



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



REGISTER TODAY!

Network with staff and consumers from local WIC agencies from across New York State, representatives from the New York State Department of Health WIC Program and others. This conference is an educational activity and will earn the participants WIC Continuing Education Hours and CPEUs for RD/RDN, DTR/NDTR and IBCLCs.

Budget planning for the 45th Annual Conference? [Click here for rates!](#)



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MARCH IS NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH®

We want to hear from you!

Tell us how your agency engaged participants in celebrating National Nutrition Month® .

Connect with us at wicassociationofnys@gmail.com or use our speech bubble at the bottom right of our homepage.

Responses are sent directly to our e-mail and are answered timely.



Insider Opinion: NWA Policy Conference

By Emily French and Gina DeVito RD, CDN (NYSWICA Sponsored Raffle Winners)

I was so honored to be chosen to represent New York State at this year’s National WIC Association conference. My supervisor signed me up for the raffle because she knows I love to advocate for WIC at local and state levels. I feel sharing experiences and information from every level of the WIC organization is key to growing as a WIC family. Learning the endless possibilities of our WIC future excites and drives me to work hard to make them a reality. Every day I see how WIC positively affects the participants in my county, so to be able to hear about similar success stories on a national scale is so affirming. I would love to be a part of NWA conference in the future and present if there ever was a chance. We have done so many fun and innovative projects in Essex County WIC and I would be proud to share our ideas.



Emily French, Nutritionist, Essex County Public Health WIC

The most difficult part of the conference is picking which break out room to join. There were too many interesting topics to choose from. One of my favorite speakers this year was Dr. Amy Valent. Her speaking and dynamic presentation was flawless. Her insight on interpregnancy health was so interesting and inspiring. She really show-cased how WIC can help our participants during and after their pregnancy. I came out of this conference rejuvenated with loads of ideas and excitement. For anyone who would want to participate in this conference, I would recommend to talk about your ideas and thoughts on the group chats and don’t be afraid to ask any questions. If you have a question, odds are someone else has the same question too. I truly enjoyed this conference and hope to be a part of more in the future!



Gina DeVito, WIC Program Director, Open Door Family Medical Center

I was thrilled to attend the NWA Legislative conference for the first time this year. As a fairly new WIC Director with so much to learn, this experience was truly invaluable. I walked away from each session feeling informed, inspired, and more confident to effectively advocate for our WIC participants and program needs. Learning about innovations to the WIC shopping experience and proposed legislation to expand access to WIC were among my favorite topics. This conference broadened my understanding of WIC policy and motivated me to become more actively involved with my state’s WIC Association. Without a doubt, I will attend future NWA conferences- thank you, NWA!





Legislative Update

By Misha Marvel, MSW

Early this month, our Legislative and Public Policy Committee organized virtual meetings with 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. Local WIC providers and advocates met with Rep. Meng (NY-6), Rep. Bowman (NY-16), Rep. Stefanik (NY-21), Rep. Williams (NY-22) and Rep. Morelle (NY-25) offices. We invited local agencies who serve counties in their districts to join and share some priority information about their WIC program, such as:

- How has it been going for your families getting remote WIC services (Nutrition education and breastfeeding support)
- What feedback are you getting from your families about the increased CVB?
- What kinds of comments did you send to USDA on the proposed food rule and why? (Emphasizing science based food packages which form basis for WIC's health outcomes.)
- What would it mean for your families to have access to online shopping?

Our take-away advocacy messages included:

- Prioritize the USDA's WIC food package rulemaking based on nutrition science that balances the supplemental food package across the food groups. We need Congress' full support on timely implementation and also full WIC appropriations to increase the availability and variety of healthy, culturally appropriate foods that more fully respect all families' dietary needs and lives.
- Remote access due to the pandemic has brought WIC into 21st Century and needs to be made permanent.
- Accelerate the availability of WIC online shopping and improve vendor rules to give WIC families equitable access to modern technologies.

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- Prioritize Child Nutrition Reauthorization; we need reforms, we’ve learned much from pandemic, and we must reset program rules. This includes modernizing WIC and expanding eligibility to address targeted nutrition gaps:
 - Extend mom’s eligibility and coverage to 2 years to assure healthier subsequent pregnancies and babies and
 - Close the eligibility gap for 5-6 year olds who have not started kindergarten yet.

We shared with offices how from Feb 2020-Nov 2022, NYS had a 12% increase in WIC participation, up from 361,000 to over 405,000 (the highest it’s been in four years). And yet, we serve about 50% of eligible New Yorkers statewide. And we shared Members’ district counties’ local participation during the same timeframe, emphasizing where appropriate when local agencies are fully serving 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 public health services. And we 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 our way and stay tuned for future invitations to share about your WIC program with Congressional offices."

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.



Have Ideas Surrounding Best Practices for Online Nutrition Education?

Contact Your Workgroup Members!

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Board Member Highlight

By: Sue Kowaleski

When my children were little, our family participated in WIC. Thinking it was just a place to get food, we were surprised at all the things that happen during a WIC visit; health screening, nutrition education, community resource sharing, etc. I was impressed!

I first became acquainted with the WIC Association when our local, Washington County WIC Director asked me if I would be interested in sitting on the WIC Association Board as a “consumer.” It was an enlightening, and somewhat overwhelming task. It took a little time to really understand all that the association does for WIC consumers, WIC staff, and the early childhood nutrition and health community. My consumer voice was needed. I was sold on doing what I could to help.



**"Everyone who knows
WIC or has been
touched by WIC is an
advocate for WIC."**

Then sadly, our household income changed a little and we were no longer eligible for WIC... by something like only \$4.00! When my term ended, I wished to remain on the board and offer a voice that came from the “outside.” There was an opportunity now to serve as an “advocate” who could promote the benefits and needs of WIC and still share the non-WIC staff voice.

Everyone who knows WIC or has been touched by WIC is an advocate for WIC. However, as an “advocate” who serves on the WIC Association of NYS Board, there are opportunities to think and speak outside the box. The best part of WIC advocacy is meeting with legislators; locally for our county WIC office, in Albany for New York State & Department of Health, and in Washington on the Federal level. As advocates we can share stories and thoughts that are different from those of WIC staff. We speak and act on behalf of the whole WIC community. When legislation is in the works to do something we see as less than ideal for WIC staff and consumers, advocates are the ones who can fearlessly address the downsides of proposals and share strategies to “fix” problems in order to make WIC the best it can be for families and WIC staff.

I encourage anyone who loves WIC to learn more about the NYS WIC Association Board and consider becoming a member.