

**OUTREACH
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**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
WIC PROGRAM
POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL**

**Policy and Procedure Number: 1.00
Effective Date: October 1, 1996
Revised Date: February 27, 2023**

SECTION: OUTREACH

SUBJECT: Local Agency Outreach

A. POLICY

1. Each local agency shall be responsible for conducting outreach activities within its respective service area.
2. The local agency shall annually prepare an Outreach Plan and submit it to the State Agency for approval.
3. The State Agency will identify the required content and provide written guidance as well as selected demographic data to assist in developing the plan.

B. PROCEDURE

1. Each local agency shall give highest priority in outreach activities to the following categories of potential participants:
 - a. Women in the early stages of pregnancy;
 - b. Migrants;
 - c. The homeless.
2. The local agency shall identify and contact agencies and organizations that have contact with significant numbers of potentially eligible persons to facilitate appropriate referrals (refer to Policy and Procedure 2.39) and integration of services. These agencies and organizations shall include, but not be limited to:
 - a. Health and medical organizations;
 - b. Hospitals;
 - c. Public assistance offices, including Medical Assistance (MA), Food Supplement Program, and Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) services;
 - d. Public and private social service agencies with special concern for foster children and children receiving protective services;
 - e. Foster parents groups;

- f. Advocacy groups for the target population;
 - g. Food banks;
 - h. Homeless Shelters;
 - i. Programs for teenage parents;
 - j. Organizations providing services to alcohol or drug abusers;
 - k. Organizations providing services for special population subgroups such as Limited English Proficiency (LEP), migrants, and the homeless;
 - l. Employment service offices;
 - m. Breastfeeding promotion groups;
 - n. Religious and other community organizations in low- income areas
 - o. Affordable Care Act community organizations; and
 - p. Home visiting organizations.
3. Local agencies operating in or having cooperative agreements with hospitals shall inform potentially eligible inpatients or outpatients about the program and certify them within the hospital to the extent possible.
4. Outreach materials developed by local agency staff shall be submitted to the State WIC Office for approval a minimum of one week prior to the local agencies requested deadline.
5. Outreach activities to promote the benefits of WIC participation shall include, but not be limited to:
- a. Issuing news releases and stories; outreach materials and communications to organizations serving WIC-eligible populations and individuals;
 - b. Telephone calls, visits, and in-service training sessions with referral groups;
 - c. Public speaking engagements with other agencies and organizations;
 - d. Participation in local health fairs;
 - e. Working with prenatal care providers and others to assure enrollment as early as possible for pregnant women;
 - f. Scheduling clinics at places and times convenient for employed individuals and residents in rural areas; and
 - g. Website and social media content.
6. The availability of program benefits shall be publicly announced by the local agency and/or the State Agency at least annually through outreach materials containing at a minimum, the following information:
- a. Explanation of program benefits;
 - b. Eligibility criteria;
 - c. Address or telephone number to contact for further information; and
 - d. Non-discrimination statement.

Outreach materials shall also be in appropriate foreign languages in areas where a substantial number of people speak a language other than English.

7. All outreach activities shall be documented.
 - a. All outreach efforts shall be documented on the Local Agency Outreach Activity Log, Attachment 1.00C. The file shall contain information on all speaking engagements, contacts, news releases, etc. This log shall be kept by month and submitted as an attachment with the Annual Outreach Plan.
8. The Local Agency Annual Outreach Plan shall be submitted to the State no later than July 31, and follow the outline in Attachment 1.00A and be enumerated as such.

Attachments

- 1.00A Local Agency Outreach Plan
 - 1.00B Self Assessment of Local Agencies
 - 1.00C Local Agency Outreach Activity Log
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Revisions:

