

## Chapter 7

### Participant and Staff Education

DRAFT

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## Overview

### Introduction

This chapter covers participant education and staff training. Nutrition and breastfeeding education are integral parts of the WIC Program. Continuing to integrate participant-centered services, including the conversational approach to assessment and utilizing projective, interactive tools, requires ongoing staff training, mentoring, and support. This support and training of staff shall ensure that appropriate nutrition and breastfeeding education is offered to participants in a way that best meets their needs.

### In This Chapter

This chapter is divided into four sections which detail nutrition education for participants, Nutrition Care Guidelines, High/Medium consults, and education for new and existing WIC staff.

## Section A

### Participant-Centered Nutrition Education for Participants

#### Policy

Participant-centered education (PCE) is a framework of providing nutrition services where the participant is the decision maker in the educational process based on their needs (e.g., risks, family situations) and interests. Participant-centered nutrition education shall be offered to all WIC participants utilizing the AZ WIC Nutrition Care Guidelines.

Nutrition education contacts shall be made available quarterly to all adult participants and the Authorized Representatives of infant and child participants certified. Nutrition education contacts shall be scheduled on a periodic basis by the local agency, but such contacts do not necessarily need to take place in each quarter of the certification period.

Nutrition education should be designed to emphasize the relationship between nutrition and health based on the needs of the participant and assist the participant in achieving a positive change resulting in improved health. All nutrition education activities are to be provided in the context of the participant's environmental and educational limitations, their interests, and cultural preferences with consideration as to where the participant is in the stages of change. The contact shall include the development of a nutrition care plan based on the nutrition assessment results and participant interests and a discussion of potential next steps for behavior change.

The WIC environment (including clinic, virtual, online, or phone services) where participants receive their services shall promote learning, and provide positive messages related to nutrition, breastfeeding, health, safety, and civil rights. However, individual participants shall not be denied supplemental food benefits if they refuse to participate in nutrition education activities. Refusal of nutrition education shall be documented in the Notes Section of the HANDS screen.

#### Local Agency Responsibilities

Local Agencies shall perform the following activities in carrying out their nutrition education responsibilities:

- Make nutrition education available or enter into an agreement with another agency to make nutrition education available to all participants and caregivers.
- Offer nutrition education through individual, group or self-paced online nutrition education sessions.
- Ensure that nutrition education is documented in each individual's record.
- Any nutrition education materials offered should be appropriate and permission obtained.

### Individual Nutrition Education Contact (With WIC Staff)

An individual nutrition education contact can occur in-person, over the phone, or virtually. WIC Staff shall engage the participant in a discussion related to their nutrition assessment and their interests. After the topic has been discussed, WIC Staff shall help the participant identify next steps or their goals based on their readiness for change.

- Staff shall complete a note for all clients on the same day the nutrition education is completed using the following the note structure:
  - G: Goals
    - If applicable, when a new goal is established.
  - I: Information
    - Any information that is pertinent to the interaction during the visit including goal status, education provided, updates
    - If applicable, WIC Codes that were identified and added as well as the information used to determine applicability
    - Changes to food package assignment
  - F: Follow-up
    - Any information that the staff person has identified as areas to follow up with at subsequent visits, including, but not limited to, information relevant to the participant's goals, referrals made, and/or additional items to discuss.
- WIC Staff shall document the type of nutrition education contact in the Care Plan screen by clicking on the Nutrition Discussion screen and selecting the contact type from the pick list.

**Note:** The nutrition education contact documentation shall be tailored per individual. Documenting the identical note in each participant's care plan in a family is not acceptable.

### Group Nutrition Education (Including WIC Your Way)

Participants may attend a facilitated group nutrition education session as a nutrition education contact. A variety of topics are available to offer families a session that is appropriate for their category or that is of interest to the WIC participant. Each group/topic shall have established, at minimum, goals and objectives. Once a participant attend a group nutrition education session, staff shall document the following in HANDS:

- WIC Staff shall document the type of nutrition education contact in the Care Plan screen by clicking on the Nutrition Discussion screen and selecting the contact type "Virtual – Group Nutrition Discussion" from the pick list.
- If the group consists of two or more families and the group title in HANDS reflects the nutrition education topic, individual TGIF notes are not required.

