QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



REGISTER TODAY!

Join us for the WIC Association of New York State Conference – a must-attend event packed with CEU credits, networking opportunities, and engaging sessions to support and inspire your work!

Dates: April 28-30, 2025
Location: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Albany, NY

Don't miss out — register today!

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JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT DOH/BOD TAKEAWAY MEETING!

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9TH 1-2PM

The WIC Association of NYS (WICANYS) is a nonprofit organization that supports and advocates for the Women, Infant and Children in New York. Our advocacy efforts work towards improving the policies that improve maternal and child nutrition.

Every other month, the WICANYS holds a meeting with the State Department of Health to support this effort. Our goal is to strengthen the WIC program, ensuring better health outcomes. Our strategy to improve communication and engage our membership is to provide Talking Points from our meeting.

We hope you will join us!



Legislative Update

Immediately after the National WIC Association's annual policy conference at the end of February, our Legislative and Public Policy Committee held virtual meetings with key NYS Members of Congress who serve on the House Appropriations Committee and the Committee on Education & the Workforce (the two House committees that have jurisdiction over WIC), and other Members of Congress who's districts' included local WIC agency directors who responded to one of our statewide invitations weeks before and shared with us they would participate in meetings. In total, nearly 20 local WIC providers and WICANYS Board advocates met with staff leads in Senator Schumer, Leader Jeffries (NY-8), Rep. LaLota (NY-1), Rep. Langworthy (NY-23), Rep. Tenney (NY-24), and Rep. Morelle (NY-25) offices. We continue to engage other offices where we were not able to get a meeting, and again invite your voice.

We invited local agencies who serve counties in their districts to join and share some priority information about their WIC program. In this critical moment, our united education and shared examples revolved around these key areas:

- Full funding for WIC to ensure that every eligible individual who seeks WIC services can receive them, as has been the bipartisan commitment for 30 years.
- No disruption of the implementation of the long-awaited and science-based revised WIC food package.
    - Last year, USDA updated WIC's food package for the first time in about a decade, aligning it with current nutrition recommendations and offering more flexibility and choice for participants. These updates take time and money to implement and therefore we ask that any final appropriations package respect the integrity of the final updated package (states are about ½ way through their 2 year implementation process). While some further changes may be beneficial to the participants, the fact is that making any changes to the revised food packages could lead to administrative delays, confusion among participants, and logistical challenges for state and local agencies tasked with implementing WIC guidelines.

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- Establish permanent virtual service options/ MODERN WIC Act, introduced by Reps. Fitzpatrick and Bonamici (H.R. 1464)/Sens. Gillibrand and Marshall (introduction date TBD).
  - This bill would create permanent virtual service options, allowing 90 days after initial certification for the collection of health metrics, either in person or transmitted from a healthcare provider. (Without a permanent fix, the currently temporary remote services under a USDA waiver will expire in September 2026.)
  - We are thrilled that as of this writing, Rep. Morelle has signed on as a cosponsor due to our advocacy.

From the deluge of concerns in DC these weeks, it is clear that Now is a critical time to amplify our voices and ensure WIC families receive the resources they need to thrive. **We must make sure decision-makers hear from us loud and clear.**

We shared with offices how while WIC participation has grown nationwide about 7% since 2020, NYS participation has grown 25%, now serving ~450k New Yorkers (NYSDOH estimates only 66% of eligible population). While there are differences between counties, the 25% increase is about the same for NYC overall and the rest of state (ROS) overall. And we shared Members' district counties' local participation during the same timeframe, emphasizing where appropriate when local agencies are fully serving and well over their target caseload but the unmet need is so much greater. We have far to go for WIC to reach all eligible families with its long-proven public health services.

In follow-up to the meetings, and with other Members of the NYS congressional delegation, we have shared some written thoughts WIC participants have sent to WIC staff that helped personalize all the issues we discussed.

PLEASE keep those participant (and staff!) comments coming, use the NWA's toolkit and stay tuned for future invitations to share about your WIC program with Congressional offices.

Please contact us at wicassociationofnys@gmail.com if you would like the follow-up emails we sent to offices so you could use them as templates to directly communicate with and educate your Representatives.

On behalf of Your Legislative & Public Policy Committee,

- Lauren Brand, Director, Stony Brook WIC Program
- Misha Marvel, Manager for Early Childhood Nutrition Policy & Engagement, Hunger Solutions New York
- Danielle Nicholson, WIC Director, Society for the Protection & Care of Children

Advocacy Corner



In early December, your Legislative & Public Policy Committee advocated to NYS DOH Commissioner Dr. James McDonald for additional funding to help brace local agencies as you have welcomed and shouldered significant growth in participation while maintaining near flat funding since the 2016 contract cycle.

Here's the letter we sent to Gov. Hochul for including some additional investment in NYS WIC in the proposed FY2026 Executive Budget.



On February 25, we are grateful that 150+ partner advocates from around the state carried WIC's needed funding message to Albany, while we were participating in the NWA policy conference.

Take a look at the leave-behind



In Celebration of National Nutrition Month®

Thank You, WIC Nutrition Staff!