- 01/05 Changed "Outreach Coordinator" to "WIC Office" in B(4) and deleted "news release" requirement for Outreach Announcements B(6)
- 01/05 Deleted Attachment 1.00C – renamed Attachment 7.65A
- 01/09 B(2)(c) Changed Food Stamps to read Food Supplement Program
- 10/10 Combined Migrant Outreach Report Attachment 1.00D to be included in Attachment 1.00A Local Agency Outreach Plan
- 10/10 Added section describing Outreach Log and created Attachment 1.00C
- 10/14 Revised Policy Section A to make policy objective broader, and outreach priority in B(1)(a) to "Women early in Pregnancy", (k) in B(2)
Added (o) and (p) to B(2), time requirement to B(4)
Revised documentation requirements in B(7), and language related to Annual Local Plans in B(8) and require that all local agencies follow the SFY Annual Template
Removed B(9) the detailed Migrant report
Revised Attachment 1.00A Local Agency Outreach Plan to reflect changes in policy, added more details related to partner activity, requirement to attach copies of outreach logs and reports, community assessment, and customer service training.
Changed Attachment 1.00C from an Event Log to an Activity Log
Added Attachment 1.00D Local Agency Event Report
- 10/15 Updated the footer of 1.00D to reflect Nicole Slater as new contact

- 03/19 Revised Attachment 1.00A to clarify goals for outreach report
Updated the footer of 1.00D to reflect Ernest Le as new contact
- 08/21 Revised Attachment 1.00C to update logo
Removed Attachment 1.00D
- 02/23 Revised Attachment 1.00A to make expectations more explicit

LOCAL OUTREACH PLAN
SFY _____

Local Agency _____

Person Completing the Plan _____

Person Responsible for Implementation _____

I. Year in Review.

- A. Review your outreach plan from the previous year. List the outreach activities that you planned for this year (regardless of whether those activities actually took place or not).
- B. Which outreach activities were you able to do and which were you unable to do? Discuss any difficulties that you had.
- C. Evaluate the success of these outreach activities. In particular, describe whether these activities allowed you to get in touch with these eligible populations:
 - 1) Women in the early months of pregnancy
 - 2) Migrants
 - 3) The homeless
- D. Did you conduct any outreach activities which were not listed in last year's outreach plan? List them below and discuss their effectiveness.
- E. List partners with whom you have worked and/or contacted this past year. Indicate new partners. How did you maximize outreach with these partners?
- F. Indicate the status of any cooperative agreements with hospitals and describe related outreach efforts.
- G. Describe how you made your annual outreach announcement.
- H. If you have not been submitting Outreach Activity Logs every month, attach them here.

II. Outreach Plan. Write short paragraphs on the following areas describing your plan/activities for the upcoming State Fiscal Year.

- A. Describe your community and the process for assessing their needs as relative to your outreach goals.
- B. Based on your community assessment, what activities will you implement to increase enrollment? Give the target population for each activity with estimated dates for implementation.
- C. Describe special outreach activities that will be targeted to reach and enroll eligible:
 - 1) Women in the early months of pregnancy
 - 2) Migrants
 - 3) The homeless
- D. List new and priority existing partner organizations that you will be targeting this year.
- E. Indicate any anticipated addition or change in cooperative agreements with hospitals and describe related outreach efforts.
- F. Describe plans to train staff regarding outreach and customer service as related to participant retention. Include any other special activities aimed at participant retention.

Outreach Activities: Self-Assessment for Local Agencies

How do you reach the largest number of potential eligibles as easily as possible?

That's right! By doing **outreach activities** in your community. Outreach involves the community in the work we do. Outreach encourages the community to refer new eligible customers into our clinics for **WIC** services. Remember, we only succeed when customers come to **WIC** and use our services.

Outreach activities include direct outreach to potential customers as well as activities, which strengthen referral networks between **WIC** and other community services. You know best what type of outreach will work for you and your clinic--what meets the needs and population of your local community. But some outreach activities appear to work well in most communities. Check yourself to be sure you've covered the basics!

1. Have you assessed your community?

Ask yourself these questions:

- (a) Where are your potential eligibles?
- (b) Where in your community can you most likely reach pregnant women, pregnant teens, babies and young children?
- (c) Are you reaching all ethnic groups in your community?
- (d) Are you making special efforts to reach special groups within your community?

For example: Do you outreach to migrant or seasonal farm workers?
Homeless women and children?
Pregnant and parenting teens?

- (e) Have you conducted an outreach campaign specifically targeted at one of the following: a local military base, your community hospital, and a large industry/factory employing women at a minimum wage?