- WIC Staff shall provide and document “Exit Counseling provided” as a General Note to postpartum categories (EN, PN, PN+, P) before their Certification expires. See [Exit Counseling](#) below for additional information.

### Self-Paced Online Nutrition Education

WIC participants may be offered a self-paced secondary online nutrition education contact through the Arizona WIC Self-Paced Online Nutrition Education Program (SPONE).

When offering SPONE, Staff shall be familiar with the modules that are available and make suggestions based on the goals of the participant established during the initial Certification or Mid-Certification appointment. If no specific topic or module for that participant is available, staff shall direct participants to SPONE modules that pertain to their program category.

Self-Paced Online Nutrition Education is not an appropriate option if:

- There is missing documentation
- A participant\* requires a Certification or Mid-Certification;
- The AR’s primary language is not a language that the SPONE is offered; or
- The participant was assigned a High/Medium Risk code (and participant has not declined the HR/MR option).

\*Note: If a participant in the family *does* require a Certification or Mid-certification and another participant in the family is eligible for SPONE, the staff may offer SPONE for the participant(s) that *do not* require a Certification or Mid-Certification. In these cases, the staff shall explain to the family that services and benefit issuance shall be completed at separate times.

Upon notification of completion of a SPONE session, staff shall:

- document the session in the Care Plan by selecting the “Virtual - Self-Paced”
- document, at a minimum, the following with a General Note in HANDS for each participant:
  - Topic or Name of the Module
  - Date the Module was completed
  - Any additional important information (i.e. food benefit changes, unique circumstances, any additional questions answered and information provided, follow-up steps for the next appointment)

Note: Documentation that SPONE was completed shall not be scanned into HANDS.

## Exit Counseling

In addition to the provided nutrition education contact, WIC staff shall provide exit counseling to postpartum categories (EN, PN, PN+, P) before their Certification expires to reinforce messages about continued breastfeeding (if applicable), folic acid, immunizations for the mother and infant, alcohol, tobacco and drug use, and a well-balanced diet. The Arizona WIC Program has developed a handout ([ENG](#) / [SPN](#)) that can be used to provide exit counseling. Staff shall provide and document “Exit Counseling provided” as either a General Note or as part of their TGIF, SOAP, or ADIME Note.

Note: All applicable participants who successfully complete a Self-Paced Online Nutrition Education Module hosted by the Arizona Department of Health Services will automatically receive the Exit Counseling Handout upon completion of the module and the questionnaire that follows.

## Nutrition Education Materials

Nutrition education materials are designed as tools to reinforce nutrition education messages provided in a participant-centered setting. Nutrition education materials, by themselves, do not meet the requirements for nutrition education contacts. Current nutrition education materials provided by the Arizona WIC Program shall be accessed on [azwic.gov](http://azwic.gov) or ordered through [AZHealthZone.org](http://AZHealthZone.org). The State agency ensures materials meet required criteria:

- Accurate and relevant content based on current scientific evidence;
- Support PCE;
- Follow the Language of Health Style Guide considerations;
- Contain cultural considerations;
- Be available in alternate languages as appropriate;
- Does not promote required purchase to access information or products;
- Be at no higher than fourth grade reading level;
- Is applicable to the population WIC serves;
- The messaging support WIC initiatives and messaging; and
- Are a reasonable expense.

Note: State-developed materials shall also be provided to pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, and parents or caretakers of infants and children participating in Local Agency services other than the WIC Program.

There are several categories of nutrition education materials that the WIC program utilizes: handouts, outside resources such as websites and apps, outreach documents, and social media.

- Only State-provided or approved handouts shall be used to reinforce nutrition education provided to pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, and



parents or caregivers of infants and children. Local Agencies shall utilize state-provided or approved materials.