Introducing the WIC Community Innovation Outreach (CAIO) Project Awardees for New York

QUEENS COMMUNITY HOUSE (QCH)

Queens Community House (QCH), one of the borough's largest social service organizations, is pleased to announce that our proposal was selected for funding for Round 2 of the WIC CIAO project. QCH is excited to be part of innovative outreach strategies to increase awareness, participation, and benefit redemption in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

WIC is a federal nutrition program that provides healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding counseling and support, and health care and social service referrals for eligible pregnant and postpartum individuals, infants, and children up to age 5.

WIC participation has proven to combat many negative health outcomes linked to food insecurity. Parents and children enrolled in WIC have demonstrated healthier births, improved birth weights, reduced risk of infant mortality, better infant-feeding practices, more nutritious diets, better access to primary and preventive health care, healthier neighborhood food environments, as well as improved cognitive development and academic achievement in childhood.

Queens Community House's Queens Childcare Network (QCCN) is dedicated to supporting working families and childcare providers. Through our QCCN program, we aim to increase awareness and participation in WIC, especially among immigrant and non-citizen families in Queens.

PROJECT GOALS include:

1. **ENHANCING AWARENESS** - By providing culturally relevant information and outreach, QCH's QCCN will mitigate misinformation and increase trust within immigrant and non-citizen families.
2. **COMBATTING BARRIERS TO WIC** - QCH's QCCN will collaborate with trusted community partners to develop multilingual materials and more inclusive environments for WIC participation.
3. **CREATING "WIC AMBASSADORS"** - QCH's QCCN will recruit and train our childcare providers and parents to develop a sustainable network of community leaders to promote WIC enrollment.

OPEN DOOR FAMILY MEDICAL CENTER

Open Door Family Medical Centers, a two-time recipient of the WIC Community Innovation and Outreach (CIAO) Project grant, has been awarded additional funding to strengthen connections between WIC and Head Start programs in the metro region. Open Door is one of only two organizations in New York State to receive funding in this highly competitive second round of the CIAO project, which awarded $14.8 million nationally to support innovative outreach strategies for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

The CIAO project will facilitate enhanced collaboration between four WIC agencies and three Head Start programs to streamline referrals and coordinate program deliverables. Partners for this initiative include FSW Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS), Stony Brook WIC, Ryan Health WIC, Westchester County DOH WIC, Open Door Family Medical Center WIC, Long Island EHS/HS, West Harlem EHS/HS, and The Hudson Center for Health Equity and Quality. This second CIAO grant builds upon Open Door's successful first-round project, done in collaboration with MVP Health Care, and expands its reach to serve more eligible families through strategic partnerships.

The goal of the partnership is to coordinate opportunities to increase WIC and EHS/HS awareness, participation, and redemption of WIC benefits among eligible EHS/HS families and reduce disparities in program delivery. By leveraging combined resources, strengths, and best practices, WIC and EHS/HS can minimize duplicative efforts on the part of families and staff, reach and assist more families in need, and enhance participant centered services that improve program coordination and customer service.

Click 'Learn More' for additional information on the WIC Community Innovation and Outreach (CIAO) Projects happening throughout our Nation

LEARN MORE



WIC Community Innovation Highlight: Essex Food Hub

Essex Food Hub (EFH), a local foods nonprofit, first began partnering with Essex County Health Department WIC (ECHD) on an informal basis in 2023, when the organization donated 900 pounds of local, grass-fed beef to the agency. In 2024, they formalized their relationship to increase the supply of local food available to ECHD WIC families by including them as a distribution partner in a state grant, allowing EFH to provide $150,000 worth of whole foods to WIC families this past year. The feedback from families involved was enormously positive:

"I was blown away by this program and left with an overflowing feeling of gratitude for the amazing meats and yogurts, oats, maple syrup, apples, veggies...all of it. It's the quality of food I dream about being able to provide for my family. Thank you thank you thank you for this generous offering."

Now, through a Mother Cabrini Health Foundation award, EFH and ECHD will not only be able to continue this work together, but they'll grow their partnership further to provide the most vulnerable of WIC families the food, education, and kitchen tools they need for both immediate health and long-term wellness.

The $151,000 project will allow EFH and ECHD to pilot new and novel ways to better serve WIC families, prioritizing those who are unhoused, have transportation barriers, or are headed by senior caretakers. The partners took into account the challenges many of these low-income families with young children face accessing healthy foods– such as cost, time, tools, knowledge, skill, and/or physical ability– and designed the year-long project to provide the following to 60 participating families:

- High-value appliances (a microwave, instant pot, or 10-in-1 air fryer);
- Basic kitchen equipment, including knives, cutting boards, mixing bowls, and child-friendly kitchen kits;
- Local meal kits with healthy pre-made meals or ready-to-prepare meals (biweekly over a 10-month period);
- Home delivery; and
- Educational programming, including simple recipes, live events with a Charlie Cart (purchased for ECHD with grant funds) at WIC clinic sites, and recordings made available on-demand for all families.

The partnership with ECHD has been so successful that EFH is branching out to work with additional counties. In February, the organization began supplying food boxes to Warren County WIC and is working on bringing them in the MCHF Project, in hopes of building a long-term partnership with them, as well.