



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



REGISTER TODAY!

The 45th Annual Conference of the WIC Association of NYS, provides an opportunity for you to meet with staff and consumers from local WIC agencies from across New York State, representatives from the New York State Department of Health WIC Program as well as others.

The conference serves as an excellent venue for networking as it typically attracts over 300 attendees including WIC Directors, dietitians, nutritionists, nurses, WIC clerical and vendor management staff and NYS Department of Health staff.

Registration for members: \$495 nonmembers: \$595. Hotel accommodations: \$135

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MARCH IS NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH®

This year's theme is "Beyond the Table," which addresses the farm-to-fork aspect of nutrition, from food production and distribution to navigating grocery stores and farmers markets. Describing the many ways in which we can eat healthier by practicing food safety, storage and maintaining sustainability by reducing food waste.

A few examples of what your agency can do to celebrate include:

- Hosting a virtual cooking demonstration using leftovers
- Arranging a lesson plan on composting
- Visiting a local farmers market to explore seasonal produce

We are excited to hear and see what National Nutrition Month® activities you have planned for March 2024! For more information on National Nutrition Month® and ideas for activities visit [National Nutrition Month® \(eatright.org\)](http://NationalNutritionMonth®(eatright.org))



Insider Opinion: NWA Policy Conference

In December, the Legislative and Public Policy Committee invited all Association members to nominate staff that were interested in attending but could not due to budget constraints for a chance to win a [NWA 2024 Policy Conference](#) registration. We are pleased to share that 19 people across the state were nominated, and that we were able to sponsor 5 local agency staff to attend! Congratulations to Megan Bianchi, Allegany County DOH WIC; Madison Breen, Saint Regis Mohawk WIC; Michelle Hall, Tompkins County Whole Health WIC Program; Teorina VanGorden, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates, Inc, and Shanshan Zhou, The Brooklyn Hospital Center! Here are some of their thoughts about the conference:

I was very thankful to be able to attend the National WIC Association Policy Conference this year, especially since this year marks the 50th anniversary of the WIC program. The conference was very informative, and it was great to be able to learn more about how the WIC program functions and where the program is headed in the future. I especially liked the session on the 2023 WIC Multi-State Survey: Sharing Participant Perspectives to Help Boost the Benefits of WIC. The data that was presented on the problems that participants have shopping for WIC foods has inspired me to focus on providing more education to our local agency participants about the WIC food packages. I am excited to have found a new sense of direction with providing nutrition education at appointments that will pertain to the needs of our participants. I hope to be able to attend the NWA Policy Conference again next year, and I would highly recommend that other WIC staff members attend this conference to gain refreshing new ideas!-**Megan Bianchi MS, CLC**

I found attending the NWA policy conference, from a local agency perspective, to be a very motivating, eye opening and educational experience. It was inspiring to hear the innovative ideas of other State WIC directors pushing to move the WIC program forward with the hopes of improving accessibility and convenience for participants, and not losing sight of WIC being a premier health and nutrition program. It was reassuring to hear those reflect on how far the WIC program has grown over the past 50 years. Listening to the many different WIC program updates lead by USDA to continue to improve all components of the WIC program as well as learning how to prepare for advocacy meetings with congressional representatives was invigorating and insightful. It was a little challenging choosing between the concurrent sessions as all topics seemed interesting and informative. The NWA policy conference provides a place for all voices to be heard, at every level within the WIC program. The time and commitment of the NWA staff to prepare for this conference does not go unnoticed. Attending the NWA policy conference opens your eyes to the tremendous support the WIC program has to continue to grow and evolve.-**Teorina VanGorden RDN**



Teorina VanGorden RDN

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It was such an honor to attend the 2024 NWA National Policy Conference for the first time. As a WIC Nutrition Site Manager/Interim Director in Brooklyn, my daily focus revolves around overseeing program operations and delivering WIC services to the community.

Despite the challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, our program persevered. Our team helped thousands and thousands of families with urgent needs for formula and food support, both in person and remotely, making me see how crucial and important WIC is. It deserves more recognition and a bigger spotlight nationwide. Effective policy-making and legislation are crucial for amplifying WIC's impact and ensuring our collective voice is heard.



Shanshan Zhou MS, RD, CDN

The conference made me realize that my knowledge of WIC policy and legislation needs a bit of a boost. I've learned so much from this conference. It deepened my understanding of WIC funding, the influence of legislation and politics, and the staff role of advocacy for WIC. I gained insights into science-based food package rule and learned from other states' experiences, broadening my perspective on how we can enhance our services.

I truly hope all WIC staff are able to learn more about WIC policy and the NWA continues to provide accessible learning opportunities for WIC staff, fostering increased participation in advocacy efforts for a stronger WIC. -**Shanshan Zhou MS, RD, CDN**

Your Feedback Matters!

Please reach out by e-mailing wicassociationofnys@gmail.com to let us know what matters most or use our chat feature on the home page.



Interested in Learning More About Advocacy

National WIC Association's "WIC Action Network" meets on a bi-weekly basis, every other Friday from 3-4pm ET. We encourage all national, state, and local partners and WIC providers interested in getting more involved in WIC advocacy to attend! Please click [here](#) to register for the recurring zoom meetings to receive WIC legislative and policy updates.