- Only approved websites from reputable organizations shall be used to reinforce nutrition education provided to pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, and parents or caregivers of infants and children. A list of reputable websites and organizations is available on AZWIC.gov.
  - If a Local Agency locates an additional resource for referrals, please contact the assigned Nutrition Consultant to have the organization reviewed and approved prior to providing information to participants. Reviews shall be conducted within 60 days and may be discussed at an upcoming Nutrition Services Workgroup meeting.
  - Reviews for approving organizational website and social media pages shall ensure the following criteria are met:
    - Accurate and relevant content based on current scientific evidence;
    - Support PCE;
    - Contain cultural considerations;
    - Be available in alternate languages as appropriate;
    - Does not require purchase for access to information or products;
    - Be at no higher than fourth grade reading level;
    - Is applicable to the population WIC serves; and
    - The messaging support WIC initiatives and messaging.
- Local agencies are encouraged to promote WIC and nutrition education messages through social media platforms to inform potentially WIC eligible individuals of the availability of the WIC Program, to explain the benefits of participation, and reinforce nutrition education promotional messages. Local agencies shall develop their own social media posts or utilize options available on the reputable websites from reputable organizations. Any local agency developed social media posts shall follow [WIC Brand Guidelines](#).

Any local agency developed messaging must meet the following required criteria:

- Accurate and relevant content based on current scientific evidence;
- Support PCE;
- Contain cultural considerations;
- Be available in alternate languages as appropriate;
- Be at no higher than fourth grade reading level;
- Is applicable to the population WIC serves;
- The messaging support WIC initiatives and messaging; and
- Are a reasonable expense.

## Monitoring of Nutrition Education

During Management Evaluations (ME), Local Agency Self-Assessments (LASA), or other site visits, the State and/or Local Agency staff shall monitor nutrition education contacts to determine if:

- Information provided is accurate and consistent with current WIC approved nutrition education materials.
  - Information is individualized to meet the participant's needs and interests, considers the education level, lifestyle and cultural beliefs, and readiness for change of each participant.
  - Participants receive positive feedback to reinforce good nutrition habits.
- Nutrition education materials shared are appropriate, State approved, and permission is obtained from the participant before being offered.
- Appropriate documentation of the type of nutrition education provided on the Care Plan Screen
- Detailed documentation of the contact in the Notes section in each individual's record
  - All documentation in HANDS reflects the participant's involvement and statements and not the sole direction of the counselor.

## Section B

### Nutrition Care Guidelines

#### Policy

Each Local Agency shall adopt and utilize the Nutrition Care Guidelines for nutrition education contacts in accordance with FNS guidelines. Using the New Employee Training Plan, staff shall be trained on nutrition in varying degrees and depth, depending on their responsibilities.

#### Nutrition Care Guidelines

The Nutrition Care Guidelines were developed with Local Agencies as a guide for staff to offer nutrition topics to women, infants, and children that may be of interest and relevant for their category.

The guidelines shall be used as a resource for staff to improve their understanding of the nutrition needs of WIC participants. The guidelines provide guidance to staff when conducting nutrition assessments, providing nutrition education, and facilitating behavior change.

## Section C

### High/Medium-Risk Consults

#### Purpose

Participants identified to be at higher risk and have counseling needs beyond the scope of paraprofessional staff benefit from more in-depth counseling provided by a Registered Dietitian (RD) / Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN), State Approved Nutritionist, or a WIC Nutritionist/Nutrition and Dietetic Technician, Registered (NDTR).

#### Qualified Staff

Each Local Agency shall provide a RD/(RDN to perform high-risk counseling, formula authorization and, as necessary, Certification of clients proportional to the agency's needs/caseload.

If a Local Agency has a hardship and is unable to provide a RD/RDN for high-risk counseling, they shall request prior approval from the State to designate a WIC Nutritionist/NDTR to provide high-risk counseling. This request shall be in writing and include a description of the hardship and the qualifications/résumé of the person that shall be designated as the State Approved Nutritionist.

**Note:** Previous WIC and/or community health experience, and/or a Master's degree in a related area are desirable.

#### Policy

The Arizona WIC Program stratified the risk codes to medium- and high-risk. The RD/RDN or State-Approved Nutritionist shall see all participants meeting one of the high-risk criteria outlined below during their current Certification period.

In lieu of an RD/RDN, a/an:

- WIC Nutritionist/NDTR shall see participants meeting one of the medium-risk criteria during their current Certification period.
- International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) shall counsel participants with risk codes 602/603 if those are the only applicable high-risk codes.

