

# January 22, 2024, Advisory Group Meeting

## Notes

### NWA local agency voting representatives

#### Background:

The National WIC Association (NWA) made updates to the by-laws in Spring of 2022 at the annual business meeting. One of the changes made, was to create parity in voting at the board level for state and local agency representatives. With adding two more sections to the state agency level (Vendor Management and Breastfeeding) this meant increasing the number of voting members from local agencies in each state to four. Previously there was only one voting member from local agencies in each state, so each state agency must identify three more local agency voting members.

Traditionally in Minnesota WIC, the local agency voting member has been the WIC Program Advisory Group (AG) Chair. Last year, the WIC AG discussed the need to identify three additional local agency voting members. They decided on a representative from tribal nation grantees (there are seven in Minnesota), and the other two should be based on caseload or region depending on where the chair is coming from to seek balance. Members will rotate based on their term with Advisory Group. There will be a member orientation in March. [2024 NWA Annual Business Meeting for Voting Members \(https://www.nwica.org/2024-nwa-annual-business-meeting-for-voting-members\)](https://www.nwica.org/2024-nwa-annual-business-meeting-for-voting-members). The following are expectations of voting members:

- Participate in orientation for new members in March.
- Vote at the virtual business meeting, (April 25 from 12-2pm).
- Review draft notes before April.
- Required to be a current NWA member. Local agencies should use WIC grant funds to pay for NWA membership and claim the expense on their monthly claim form/invoice. Log in or set up your account at [National WIC Association \(https://www.nwica.org/\)](https://www.nwica.org/) to access resources and materials. Contact Emily Gilcher at [egilcher@nwica.org](mailto:egilcher@nwica.org) if you need additional information about setting up your NWA account.

MDH WIC will fill out local members contact info based on who we select to represent and as it changes.

The complete list of NWA local agency representatives will be finalized and announced once the advisory group decides on a final list.

### Local agency – helping set agenda. Discussion on how best to incorporate

Discussed best practices and ideas for how to help set the agenda. This came up in the strategic plan meeting.

Historically not many agenda items are submitted from AG members. We discussed how to improve and solicit items from the region and/or caseload you represent. Perhaps asking at regional meetings or through group emails.

AG members discussed some frustration that if they requested an agenda item and it was declined to be put on the agenda and/or it was pushed to a later meeting. Some of the reasons agenda items are declined are that they raise questions if the AG is the best platform for the agenda item or if it pertains to entire state and it could then be added to the LA monthly call. A few solutions are to ask the entire AG to vote if an item should be added to the agenda. Also to create an agenda item request template that requires pertinent information to be filled out. The template could include talking points, what the end goal is for agenda item/what hoping to accomplish, etc. Tina will work on a draft template. Katlyn, our advisory chair, will ask how other states obtain agenda items at her next NWA Midwest regional meeting.

#### Feedback from hybrid meeting & strategic plan summary

Reviewed the strategic plan document. Overall, it was consistent with AG's understanding of what was discussed. Tina will make a few edits and send back to the group. We will revisit and share progress on this at AG meetings and may need to further prioritize.

Overall, the group liked the in person meeting last fall and would like to keep at least one meeting if not more in person. We will plan, for now, to have the October meeting in person again.

#### Continue discussion on Everyday Heroes process and awards.

Would like input and thoughts around our various awards.

**Everyday Hero (every two years)** – We would like to simplify the process and not have any letters of support required. Can have a letter of support, but it will not be required. There is concern that not all regions are represented, and their challenge is that there are fewer staff and so less nominations. The group decided it would be good to continue to have the award and really encourage agencies to nominate staff. There is interest in adding to the guidance that state consultants could nominate someone for an everyday hero award. All nominations should still include that the local agency coordinator be notified. Consider having a better award such as an Everyday Hero water bottle or pin or something with a WIC logo. There were mixed thoughts on the certificates since many don't have space or have a place to hang them. Can offer and improve the frame.

**Years of Service Awards (at conferences)** – majority of the group liked the pins and certificates. Some mentioned they are meaningful and helps staff feel valued. They like to wear pins on their name badges.

**Friend of WIC (awarded/recognized at conferences)** – in 2013 MDH introduced the Friend of WIC Award. This award is presented at each WIC Conference for outstanding accomplishment and achievement in the areas of advocacy, leadership, management, and services to WIC. This is our opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of our partners in advancing the Minnesota WIC Program. Dr. Jamie Stang and Dr. Michael Georgieff have received the award in the past.

The AG liked the idea of keeping this award. When a partner is selected, confirm the nomination with AG.