2. Have you created a community resource list?

The agencies and services listed below should be contacted at least once annually and more frequently if possible. Be sure that the eligibility workers and client advocates know about **WIC**, and that they are referring their customers to the **WIC** program. Answer their questions! Be sure to give them your name and the address and phone number of all your **WIC** clinics. Be certain to provide these groups with **WIC** materials that include your address, telephone number and basic eligibility guidelines.

Also, post a large map of your city, town or county and indicate the location of other agencies, shelters, emergency food pantries, other **WIC** clinics and as many services as you can include. This helps **WIC** customers visualize where services are available and make contact.

Agencies to include in a community-resource guide, and to contact:

- . TCA, Food Stamps, medical assistance programs
- . Child-support enforcement
- . Community physicians who take Health Choice patients
- . Credit counseling
- . Developmental screenings/Early Childhood Intervention
- . Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT)
- . Educational opportunities
- . Emergency food pantries
- . Family planning services
- . Free and reduced price school lunch programs
- . Head Start
- . Housing services
- . Job banks
- . Licensed child-care facilities
- . Literacy and tutoring programs
- . Community agencies, which provide parenting classes
- . Schools, community agencies that provide parenting for pregnant teens
- . Medical and dental services
- . Migrant-health services
- . Services for children and infants with special needs (children with developmental disabilities, genetic disorders, chronic illness, exposed to drugs perinatally)
- . Shelters for battered women
- . Shelters for homeless families/homeless women and children
- . Substance abuse programs (inpatient or outpatient)
- . Summer lunch program
- . Foster parent programs
- . Protective services or child welfare authorities

3. Have you talked/brain stormed outreach ideas with staff?

Everyone who works for **WIC** is responsible for outreach. The appointed outreach coordinator "coordinates" outreach activities, but must have everybody's support and hands-on assistance to be effective. Talk about what you can do within the clinic to improve the **WIC** customer's experience. Satisfied customers are more likely to bring in new participants.

4. Do you talk to your participants?

Ask staff to ask participants to talk about **WIC** to friends and family members who may be eligible for benefits. Put up a sign in the **WIC** clinic, which encourages participants to bring in new eligibles.

5. Are you contacting women who have missed their WIC appointment? Are you encouraging them to return to WIC?

Have your most diplomatic and understanding staff member contact the participant, and make it easy for her to return.

6. Have you arranged referrals with prenatal clinics?

Some local agencies station a **WIC** staff member in large prenatal clinics to make appointments for **WIC**. Make sure that you visit with prenatal nurses and remind them to please refer their customers to **WIC**. Be certain they have **WIC** materials to give their patients. Even if you are co-located, be certain to ask for referrals. With time and turnover, referrals may be overlooked.

7. Have you visited with eligibility and case workers at local Food Stamps, TCA, and social service offices?

Remember, most families receiving these benefits will also qualify for **WIC**. In many communities, this is the fastest, easiest way to get to the largest group of eligibles. Offer to provide in-service training for caseworkers and be open to receiving information about their programs. The best way to get referrals is to give referrals. Make certain that all **WIC** customers receive a direct referral to TCA, Food Stamps, and medical assistance programs.

8. Are you providing WIC information and encouraging referrals from other health programs' staff?

Contact and discuss **WIC** services and referrals with other health programs' staff, such as immunization nurses, regional nutritionists, maternal child health staff, community and migrant health workers.

9. Have you contacted physicians who see patients receiving Health Choice?

Pay special attention to the **office staff and nurses** of obstetricians, pediatricians and family practitioners. Remember to let each physician know the location of the **WIC** clinic closest to his or her office. Offer to provide materials, posters and referral forms. You may want to send thank you notes to the physicians who refer to **WIC**.

10. Are you making personal contact and designing a way of referring all Head Start participants to the WIC program?

Head Start programs usually have a registration fair just before the school year begins. It's a great time to make appointments for **WIC**.

11. Are you remembering to reach out to working women?

Remember to share **WIC** eligibility information with city and county employees or other large employers in your area who employ women. Many may be eligible for **WIC** services.

12. Have you contacted community midwives and given them WIC information for their customers?

You may wish to send a letter or postcard, which informs them about WIC services and gives your number if they want to have materials provided for their customers.

