

WWA NEWS BREAK



In This Newsletter :

- 1 • Advocacy & Legislative Updates
• Annual Membership Meeting + Discussion
- 2 • Vote & Bylaw Updates
• Apparel Sale
• WIC Action Network
- 3 • Professional Development
• New WWA Calendar
- 4 • Call for Participation
• Scholarship
• Advocacy Opportunities
- 5-7 • Scholarship Recipient Conference Summaries
- 8 • Meet Your WWA Regional Representatives
- 9 • NWA Membership
• WWA Board
• Meetings & Minutes

Advocacy & Legislative Updates

How WIC Helps Wisconsin Report

Each year, NWA creates a state specific handout highlighting the impact WIC has on each state. Some of the report highlights for Wisconsin include: 36% of infants born here participate in WIC, 92,188 total participants, and 94% of WIC participants received Medicaid. To view the entire report, see the post on [WWA's website](#). The report is helpful to explain the benefits of WIC to many different entities, including legislators, community members, and local county boards.

Save The Date! Annual Membership Meeting + Members Discussion

The WWA Annual Membership Meeting and Discussion will be Thursday, September 18 from 11:30am - 1pm.

At this meeting, the WWA board will share activities and accomplishments from the past year. We will also hear how support to WWA Scholarship recipients to attend WWA conferences has helped them serve the WIC community. Lastly, an NWA Policy team member will join to discuss the current landscape and share how WIC staff can advocate for WIC in our community. The Membership Meeting portion of the meeting will be recorded for those that are unable to attend.

Following the membership meeting, WWA will hold the second member discussion this year. During this unrecorded portion, local agency staff have the floor to give ideas on how WWA can better serve our members and bring any concerns forward that local projects are experiencing.

WWA Member Action

Member Voting!

WWA needs your help to select two new At-Large Board Members for the 2025-2027 term as well as review and update the WWA Bylaws. We are proud to present four great applicants and some meaningful Bylaw updates.

Please review the Bylaw summary below (extended version available in the link) and the applicant biographies within the vote.

Bylaw Updates: Please review before July vote

The WWA Board reviews its bylaws annually to ensure they are meeting the needs of the board and members. The updates proposed this year focus on building capacity and partnership within the board through shared positions. View extended summary of changes [here](#).

Proposed changes summary:

1. Transition WWA executive committee structure from three Chair positions (Chair, Vice and Past Chair) to two, working as Co-Chairs. The change to co-chairs is a result from challenges to adequately fill the three roles in recent years. The co-chair model will share traditional Chairperson responsibilities between two individuals during a two-year, alternating elected term.
2. Update wording from “Treasurer” to “Co-Treasurer” to accurately reflect the change from one treasurer to two co-treasurers. The update includes a combined co-treasurer duties list to describe actual tasks. The shared role divides the work load and allows for two board members to conduct financial transactions.
3. Establish NWA Voting Members selection criteria. All States who have membership in NWA are allowed four local agency voting members for NWA elections. Previously, voting members were not specifically identified in Wisconsin. In collaboration with the State WIC Office, WWA has included criteria to identify voting members: representatives from WWA, NWA Midwest Regional Standing Committee, Nutrition Committee, and LACC.

Vote Here!

WIC Action Network

NWA holds a monthly call the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 2:30pm CST, sharing the latest updates on WIC Policy, legislative activity and advocacy opportunities. Meetings are open to all WWA/NWA members. Don't miss out – register today!

WWA WIC Apparel Online Store



You Asked... We Listened!

WWA is hosting an online store through Fox Cities Embroidery as an ongoing fundraiser for 2025.

The store will be open for an extended period of time. Individual orders are available or local agencies can submit orders that will be mailed directly to them. If you are interested in an order for your agency to be placed tax exempt, please reach out to the WWA board and we will connect you with the sales representative.

This [Store Flyer](#) shows new items available.



Professional Development

Lunch & Learn Series

In partnership with Waisman Center Registered Dietitian Mary Marcus, MS, RD, CD, LDN, WWA presents a virtual, three part series on nutrition topics relevant to WIC staff. The lunch & learn will be 30 minutes of education followed by a question and answer session. All sessions will be recorded and available for later viewing. WWA will not be pursuing prior approval for CEUs.