The participant shall receive up to three months of Food Benefits between the Certification and the high-risk nutrition visit (RD/RDN/State Approved Nutritionist, IBCLC) per Local Agency discretion.

## High-Risk Criteria

The following high-risk codes shall be seen by the RD/RDN/State-Approved Nutritionist. The Local Agency may include additional high-risks as deemed necessary. These codes shall trigger the red High-Risk icon in the Care Plan and Active Record in HANDS.

### [Arizona WIC High Risk Codes](#)

## Medium-Risk Criteria

Medium risks may be seen by a RD/RDN/State-Approved Nutritionist, or WIC Nutritionist/NDTR:

### [Arizona WIC Medium Risk Codes](#)

## Documentation of High or Medium Risk Education

The High-Risk Care Plan shall be documented for all high- and medium-risk participants in HANDS in the Notes screen with the ADIME/SOAP note type ([Comparison](#)) or an equivalent professional format. It shall include, at a minimum, assessment and plan.

## High-Risk and Medium-Risk Referral

Each Local Agency shall develop written procedures for staff referrals for participants with a high- and/or medium-risk to an appropriate RD/RDN/State-Approved Nutritionist/WIC Nutritionist/NDTR. Participants shall receive assessment and education by a RD/RDN/State-Approved Nutritionist/WIC Nutritionist/NDTR for each Certification period where a high-risk or medium risk is identified respectively.

Note: Nutrition status is reassessed at each Certification. If the same high-risk or medium risk is identified as the previous Certification period, the participant still requires a referral for the evaluation and follow-up by the RD/RDN/State-Approved Nutritionist/WIC Nutritionist/NDTR.

## High-Risk and Medium-Risk No Show

High-Risk and Medium-Risk participants shall receive monthly issuance of food benefits until they meet with the RD/RDN/State-Approved Nutritionist/WIC Nutritionist/NDTR.

## High-Risk and Medium-Risk Refusal

Participants who decline High- or Medium-Risk appointments shall be issued up to three months of Food Benefits. The declined service shall be recorded on the Notes screen in HANDS.

## High-Risk and Medium-Risk Follow-Up

The RD/RDN/State-Approved Nutritionist/WIC Nutritionist/NDTR discretion shall be used to determine whether to continue to see the participant or to refer the participant back to the WIC Staff.

If the previous high-risk or medium-risk condition was deemed stable, no longer applies, and/or does not require further intervention from a RD/RDN/State-Approved Nutritionist/WIC Nutritionist/NDTR intervention, the RD/RDN/State-Approved Nutritionist/WIC Nutritionist/NDTR shall:

- change the red High-Risk Heart icon in the Care Plan in HANDS to green;
- provide in the Notes screen in HANDS a nutrition care plan with specific criteria for referral back to the RD/RDN/State-Approved Nutritionist/WIC Nutritionist/NDTR, if needed.

The Local Agency shall develop written procedures providing the WIC Staff with guidance for referral back to the RD/RDN/State-Approved Nutritionist/WIC Nutritionist/NDTR, as needed.

## High-Risk and Medium-Risk Monitoring

The Local Agency shall monitor and evaluate their internal procedures at least two times per year to ensure that participants needing the referrals were seen by the appropriate personnel.

## Section E

### Education for WIC Staff

#### Policy

The Arizona WIC Program considers well-trained, competent staff essential to providing quality nutrition services. Local WIC programs shall ensure that staff is appropriately trained to perform functions according to policy. Local program staff shall complete State training modules and requirements as appropriate for their position. Local program staff shall demonstrate an adequate level of competence in performing their tasks.

#### New WIC Staff Training Requirements

Local WIC program staff shall complete the appropriate training modules, guidebooks, and other required activities for their position using the [Arizona WIC New Employee Training Plan](#).

- Local Agencies that choose to develop or send staff to an alternative New Employee course shall ensure that all established course competencies are met ([Competencies](#)) . Course curriculum shall be submitted to the State Agency Nutrition Consultant for approval prior to implementation of attendance.
  - Not applicable to Civil Rights, Voter Registration, or Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality

Note: New Employee Training courses shall apply toward Continuing Education Hours after the initial Federal Fiscal Year of hire.

