

Exit Counseling

NOVEMBER 13, 2024

Updated exit counseling policy and materials

What is changing?

- In the most recent Minnesota WIC State Agency Federal Management Evaluation, it was noted that Minnesota WIC was not fully complying with Exit Counseling requirements. The requirement for exit counseling has been expanded to include **pregnant** participants, in addition to breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding participants who are about to graduate from WIC. Although pregnant participants may be eligible to continue WIC services following delivery, exit counseling must be offered during the prenatal certification period in the event they do not return for a subsequent certification. Minnesota WIC is able to implement this requirement now that WINNIE was rolled out statewide.
- See updated [Section 6.7 Additional Nutrition Education](#)

What is the purpose of exit counseling?

- Exit counseling for women reinforces the nutrition education and breastfeeding promotion provided during the certification. It emphasizes the importance of continuing healthy habits for future pregnancies and for the health of their family across the lifespan. Exit counseling includes:
 - The importance of preconceptual folic acid intake in reducing neural tube defects.
 - Breastfeeding as the preferred method of infant feeding.
 - The importance of immunizations.
 - The health risks associated with the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
 - The need for a well-balanced diet.
 - Referrals as appropriate.

How is exit counseling provided?

- Exit counseling is provided at an Additional Education contact during the certification period. It is not an “extra” contact.
- Exit counseling is provided in a tailored, interactive manner using a participant-centered approach to reinforce important nutrition and health messages and to provide anticipatory guidance appropriate for each category.

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- Use exit counseling as an opportunity to remind participants of requirements for reapplying for the program and encouraging WIC participation in the future, if categorically eligible.
- The required written exit counseling materials can be provided in a hard copy or electronic format. The MN WIC nutrition education card [Stay Healthy](#) includes the required exit counseling topics. This card was recently updated to be appropriate for all pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding participants. Local agencies may use this card for all exit counseling contacts or may develop their own materials. Locally developed exit counseling materials must include the exit counseling topics as listed in this document and in [Section 6.7: Additional Nutrition Education](#).

How is exit counseling documented?

- **Exit counseling education:** Either select the topic “Exit Counseling” in the Information System Nutrition Education page or document the education in a note. The topic “Exit Counseling” is currently available for breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding postpartum participants and will be available for pregnant participants the week of November 18th.
- **Exit counseling materials:** For agencies using the state provided nutrition education card “Stay Healthy”, select the card in the Information System Nutrition Education page under materials. Use a note to document other exit counseling materials. The topic “Stay Healthy” will be available in the Nutrition Education page materials for pregnant participants the week of November 18th.

How should this policy change be implemented?

- Inform staff of the policy change in [Section 6.7: Additional Nutrition Education](#) and upcoming WINNIE updates. Discuss how Exit Counseling and materials are provided and documented.
- Exit Counseling should be fully implemented by January 2025.
- Questions? Contact your state consultant.

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[Section 6.7 Additional Nutrition Education](#)

(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch6/sctn6_7.pdf)

[Stay Healthy](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/genstayhealthy.pdf>)

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.