August 26, 12-1:00 pm : Beyond Picky Eating

Dr. Maria Stanley, MD, UW Waisman Center Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician and UW Department of Pediatrics Developmental and Genetics Division Chief will talk about pediatric feeding disorder, defined as impaired oral intake that is not age-appropriate, and is associated with medical, nutritional, feeding skill, and/or psychosocial dysfunction.

September 30th, 12-1:00pm : WIC Referrals, Advocating for Families, and the Role of Waisman Family Navigators

Erin Thomson, MSW, LCSW , UW Waisman Center Family Navigator and Clinic Coordinator for the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Clinics will speak on how to advocate and refer families to resources. They will discuss how family navigators at the Waisman center work with families and their role, referral process and resources available to families, including an overview of the Wisconsin Children's Resource Centers.

October 28th 12-1:00pm : How does WIC best partner with Clinical Dietitian Nutritionists and Specialty Care Providers?

Camila Martin, MS, RDN, CD, LDN, UW Health American Family Children's Hospital will discuss what happens when WIC clients are referred to a clinical RD, what a RD visit looks like, and how clinical RDs help families utilize WIC foods.



Waisman Center

Advancing knowledge of human development, developmental disabilities, and neurodegenerative diseases.

Featured Recorded Event: National Maternal Nutrition Intensive Course

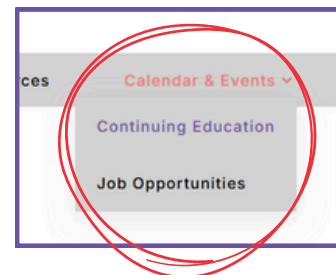
The MN School of Public Health will once again present its annual National Maternal Nutrition Intensive Course. Topics are very relevant to the work we do in WIC. WWA Board members have attended and recommend this event. Cost is \$35 with up to 7 contact hours are available for completion of the course.

The purpose of this activity is to enable the learner to:

1. describe ways that nutrition programs and services can improve maternal, fetal and child health outcomes;
2. discuss the effects of maternal and child eating behaviors and patterns on birth outcomes, infant and child health and development; and
3. identify characteristics of effective programs, services, outreach, research and evaluation needed to improve maternal, infant and child health, nutrition and food security.

Live dates were on July 15-16th but you can register for the fully online distance program [here](#) through December 31st.

New WWA Events Calendar



WWA has updated their website to include an events calendar. The calendar features live, upcoming events, including registration information.

WWA recognizes that live trainings can be hard to attend, so we also have included a whole page dedicated to on-demand. This includes a selection of ethics choices to meet the requirement for RD continuing education.

To stay in the loop of events, subscribe to the calendar at the bottom of the [Calendar & Events](#) [page](#).

If you have a live training or event that is relevant to WWA members, please send to Professional Development Chair Kim Damrow at Kim.Damrow@bayfieldcounty.wi.gov.

Call For Participation

NWA Midwest Local Agency Section Standing Committee

WWA is looking for a Wisconsin WIC staff member to attend monthly NWA Midwest Local Agency Section Stand Committee meetings. At these meetings, you will hear from and share with local WIC staff from surrounding midwest states. This position is also a voting member of NWA. If you would like to learn more about this role, please email the current committee member, Kim Damrow at Kim.Damrow@bayfieldcounty.wi.gov

Join a WWA Committee!

WWA has four committees supporting different aspects of the association. Please visit the [WWA Committees page](#) to learn about them and see which one would be a good fit for you! All the committees are currently accepting new members. If interested in joining a committee, please sign-up [here](#).

State WIC Associations

Did you know other states have WIC Associations? Monthly, Beth and Kim attend the NWA State Associations call where we learn about advocacy and challenges in other states. This newsletter, we are highlighting the California WIC Association. They have many free resources available to WIC staff as well as frequent newsletters you can sign up for. Visit their website [here](#).



Scholarship Opportunities

Scholarships are available for WWA members to pursue professional development opportunities that impact WIC. Apply for scholarships [here](#). Below are links to other organizations with educational opportunities. Scholarships can be used towards WIC sponsored and non-WIC sponsored events.

NWA's next conference is the [2025 Virtual Nutrition Education & Breastfeeding Conference](#), November 5-6th. Early bird registration ends September 10th.