**Sheila Farnan (award given at conference by director and AG chair)** Sheila Farnan was a public health nutritionist, long-term MDH employee, and a passionate advocate for the nutrition needs of mothers and children. She died in 2004. The Minnesota WIC Program honors her work and memory of her with this award. The award is presented to an individual (or WIC local agency) who has demonstrated exceptional leadership in the Minnesota WIC Program.

The group decided to keep this award and the namesake.

Katlyn will check with other regions as well to see about their awards.

Tina checked with Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ohio. No one else has a similar award. Iowa has discussed having service awards, they had staff choose years of service ribbons at their last conference. Michigan has an Advanced CPA award. Ohio – WIC PRO award, Friends of WIC award. Wisconsin had years of service awards many years ago, however, don't offer at this time. They highlight staff and agencies in their weekly newsletter.

#### Updates:

**Share One MN Plan & WIC's inclusion** – checking to see if can share slides.

In Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Penny Peggy Flanigan's, One Minnesota Plan there is a food security goal that's been identified that relates to the WIC program.

Overall, the One Minnesota Plan has a mission to improve the lives of all Minnesotans by working collaboratively to implement policies that achieve results.

The vision is that Minnesota is the best state in the country for children to grow up in.

Priorities for One Minnesota Plan, in general, relate to the vision that Minnesota does best when state agencies and community partners collaborate to achieve common goals.

Priority areas that have been identified for the governor's One Minnesota Plan include children and families, safe and thriving communities, housing workforce, healthy Minnesotans, equity and inclusion, Minnesota's environment and fiscal accountability, customer experience and measurable results.

The priorities have goal areas identified. One priority is children and families and within that there are three measurable goal areas, one related to child and family well-being, another children's mental health, and then a third educational opportunity.

The priority around child and families has a three-year goal related to Minnesota children and families having access to basic needs and a high level of well-being.

The target is to reduce child poverty and the impact of poverty on Minnesota's children and families.

Underneath the three-year goal area, there are two specific focus areas, one being the child tax credit and the other area is food security. This is where WIC comes in.

If all children in Minnesota have access to adequate, accessible, nutritious food then families have the funds necessary to access food to reduce poverty and improve child well-being.

Family funds can then be spent on other needs, and that gets to reducing the impact of poverty on those families. The metric we're using for this focus area will be the percentage of eligible households receiving WIC and SNAP as a benefit.

The most recent report was for the year 2021, 61.5% of all eligible participants were enrolled in WIC in Minnesota.

61.5% coverage rate is significantly higher than the average US coverage rate, which is closer to 50%.

But even at 61.5%, we know that there's room to help connect more families to the services and benefits available through WIC.

For both 2020 and 2021 the highest coverage rate for infants, and then women.

There will be more updates and information along the way, but Kate wanted to share this so if you hear about it in different discussions, you have an awareness of the One Minnesota Plan and how WIC is included.

### **Establishment of the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)**

Only one program from the Minnesota Department of Health will move to the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families. Help Me Connect, the online navigator developed through an early childhood grant, will transfer. Not all programs that serve children, youth and families are moving to the new department. Cross-agency coordination will continue to put children and family at the center of government.

### **2024 technology updates**

Many updates and changes coming in 2024; moving HuBERT servers, rolling out WINNIE, updates to mobile management and modernization of the mobile app.

We have started moving the HuBERT servers and will soon put out a pilot and rollout schedule. We will be reaching out to the pilot agencies first about dates for them to start.

Mobile Management will have an update which will enhance the login process so there are not so many locked accounts.

WIC mobile app there will be 2 phases of the modernization that will come to the state for User Acceptance Testing (UAT)

Phase one: upgrade to a new platform, includes a different look for the app, app available in Spanish, addition of a toggle to have separate lists of stores and pharmacies and direct link to the Non-discrimination statement.

Phase two: will include direct links from benefits screen to portions of the shopping guide, ability to submit suggested UPCs without being registered, link from Benefits screen to call the IVR to set the PIN.

Question to advisory group was related to timing of app releases:

1. Rollout phase 1 earlier and then phase 2
2. Bundle both phases together

Group voted that they wanted Phase 1 and 2 separate.

## Data sharing

Moving forward with data sharing agreement planning. Commissioner Cunningham has given her support since this is in federal regulations. She supports moving forward in sharing data with the following programs:

- Head Start
- Family Home Visiting
- Child and Teen Check-up
- MN Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS)
- SNAP
- Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)
- Longitudinal Follow-up for Newborn Screening Conditions
- MN Immunization Information connection (MIIC)

We have an internal work group working on steps to move these forward. We will be working on the rights and responsibilities, templates for data sharing at the local level, and updating policies. We will continue to provide updates.

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 625 Robert St N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, [health.wic@state.mn.us](mailto:health.wic@state.mn.us), [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us); to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.

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