#### Local Agency Training Coordinator

The Training Coordinator, as defined in Chapter 1, shall ensure all Local WIC Agency staff is trained in a timely manner in compliance with policy, as Training Lead for their agency.

The Training Coordinator shall be trained by the WIC Director or Nutrition Coordinator and receive orientation to the Training Coordinator's role and responsibilities by the WIC Director, Nutrition Coordinator, a member of the State WIC Training Team, or from their State WIC Nutrition Consultant. All Training Coordinators shall:

- Be Competent Professional Authorities (CPAs) as defined in Chapter 2
- Have completed and satisfactorily passed all training requirements and modules to which they are assigned prior to training other staff.

The Training Coordinator or designee(s) shall:

- Develop a training plan for new employees that includes completion of State and Local Agency training requirements (New Employee Training Plan)
- Develop a plan for continuing education for existing employees to include any mandatory State and Local Agency training requirements
- Maintain a record of, at minimum, New Employee and the required WIC Continuing Education training completion for each individual staff member
- Establish an ongoing plan for Local Agency Self Assessments for all employees to ensure continued acceptable job performance
- Complete all required observations and chart reviews for the staff as indicated in the New Employee Training Plan and the Local Agency Self-Assessment section.

Note: These activities will be evidenced by the successful completion of New Employee Training for new WIC Staff, Continuing Education by existing WIC Staff, as documented on the staff training record and completed LASA forms. This shall be reviewed at the ME.

### Blended Learning

The Arizona WIC Program utilizes blended learning for new and existing employee training. Blended learning includes guidebooks, which outline required activities, and the learning management system (LMS), which is a web-based software used for delivering, tracking, and managing training/education. The purpose of the LMS is to be able to provide and track both online (e-learning) and instructor-led training to internal and external WIC staff.

### Local Agency Self-Assessment, Mentoring, and Evaluation

Local Agencies are required to conduct, at a minimum, one self-assessment on employees that provide direct client services in years they are receiving a State ME, and two self-assessments in years without an ME. [LASA Schedule](#)

Local Agencies have the option of either observing staff conducting an entire Certification or only observing specific portions of the Certification, depending on the staff's job duties. If observing an entire Certification, in order to comply with Separation of Duties requirements, Local Agencies may indicate on the Cert List for Audit Report that an observation and chart review were completed and the name of the staff member who completed them.

At the time of the observations and chart reviews for staff, the Local Agency shall provide one-on-one mentoring to staff that shall include feedback and guidance in a positive way, following the ME Certification Observation Form and accompanying rubric as well as the Chart Review Form.



If staff do not demonstrate adequate competency during ongoing observations, State technical assistance visits, or MEs, the State shall require an additional individualized training plan for the employee(s). In addition, the State shall limit access to HANDS if staff do not show adequate competency.

**Required observations and chart reviews:**

- Observations of one complete Certification or Mid-Certification for each primary category (any one woman, one infant, and one child) including anthropometric and hematology components;\*
- Observations of one non-Certification or Mid-Certification nutrition education contact for each primary category (any one woman, one infant, and one child);\*\*
- Chart reviews of Certifications for:
  - 1 infant client
  - 1 child client
  - 1 pregnant client
  - 1 breastfeeding client
  - 1 postpartum client

\*If the Local Agency chooses to only observe specific portions, certain components of the Certification may not be required, depending on the staff member's regular duties (e.g., anthropometric, assessment, income, etc).

**WIC Continuing Education Plan**

Local Agencies shall provide a minimum of 24 hours of WIC continuing education to all WIC staff after the first Federal Fiscal Year of hire, spread throughout the year and be given quarterly, at a minimum. Both State-provided in-person training and State-provided curriculum administered at the Local Agency level can be counted toward the continuing education requirement, unless otherwise indicated.

At least six hours of nutrition education. Examples include:

- Nutrition Risk and Assessment
- Nutrition Through the Life Cycle
- Counseling
- ACES
- Trauma Informed Care

At least six hours of breastfeeding education. Examples include:

- Breastfeeding Assessment
- Common Breastfeeding Concerns
- LATCH-AZ
- WIC Breastfeeding Boot Camp
- Breast pumps, Milk Storage, etc.

