

# BEST PRACTICES IN WIC/CACFP CROSS PROMOTION



**D.C. Hunger Solutions**

Ending hunger in the nation's capital

## INTRODUCTION

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides nutritious supplemental foods, nutrition education and counseling, and screening and referrals to other health and social services to low-income women, infants, and children.<sup>i</sup> The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides reimbursement for healthy meals served to children and infants in childcare centers and homes.<sup>ii</sup> These two programs often serve the same population (low-income families, infants, and young children) creating a unique opportunity to cross-promote between the programs. This guide outlines best practices for optimizing cross-promotion of WIC and CACFP.

## INTERAGENCY MOU'S

To facilitate outreach and referrals, DC WIC should have a partnership or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement with relevant state agencies and programs that are focused on early education settings including Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE), the Department of Human Services (DHS), and DC Medicaid.<sup>iii</sup> Key partners for reaching children in early care and education settings include agencies and programs administering Head Start and Early Head Start (responsible agency – OSSE), child care subsidy programs (responsible agency – DHS), Pre-Kindergarten (responsible agency – OSSE), and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (responsible agency – OSSE). *See Figure 1.*

A recently updated federal MOU between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families and USDA's Food and Nutrition Service encourages the relevant state agencies to promote each other's programs and to make referrals. In addition, the MOU encourages agencies to share statistical, medical, and eligibility information regarding participants to the extent that confidentiality policies permit. Childcare centers and homes using CACFP are required to distribute WIC outreach materials to families at their childcare centers. In addition, DHS which administers child care subsidy programs must invite a representative of OSSE and can invite a representative of WIC to participate in the statewide planning committee.

## **TRAIN CLIENT-FACING STAFF ON FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

Client-facing staff are important links in the information exchange between families and support services. They have the ability to assess a family's needs and provide relevant information and conduct referrals to potentially beneficial programs. Examples include SNAP and CACFP referrals at WIC clinics; SNAP and WIC referrals at CACFP childcare centers; WIC and CACFP referrals at SNAP outreach events and administrative offices. When information comes from a trusted WIC nutritionist or childcare center educator, families will be more likely to enroll in programs and benefits.

However, in order to provide quality information and referrals, staff must have an understanding of these support programs. Agencies and programs should educate and train staff on all relevant support services including but not limited to WIC, CACFP, SNAP, TANF, child care subsidies, and Head Start. Agency representatives and community partners offer staff training on these programs. Centers and clinics can make use of these resources to ensure staff are equipped to meet the needs of clients.

D.C. Hunger Solutions provides a toolkit for childcare centers and homes that outlines the steps to train client-facing staff and implement outreach strategies.

## **IMPROVE DATA SHARING TO TARGET WIC-ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS**

Often, families are eligible for many programs but are not taking full advantage of them all. This could be due to awareness or misconceptions that an individual or household cannot be one two programs concurrently. Agencies should do a better job targeting eligible individuals and families by improving data sharing procedures. Facilitated by a clear and direct interagency MOU (explained above), agencies can use shared data to conduct targeted outreach for a variety of programs. During outreach, they also can clarify any misconceptions on dual-enrollment in programs. Examples of data sharing include:

- DC Health can share Medicaid data with DC WIC clinics and CACFP childcare centers;
- WIC enrollment data can be shared with CACFP childcare centers to identify WIC-eligible yet not participating families
- Head Start – DC WIC data sharing agreement can allow WIC to share nutrition assessment data and Head Start to share its parent data

## UTILIZATION OF CACFP IN FAMILY SHELTERS

CACFP can be used in homeless shelters to provide evening, weekend, and summer meals along with meals during school breaks to children 18 and under. The use of CACFP in family homeless shelters ensures children and infants have access to nutritious meals during periods of housing instability. Additionally, CACFP utilizes federal funding for meal as opposed to local dollars so that more can be invested in transitioning vulnerable families to more permanent housing and providing wrap-around support services.

Family shelters also have the opportunity to connect residents with programs like WIC, The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps), and Medicaid so that all supports are in place as the family transitions to more permanent housing.

### Questions?

**Contact D.C. Hunger Solutions – [info@dchunger.org](mailto:info@dchunger.org) – (202) 640-1088 – [www.dchunger.org](http://www.dchunger.org)**

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<sup>i</sup> United States Department of Agriculture. (2019). Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) – About WIC. *Food and Nutrition Service*. Accessed on January 31, 2019. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/about-wic-wic-glance>.

<sup>ii</sup> United States Department of Agriculture. (2018). Child and Adults Care Food Program (CACFP). *Food and Nutrition Service*. Accessed on April 19, 2019. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program>.

<sup>iii</sup> Food Research & Action Center. (2019). *FRAC Report: Making WIC Work Better: Strategies to Reach More Women and Children and Strengthen Benefits Use*.

# SUPPORTING GOOD NUTRITION FOR MOTHERS & YOUNG CHILDREN



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## EARLY CARE & EDUCATION



### Office of the State Superintendent for Education

#### ★ Early Care & Education

- Child care center providers
- Family child care home providers
- **BENEFITS:** early education, childcare subsidies

#### ★ Child & Adult Care Food Program

- State agency staff
- Home visitors
- **BENEFITS:** nutrition standards, training, and reimbursements for healthy meals and snacks

Mothers & Young Children

### Dept. of Human Services

#### ★ SNAP

- Caseworkers
- **BENEFITS:** food

#### ★ SNAP Ed

- Nutrition educators
- **BENEFITS:** nutrition education

## FAMILY SUPPORT



## HEALTH



### DC Health

#### ★ Health Care

- Physicians
- Pediatricians
- Nurse practitioners
- Mental health professionals
- **BENEFITS:** medical care, disease screening, mental health services

#### ★ Public Health

- WIC
- Nutritionists
- Dietitians
- Breastfeeding support
- **BENEFITS:** supplemental foods, nutrition counseling, and referrals to health care

## KEY

Communication regarding eating at ECE

Food/Meals

Nutrition education

Nutrition counseling