Advocacy Opportunities



*Lobbying Activity, must complete outside of worktime.

INVITE YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS OR CONGRESSIONAL STAFF FOR A WIC CLINIC VISIT

NWA is here to help you with resources for your visits. NWA has a recorded webinar available to members so you can learn effective strategies for organizing these visits, engaging clinic staff, and using personal stories to educate Members of Congress on the importance of sustained support for WIC.

Learn more:
bit.ly/wicedu



HELP US COLLECT WIC MILITARY FAMILY STORIES

NWA is leading an advocacy campaign to collect stories from WIC staff and military families. Help share the campaign with your participants!

Spread the word:
bit.ly/wicmilitary



NWA Education & Training Conference Summary

I am writing to extend my gratitude for awarding me a scholarship to attend the 2025 NWA Annual Training and Education Conference. It was an incredible opportunity to learn, network, and bring back valuable insights to enhance our work in Wisconsin.

Thanks to your support, I was able to attend several impactful sessions. One of the most informative was the USDA Update, where we learned that WIC served approximately 6.70 million participants in FY2024—an increase of 2% from the previous year. Additionally, the program saw significant changes in food costs: FY2023 food costs totaled \$4.42 billion, averaging \$56.06 per participant per month (a 17.4% increase from the prior year), and in FY2024, food costs rose to \$4.91 billion, with a new monthly average of \$61.08.

Secretary Rollins staff shared program commitments that focus on customer service, enhancing program integrity, minimizing fraud, modernizing MIS systems, aligning dietary policies with current science and fostering farmer-nutrition program connections, and promoting policies that support both participants and taxpayers.

I also attended a session that focused on the WIC workforce. The session highlighted the financial burden of becoming a dietitian, including the estimated \$40,000 cost of a master's degree and the additional strain caused by the inability to use student loans for dietetic internships. Alarming, there was a 45.7% decrease in dietetic internship applicants in 2023. It is no wonder that it can be difficult to fill positions. In response, states are exploring dual enrollment programs in high schools with an emphasis of getting people in frontline WIC positions early and then offering career development opportunities to encourage long-term careers in public health.

I was proud to attend Kaila's presentation on ONE, where she showcased how WI WIC is leading in using this platform for nutrition education. Her session sparked interest from attendees who are currently using WICHealth, and who had many questions.

Another session that stood out focused on research done by the Michigan WIC Program on shopping behaviors among WIC participants in Arizona and Michigan. It revealed that highly redeemed food items in which more than 25% of the benefits were redeemed included milk, cheese, eggs, infant formula, fruits and vegetables and children's juice. Participants who shopped at multiple stores during the month tended to redeem more benefits, prompting questions: What motivates vendor shopping? Do clients with language barriers prefer smaller stores where they may receive more personal attention and are these clients able to redeem all their benefits? These findings offer valuable insight into how we can continue to improve access and equity for all WIC families.

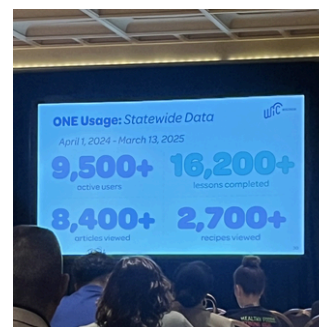
Thank you again for your generous support. Attending this conference has inspired me to continue advocating for and improving WIC services in our state.

Becky



**Becky Litwaitis, WIC Program Director
Southwest Suburban Health Department**

Becky Litwaitis is a dietitian and WIC Director with the Southwest Suburban Health Department. She's been working in WIC for over 25 years, dedicating her career to supporting maternal and child health through nutrition education and public health leadership. She has worked as a WIC dietitian, Breastfeeding Coordinator, Project Nutritionist, Health Project Coordinator, and for the past year, WIC Director. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with family (including 2 cats) and friends, traveling, and checking out new restaurants.



WI WIC presentation on ONE success at conference.
Submitted by Alex Forsythe.

