefit and promote healthier options for WIC participants:
  - Permanent increase in fruit and vegetables
  - Increased access to seafood
  - Revised issuance, including sharp decreases in juice
  - Package size flexibility for grains and yogurt to encourage more options
  - Stronger nutrition standards, including for whole grains and sugars
- The high-level goal of the review is to align WIC’s offerings with 50% of DGA-recommended intake of priority nutrients across food groups.
USDA RULEMAKING: ONLINE SHOPPING

- WIC vendor rules contemplate an in-person shopping experience and haven’t even been fully revised to reflect EBT transactions
- USDA-funded pilot projects exploring online ordering platforms with Walmart (WA/MA), Hy-vee (MN/IA/NE), and Buche Foods (SD/Rosebud Sioux)
- Additional considerations:
  - Forms of vendors/virtual platforms that will be authorized
  - Authorization/monitoring process: state or national
  - Equitable access – coverage, stocking/substitutions, fees
  - Changes to WIC transaction – refunds/benefit months and developing technologies (mobile payments)
  - Healthy eating landscape and consumer privacy of online platforms
KEY MESSAGES FOR HILL DAY: USDA RULEMAKING

- The USDA rules, especially the food package rule, **need to move as soon as possible**. USDA delays are creating uncertainty as WIC providers implement temporary pandemic-related waivers to increase the fruit and vegetable benefit, provide additional package size options, and move forward online shopping pilots.

- **WIC must include a higher benefit to support health outcomes of the next generation.** For too many years, WIC providers have been limited from issuing all appropriated food dollars. Now is the time to expand the WIC benefit to provide more healthful foods to WIC families, especially in fruits, vegetables, and seafood.

- **Strong nutrition standards in WIC pave the way for healthier outcomes.** WIC has the strongest emphasis on healthy options among the federal food assistance programs, and WIC has delivered healthier outcomes, including reduced childhood obesity. We need to build on this success.

- **We need to build online platforms that will be accessible to the diverse WIC population.** Speed is of the essence to close disparities with SNAP households and other consumers, but we must be thoughtful of ensuring that a broad enough group of retailers are providing modern shopping models that are within reach for WIC’s low-income population, and particularly for rural and tribal communities.
Marquee legislation is considering revisions to account for opposition from Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV).

Key provisions are at risk of being left aside:

- $10 billion for school meals and summer feeding programs
- $3 billion in maternal health equity investments, including postpartum Medicaid expansion
- 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave
- An extension of the expanded Child Tax Credit, which has lifted millions of children out of poverty
**KEY MESSAGES FOR HILL DAY: BUILD BACK BETTER**

- WIC-specific provisions are moving in separate vehicles, but **WIC families would benefit from economic and social priorities included in the Build Back Better Act.** As the nation continues to navigate the pandemic, the tangible outcomes for families of provisions like the Child Tax Credit and paid leave cannot be ignored.

- **Economic and social priorities must be included in the bill, even if slimmed down.** There is discussion about limiting the Build Back Better Act to only climate provisions. With so few opportunities to move legislation, we cannot lose areas of broad consensus – like maternal health equity investments and child nutrition.
PREPARING FOR WIC HILL EDUCATION DAY
WHAT IS A WIC CAPITOL HILL EDUCATION DAY?

- Opportunity to educate and inform legislators about WIC in their districts

- Helps:
  - Build program support at the federal level
  - Build partnerships for outreach and awareness
  - Build strong relationships with members

- Legislators want to hear from YOU.
# EDUCATION/ADVOCACY VS. LOBBYING

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Lobbying Advocacy</th>
<th>Grassroots Lobbying</th>
<th>Direct Lobbying</th>
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<tr>
<td>Providing a Member of Congress with key messages about the importance of the WIC program, including how it plays out in your local community</td>
<td>Sending an email blast to a listserv with contact information for a legislator and stating your organization’s opposition to that legislator’s bill cutting WIC funding</td>
<td>Calling a Member of Congress or Congressional staff to vote for H.R. 424</td>
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<td>Inviting a Member of Congress to visit your clinic to meet participants and pose for photographs</td>
<td>Distributing flyers in WIC clinics asking participants to call their Member of Congress in favor of H.R. 424</td>
<td>Asking the governor to veto a budget bill if it includes a provision that would cut funding for breastfeeding promotion</td>
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<td>Tweeting out a guest blog post that you wrote including testimonials from WIC participants on the benefits of your peer counselor program</td>
<td>Tweeting to your network that they should call their Members of Congress in opposition to H.R. 424</td>
<td>Assisting legislative staff in drafting a bill that would streamline vendor approval processes</td>
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<td>Writing a letter to the editor highlighting how budget shortfalls have affected the administration of WIC initiatives</td>
<td>Submitting an op-ed to your local paper encouraging your community to write to the governor about a budget request for WIC</td>
<td>Emailing your legislator and expressing your opposition to provisions in the appropriations process that cut WIC funding</td>
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WHO ARE MY MEMBERS?