At least six hours of WIC-related education. Examples include:

- Food Benefits
- Customer Service
- Local Agency ME Preparation/Corrective Action
- HANDS
- Referrals

At least an additional six hours shall be used to meet the needs of the individual Local Agency. These hours can be focused on one or more of the categories listed above.

### Required Annual WIC Training

Within 30 days of hire and each federal fiscal year thereafter, all WIC employees are required to complete:

- Civil Rights
- Voter Registration
- Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality

Note: These courses may be counted toward the annual continuing education requirement for WIC related education.

### Training Alternative: Interns

Due to the established competencies, WIC staff that are participating in the Maricopa County Dietetic WIC Track Internship (MCDPH WIC Track Dietetic Interns) fulfills the minimum required 24 hours of continuing education through the internship program during the federal fiscal year that they are primarily in the program.

MCDPH WIC Track Dietetic Interns shall complete the required annual WIC training.

MCDPH WIC Track Dietetic Interns shall complete the Stage 4b/c new employee training, which fulfills the LASA requirement for the internship year. This may be completed during or immediately following the completion of the internship.

### Documentation of WIC Training

Each Local Agency shall maintain current training records of all employees including new employee education and continuing education provided to each individual staff for each federal fiscal year. This includes documentation of trainings facilitated by Local Agencies, as well as documentation of trainings received/completed by each staff member.

- Consider using the pre-ME Training Log as this shall be required to be completed and submitted prior to the LA ME. [Tracking Log](#)

## Agency WIC Training Documentation

Current training files for each continuing education training provided by a Local Agency for each fiscal year shall include:

- Name of training provided
- An agenda or outline of the training
- Breakdown of education hours by category
- Location of training
- A list of all WIC staff members that participated in the training
- Names of trainers who facilitated the training
- Dates and time spent in training

## Staff Member WIC Training Documentation

Current training files for each WIC staff member shall include:

- Documentation of completed new employee trainings as outlined in the New Employee Training Plan.
- Documentation (including the date, name of training, location, time spent in training, category of training for each fiscal year) of completed continuing education trainings.
- Documentation of all completed Local Agency Self Assessments (LASAs) for each fiscal year.

## Section F

### Program Incentives

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) allows the State, when funds are available, to purchase incentive and outreach items for WIC. The State permits Local Agencies to purchase incentive items with prior approval by completing a [Request to Purchase Incentive Items form](#).

Incentive items are allowable for three purposes: outreach, breastfeeding promotion, and nutrition education.

#### Breastfeeding Promotion Incentive Items

Program incentive items for breastfeeding promotion and support shall include the following:

- Has a clear and useful connection to promoting and supporting breastfeeding among current WIC participants
- Either conveys information that encourages and supports breastfeeding in general, informs participants about the benefits of breastfeeding, or offers support and encouragement to women to initiate and continue breastfeeding
- Has value as breastfeeding promotion and support items that equal or outweigh other uses
- Be distributed to the audience for which the items were designed
- Costs are reasonable and necessary

#### Nutrition Education Incentive Items

Program incentive items for nutrition education shall include the following:

- Be targeted to participants
- Has a clear and useful connection to particular WIC nutrition education messages
- Either convey enough information to be considered educational or be utilized by participants to reinforce nutrition education contacts
- Has value as nutrition education aids that equal or outweigh other uses
- Be distributed to the audience for which the items were designed
- Costs are reasonable and necessary

## Outreach Incentive Items

Outreach Incentive Items Program incentive items for outreach shall include the following:

- Contain a WIC-specific message that targets the potentially eligible population
- Be seen in public
- Has value as outreach devices that equal or outweigh other uses
- Includes WIC contact information such as the state or local agency name, website, address and/or telephone
- Constitutes or show promise of an innovative or proven way of encouraging WIC participation
- Cost is reasonable and necessary

Some examples include calendars that contain important nutrition education messages and refrigerator magnets with nutrition or breastfeeding information on them.

For breastfeeding specific guidance, refer to Chapter 19. For guidance related to the Non-Discrimination Statement on program incentive items, refer to Chapter 9.