NWA Education & Training Conference Summary

I was so immensely grateful to have been given the scholarship, allowing me to attend my first WIC conference. While I have been a RD for many many years, I am new to WIC so getting the opportunity to immerse myself in all things WIC was so incredible. I would say that is one of my biggest take aways from the conference and what stood out to me the most is the ability to be able to connect with others from across the country. While I am incredibly lucky to be in a region with amazing and strong WIC leaders who have been so supportive and open to mentoring, we don't often get the chance to connect that much and certainly not in person. Getting that opportunity not just with the wonderful presentations, but at each talk I was able to connect with other peers and discuss what things they were doing that worked and that didn't work and just overall learn so much more about operations across the nation. Having these connections after the presentations, at breaks, and while reviewing posters and visiting vendors was so invaluable and really created an environment for brainstorming and just opportunity to learn even more then the amazing presentation material.

I had the opportunity to attend several breastfeeding presentations which really allowed me as a director to think about what we were doing and how we may expand our practice to include other unique ways to not only reach our participants but also give them more services that may help them in their breastfeeding journey. I also got the opportunity to attend presentations on innovation and ways to streamline workload that again will be incredibly helpful when looking forward to helping staff in meeting the needs of our participants in the future while also attempting to prevent burnout of our staff. The presentations were well done and thoughtful and provided a great base to bring back to even our smaller project which I greatly appreciated.

Finally, it was so uplifting to be surrounded by colleagues and peers that are so committed to helping others in their community and the many that have been a part of WIC for years in what recently at times can be a stressful and challenging time. Seeing and feeling that was so heartwarming and hearing from those that had been in WIC and public service for years and how they had faced challenges in the past and moved past them and were even stronger was so inspirational and gave needed support and inspiration to bring back and keep helping our community.

Again, thank you for this most amazing opportunity.

Stacey

Interested in attending? This conference is held in the Spring each year. Watch for next year's date in future WWA newsletters and website.



Stacey Sadowski, WIC Project Manager/Director, Trempealeau County

Stacey is a registered dietitian with over 20 years of experience, primarily focused on clinical nutrition and nutrition support within hospital settings. In early 2024, she transitioned into public health as the Director of the Buffalo/Trempealeau County WIC Program in Wisconsin. This new chapter has been incredibly rewarding, allowing her to make a meaningful impact on community health and support families in a whole new way.



Las Vegas view at conference. Submitted by Alex Forsythe.

NWA Policy Conference Summary

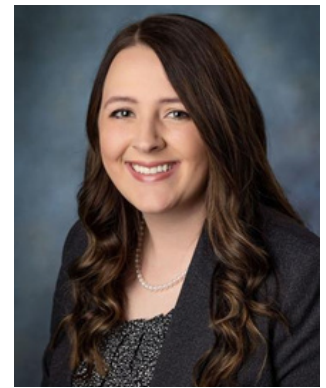
Attending the National WIC Association Policy Conference was incredibly valuable. The sessions and speakers helped me better understand and navigate these unprecedented times. Hearing national updates firsthand and connecting with other WIC leaders provided both perspective and clarity during a time of rapid change. Most impactful was the opportunity to meet with our local representatives and discuss the real-life impact of WIC in our community. Those conversations helped me see the power of advocacy and how our voices directly influence policy decisions that support the families we serve.

The Policy Conference also helped me gain additional insight into the political landscape and better understand the main challenges WIC is currently facing. (this) really set me up to be successful to meet with Congressman Tony Wied when he visited our agency.

I discussed the importance of FMNP, who we serve, and how doing appointments virtually helps us better serve our community. Since I was prepared from what I learned and experienced at the conference, he walked away supporting the WIC Modernization Act!



Jessica



**Jessica Sepers, MPH,
WIC Director
NEW Community
Clinic - Green Bay**

Jessica is the WIC Director at N.E.W. Community Clinic in Green Bay, where she has served since September 2024. She previously worked in Nebraska as the Health Officer for a four-county health jurisdiction. Before that, she was the WIC Director at the same agency, where she developed a strong foundation in maternal and child health programs. Jessica holds a bachelor's degree in foods and nutrition and a Master of Public Health. Her and her husband call Appleton home, where they spend weekends camping in state parks and exploring with their two dogs, Gus and Bailey. Jess is so happy that her path has brought her back to the WIC program!

Local Agency Advocacy Spotlight



Congressman Wied visits Northeast Wisconsin Community Clinic to learn more about the Green Bay based WIC program.