13. Remember to visit with childbirth educators.

Childbirth preparation classes offer a wide range of materials to expectant parents and often have a nutrition component. This is an excellent opportunity to include information on the **WIC** program. Be sure to inform the educators regarding the benefits of WIC participation, including the information and support available for breastfeeding mothers. Check with your local hospital or local obstetricians to see who offers childbirth preparation classes in your community.

14. Do you talk with local hospital staff about WIC?

Talk with social workers, OB nurses and emergency room nurses about WIC and ask them to refer potential clients. Leave materials with your name and address and telephone number so you can be easily reached.

15. Are you providing WIC information to staff at day care centers and licensed family day care homes in your community?

The staff will likely know who may qualify for **WIC**. Encourage them to put up posters where their clients will see them, so families have an opportunity to consider if they are eligible for **WIC** and call for more information. Names and addresses of childcare centers are available from the State Agency.

16. Build partnerships with churches and synagogues in your community.

Religious organizations are usually supportive of the **WIC** Programs. Because such organizations have community outreach programs of their own, they may have ways in which they can assist **WIC** in addition to referring potential participants. Be

certain that churches have **WIC** materials to give to families seeking assistance.

17. Contact local shelters and food assistance programs for homeless families and battered women.

Remember to include the Salvation Army, and emergency food-assistance centers, food banks and soup kitchens. Ask for their assistance in referring to the local **WIC** agency. Do not assume that they know about **WIC** or the eligibility requirements. Volunteer staff and counselors should receive information on the **WIC** Program. All shelters should have information about the **WIC** Program to give to their clients.

18. With permission from grocers, place WIC posters and materials at your local WIC vendors.

Our vendors are a valuable resource. Please check with vendors about placing outreach materials in their stores. Usually privately owned stores are more receptive to placing materials in their stores. Large vendors (e.g. Giant, Weis, etc.) may only allow a small poster on their community bulletin board.

19. Review appointment schedules for evening and or Saturday hours.

Take a moment to review your hours of operation. The working poor are in need of our services but may not be able to take advantage of them because of the agency hours. When conducting targeted outreach to the employed, emphasize the availability of evening and or weekend hours.

20. Check listing in local phone directory.

Looking for someone or someplace? Usually the first place you go is to the phone book. Please take a moment and check your local phone directory to see if the phone number listed for the WIC Program is correct.

Potential Outreach Activities

Use this list as a starting point for conducting outreach to record on your activity log.

- Breastfeeding Support
- Bus Advertisements
- Calls or mailings about missed appointments
- Church Sponsored Events
- Community Organizations serving low income
- Dental Providers
- Department of Social Services
- Email Marketing or Advertising
- Faith & Community Partners
- Food Banks
- Foster care
- Head Start
- Health Department Sponsored Event
- Homeless Shelters
- Letters or Calls to Physician Offices
- Letters or cards sent to participants (Birthday, Celebratory)
- Limited English Proficiency Organizations
- Links to WIC Web Site
- Magazine Advertisements
- Mail Advertisements
- MCHP
- Medical Assistance
- Migrants / Farm worker Organizations
- Military
- Newspaper Advertisements
- Other Advertisements
- Outreach Materials Mailed (General)
- Participation in Health Fairs, Community Day, Festivals, etc.
- Participation with Farmers' Market
- Posting information in Clinics for participant viewing
- Programs for Teen Parents
- Protective Services
- Radio Advertisements
- Radio Outreach
- Schools
- SNAP
- Staff Meetings
- Substance Abuse Programs
- TCA
- TV Advertisements
- Unemployment Offices
- Visits or Information provided to Hospitals / Clinics
- Visits or Mailings to Licensed Child Care Providers

**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
WIC PROGRAM
POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL**

**Policy and Procedure Number: 1.10
Effective Date: October 1, 2012
Revised Date: July 13, 2021**

SECTION: Outreach

SUBJECT: Social Media – Creation of WIC Local Agency Accounts

A. Policy

The term “social media” encapsulates web-based and mobile communications that facilitate the development of social and professional contacts, sharing information, and cooperation on joint activities. Social media is specially designed to exchange user-generated content.

The WIC Program utilizes social media to promote the Program, make information and resources easily accessible, and to develop a virtual community for WIC staff and clients.