Meet & Greet Recap

In a bid to foster healthier outcomes for WIC families across NYS, the Marketing and Membership committee organized a meet-and-greet event on February 29, 2024. This gathering, held under the auspices of the Cornell Cooperative Extension program, not only showcased the exemplary relationship with the HH/Elmhurst WIC program but also served as a platform for insightful discussions and collaboration.

The event featured distinguished guest speakers Carol Parker and Altagracia Gomez from Cornell Cooperative Extension highlighting the EFNEP workshop. The workshop offer an 8-10 week nutrition series, covering a wealth of topics that supports the wellbeing of the attendees. The workshops are available in English and Spanish and focus on enhancing the education WIC programs provide. It also fosters a connection in the community to enhance their knowledge of healthy food and strengthen nutrition behavior changes within the WIC community. Their expertise and dedication to the cause of promoting health and wellness among WIC families added immense value to the proceedings.

One of the focal points of the event was the spotlight on the HH/Elmhurst WIC Program, which served as a beacon of success in supporting its community. Through an engaging presentation, attendees gained valuable insights into innovative strategies and impactful initiatives undertaken by the program. From nutritional education, to access to essential resources, the Elmhurst WIC Program exemplified the vital role that such initiatives play in enhancing the well being of families.

This initiative underscores the ongoing commitment of the Marketing and Membership committee, in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension Program, to extend support and resources to WIC families across the state. For more information on how local agencies can partner with Cornell Cooperative with the implementation of EFNEP workshop series click [here](#). WIC Agencies in NYC can complete and fax the [8-session workshop series request form](#). A recording of the session for those unable to attend can be found [here](#).



Save the Date for our
next Meet & Greet!

Thursday, June 13th
12:00PM-1:00PM

We hope to see you there!

Tasty Tidbits for Teamwork

Encouraging teamwork through activities such as team-building exercises or collaborative projects helps build trust and camaraderie among team members. A best practice working to support this aim at the Elmhurst WIC program was suggested by our Dietitian team to decrease burn out.

Incorporating a daily breathing/stretching exercise into your team's routine at 3:15pm via the preferred virtual platform can yield substantial benefits to the employee. This five-minute practice serves as a powerful tool to boost team morale, enhance focus and promotes overall well-being.



Legislative Committee Update

As I write this in early March, we are in the waiting time of when the House passed a full year Appropriations bill over the weekend, with the excellent result of the full funding needed for WIC this fiscal year, with no additional ‘strings attached’ of significantly controversial policy riders.

Leading up to the March 1 Appropriations’ short-term continuing resolution deadline, we reached out to each Member of Congress in our NYS delegation, sharing with them our concern and urging them to only advocate for and support this exact result.

The fact that not fully funding WIC for the first time in 25 years was even considered, or funding threatened to be held hostage to unrelated and controversial policy is very concerning. Communicating with and educating elected Representatives on local WIC programs is very important in the coming weeks and months. We encourage you to share some priority information about your WIC program, such as:

- How has your enrollment and participation rates changed over the past few years?
- How has it been going for your families getting remote WIC services (Nutrition education and breastfeeding support, as well as certifications)
- How many of your participants are dreading the six-month or one-year birthday because then they are no longer eligible for services that are so important to them?
- What feedback are you getting from your families about the CVB?
- What would it mean for your families to have access to online shopping?
- What would it mean for your families to be able to use their CVB at farmers markets, along with their FMNP benefits?
- What are families telling you about their experiences with WIC services and their food package?

Statewide, Feb 2020- September 2023 (most current data we have from DOH), NYS had a 19% increase in WIC participation, up from 361,000 to nearly 430,000 (the highest it’s been since summer 2017). And yet, we serve about 50% of eligible New Yorkers statewide. How has your local participation changed during the same timeframe? Are you fully serving your target caseload? And is the unmet need in your service area so much greater? We have far to go for WIC to reach all eligible families with its vital public health services, and we need more voices - from the WIC community and beyond - helping to explain both the reality of its life-changing results and struggles.

WIC Association Membership Drive

The WIC Association of New York State’s 2023-2024 membership drive is in full swing. Membership benefits include a discount for the WIC Association of NYS 2024 45th Annual Conference registration scheduled on April 15- 17th 2024. This conference offers local agency staff the opportunity to network and learn from WIC providers, colleagues, partners, as well as NYS staff. The challenges NYS WIC staff face has never been greater. Sessions offered at our conference were chosen to meet these challenges educating staff in policies and program innovations with an emphasis on food dignity and reproductive justice. In addition, the conference provides a convenient opportunity for nutritionists to earn continuing education credits.

Membership also helps support the association’s primary goals of coordinating advocacy days with legislators and government officials, collaborating with NYSDOH to guide policy change and program enhancement, and supporting members’ local agencies with their own advocacy goals, highlighting best practices, staff achievements, and more.

Currently we have received support in the form of membership checks from 44 Local Agencies statewide: 6 from the Central Region, 7 from Western Region, 21 from Metro Region and 10 from Capital Region.

We are striving for 100% membership this year. If your Local Agency is not a member, please consider supporting the WIC Association. Membership dues are an approved WIC expense by NYS.

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



Click ‘Learn More’ to access the NYS WIC Association Membership Application and apply today!

[LEARN MORE](#)