Spotlight - WWA At-Large Representatives



Alyssa Schiessl, At-Large Regional Representative
Wood County WIC - Program Assistant

"Being a part of WIC has given me the opportunity to support families in a meaningful way. Serving on the WWA board has provided me the privilege to help guide the program's growth and connect with others who share the same commitment. It's rewarding to contribute to a mission that makes a lasting impact."



Shawn Handfelt, At-Large Regional Representative
Grant County - Administrative Assistant

"I began working with WIC in October of 2010 as Support Staff. I enjoy WIC and the organization. All of the people I have met and have had the chance to work with is so rewarding. It's always a great feeling that we are helping families grow in many different aspects. Being a part of the WWA board is a rewarding, excellent experience from advocacy, program integrity and being a voice for our WIC families and program."



Heidi McCann, RDN, CD, CLS, At-Large Regional Representative
Oneida Nation - WIC Nutritionist Lead

"Working in WIC has been such a rewarding experience helping families build a solid foundation for healthy habits. I'm excited to be part of WWA where I can further expand that foundation and be a voice to support healthy lifestyles for the families we serve on a much greater level."



Marlena Oechsner, At-Large Regional Representative
Washington Ozaukee County WIC - Breastfeeding Peer Counselor

"WIC is such a wonderful organization and I feel so fortunate to be a part of a great team at my local project, but also as part of the WWA Board. There is great collaboration between members and it is always beneficial to share knowledge and insight into the trends in WIC and what other projects are experiencing. Learning from others on the board and being able to support members on my own team with what I have learned has been so rewarding."



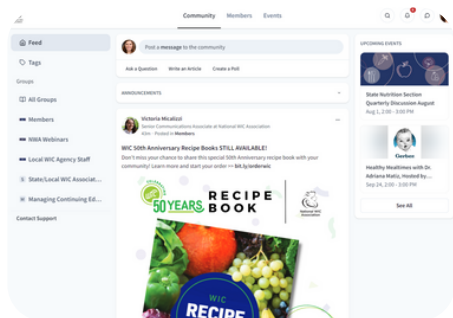
Beth Scheelk, MPH, RD, CD, CPH, At-Large Regional Representative
Outagamie County WIC - WIC Director

"Working in WIC as long as I have (25 years) I always appreciated everyone in WIC helping to raise the next generation of thriving kids. Joining WWA has provided me the opportunity to become more involved in the legislative aspects of WIC and advocating for not only the families but all the great people that work in WIC. I have been honored to Chair this organization and help to connect and educate WIC Staff across the state to continue to share the great work that WIC does everyday!"



Morgan Thums, RDN, CD, CLS, At-Large Regional Representative
Healthfirst Network WIC - Nutrition Coordinator

"I have had many opportunities to grow in my professional life through being on the WWA Board. I enjoy that it pushed me outside my comfort zone by becoming the Treasurer and being a part of the financial aspect of budgeting, event planning, and fundraising to name a few tasks. I also love that I have been able to work with so many wonderful WIC staff from across the state to promote the important work we do in WIC here in Wisconsin."



NWA Membership Information

Did you know all Wisconsin WIC staff are members of the National WIC Association? Here to [log in](#).

NWA has an online Member Community where you can connect and share with other WIC staff across the country and access webinars and other resources. Access the online member community [here](#). NWA website and Online Member Community use the same login information.

2025 WWA Board



Executive Committee

Chair: Beth Scheelk

Vice Chair: Vacant

Past Chair: Kim Damrow

Secretary: Rachel Bauer

Treasurer: Shawn Handfelt

Past Treasurer: Morgan Thums

Regional Representatives

Northern: Kim Damrow

Northeastern: Rachel Bauer

Southeastern: Alex Forsythe

Southern: Emily Seltzner

Western: Amy Richter

At-Large Representatives

Alyssa Schiessl

Beth Scheelk

Heidi McCann

Marlena Oechsner

Morgan Thums

Shawn Handfelt

WWA Meetings & Minutes

Board Meetings are open to WWA Members.
Upcoming meeting dates, times and link:

- July 24th, 2025, 12-1 pm
- August 24th, 2025 12-1 pm
- September 25th, 2025 12-1 pm
- October 22nd, 2025 - Annual Fall Board Meeting In-person

View Recent
Board
Meeting
Minutes
Here