Local Agencies may create social media accounts. The following procedures shall guide the development and maintenance of such accounts.

B. Procedure

1. Creation of social media accounts is optional.
2. Local Agencies shall consult with their local Health Department or parent agency for guidance prior to creating social media accounts.
3. All social media accounts shall be created with the assistance of the Communications Team at the State WIC Office.
4. The information provided through social media accounts shall align with the vision and mission of the Maryland WIC Program and present a unified message on behalf of the Program.
5. Each Local Agency shall designate an Account Administrator (individual responsible on behalf of the Local Agency for the creation and administration of accounts) and a Content Moderator (to assist the Account Administrator in the daily monitoring of the account).

6. The Account Administrator and Content Moderator shall have a thorough understanding of public and privacy settings and the guidelines of each social media site. Also, be familiar with the available applications and web-based communities.
7. The Account Administrator must diligently investigate the social media tool, its capabilities, and structure its account accordingly.
8. Social Media accounts shall be restricted as described in Attachment 1.10A
9. A publicly available account shall be monitored continually, as described in Attachment 1.10 A.
10. Each account should have a strong password with 8 characters or greater and uses a combination of letters, numbers, and symbols.
11. Posts should be focused on WIC-related topics from reliable sources where proper credit is provided to the author. All content should be refreshed as needed, with a minimum of weekly. For best practices, see Attachment 1.10B
12. All photos uploaded onto social media applications must have accompanying photo releases for each individual that appears in the photograph. These releases must be stored on file with the Local Agency.
13. All other policies and procedures that apply to computer usage, confidentiality and privacy issues, apply to social media accounts. (P&P 7.40; P&P7.41)
14. Maintenance of WIC accounts is permitted on WIC provided computers. However, administrators and moderators should not open their WIC accounts to other applications as this may compromise the security of the account.
15. All questions shall be referred to the Communications Team at the State WIC Office.

Attachment(s):

1.10A Account Restrictions
1.10B Best Practices

References:

P&P 7.40 WOW Information Systems Usage
P&P 7.41 WOW Information Systems Security

Revisions:

March 2019	Revised Attachment 1.10A to clarify communications that are prohibited on social media
8/15/2019	Revised to note change to 1.10A allowing communication with Facebook users.
7/13/2021	Updated Attachment 1.10A to incorporate modern media Updated Attachment 1.10B to incorporate new social media best practices and reflect that Maryland WIC no longer has a Twitter account

Social Media Account Restrictions

Social media account restrictions and responsibilities are contingent upon the platform in which they are administered and should be followed accordingly.

1. Interaction with State Social Media Accounts

- a. The Maryland WIC Program is on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The State Program's accounts for Facebook and Instagram are @MDH.WIC, and the YouTube account is MarylandWIC.
- b. Every Local Agency which has an account on Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube shall follow the Maryland WIC Program's account on the same platform.
- c. Local Agencies may create accounts on other social media platforms which the Maryland WIC Program does not have a presence on as long as they inform the State Agency and receive permission.

2. Communications with the Public

- a. Local Agencies shall not discuss any participant's individual circumstances, either in public on social media or through a private message.
- b. A Local Agency shall not initiate private communication with any individual person on social media unless that person has specifically invited that communication.
- c. If any individual person wishes to discuss their circumstances, the Local Agency shall give out their phone number and encourage that person to call.

3. Branding

- a. A Local Agency shall use imagery and branding on social media that is consistent with the guidelines set out by the State Agency.

Best Practices for Social Media Use

How can you maximize the potential impact of your social media platforms?

A variety of strategies are needed to capitalize on the endless possibilities created through social media avenues. Successful social media strategies recognize the importance of engaging the target audience with a cohesive inviting approach.

1. Share content from credible sources only!
2. Cultivate a friendly, welcoming, and authentic tone in your communications.
3. Be brief. Users on social media like to scroll through a lot of content and will probably only spend a few seconds looking at what you put up before moving on.
4. Content which you have created yourself will get more attention than content which you have shared from other sources.
5. Do not get into extended back and forth conversations with others on social media. If someone makes a false statement, make a factual correction with a citation to a credible source and do not engage further.

Social media is the new path towards an engaged community. What are you waiting for? Get connected!