Find Your Representatives

Tell your representatives to support the increased extension to WIC’s Cash Value Benefit through Sept. 2022!

Street*

| |

Zip Code*

Submit
WHO ARE MY MEMBERS?

Federal House
Rep. Andrew Peter Harris
US Representative
Republican Party
Website

Federal Senate
Sen. Benjamin Louis Cardin
US Senator
Democratic Party
Website

Sen. Christopher J. Van Hollen Jr.
US Senator
Democratic Party
Website
WHO ARE MY MEMBERS?

Sen. Christopher J. Van Hollen Jr.
US Senator - MD
Democratic Party
Elected since 2014 (Next Election Date: 2022)

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Hart Senate Office Building
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2051 Constitution Avenue, NE
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Committees
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on Economic Policy
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, Environment, and Related Agencies
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on Finance
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
- Federal Committee Member, Senate Committee on the Judiciary
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WHO DO I REACH OUT TO SCHEDULE A MEETING?

- Call your member’s office or reach out to Noora Kanfash at NWA – nkanfash@nwica.org – if you need help identifying who the right staff person is from your legislators office.
  - Typically, we want to reach out to the staffer who works on Agriculture programs.

- Some folks may already have relationships w/their member’s offices so feel free to reach out directly.

- Please let Noora know with what offices you have been able to secure meetings.
To: Appropriate Staffer

Subject: Meeting Request – INSERT STATE ABBREVIATION WIC Providers

Draft Email Text:

Good morning/afternoon STAFFER NAME,

My name is INSERT NAME and I work for WIC PROGRAM NAME in Rep/Sen. NAME’s district. INSERT STATE NAME WIC providers will be participating in a virtual WIC Capitol Hill Education Day on February 17, following the National WIC Association’s WIC National Policy Conference.

Would you have any availability to meet (through Zoom or an alternative virtual platform) with our group of WIC providers during the aforementioned date?

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Kind regards,
MEETING PROTOCOL

- Who sends the meeting zoom/call-in line?
  - The staffer or you! If you are sending, be sure to confirm and sending the meeting call-in information in the email itself to the staffer, not just a calendar invitation.
  - If you don’t have a zoom line you can use, reach out to Noora to provide you with one.

- Length of meetings
  - Maximum of 30 minutes, likely shorter
MEETING FLOW

- Identify a meeting facilitator/lead ahead of the meeting
- Brief Introductions, highlighting constituents
- Lay out the agenda
  - Brief WIC overview
  - WIC Benefit Bump
  - Child Nutrition Reauthorization
  - USDA Rulemaking
- And remember it is a conversation!
QUICK TIPS!

- Share your experience.

- Check-in with meeting attendees prior to your meeting. Each attendee should have a unique role/perspective to offer during the meeting.

- Craft your message using data, storytelling, and do your research about who you will be meeting with.
KEY FOLLOW-UP MATERIALS

THE STATE OF WIC
HEALTHIER PREGNANCIES, BABIES, AND YOUNG CHILDREN DURING COVID-19

NATIONAL WIC ASSOCIATION
2022 CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION PRIORITIES
RESOURCES

- NWA Resources:
  - State of WIC Report
  - Find Your Representatives
  - WIC Action Network

- Brian Dittmeier
  bdittmeier@nwica.org

- Noora Kanfash
  nkanfash@nwica.org

- Food Package Resources:
  - CVB Increase Outreach and Advocacy Toolkit
  - WIC Benefit Bump Fact Sheet
  - Food Package Report

- Child Nutrition Reauthorization Resource:
  - Child Nutrition Reauthorization Priorities
  - Striking the Balance: Physical Presence Fact Sheet
  - WIC Act Fact Sheet

- Online Shopping Resources:
  - USDA Task Force report
  - NWA Working Group overview report