Helping Illinois Families Stay Enrolled in WIC:
Getting to Know WIC to 5

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Lead Contributors

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  - Regional Nutritionist Consultant, Illinois Department of Human Services

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  - WIC to 5 Project Coordinator, University of Illinois-Chicago, Department of Kinesiology and Nutrition
Learning Objectives

By the end of this presentation, WIC staff and other stakeholders will understand the:

- Purpose and history of the WIC to 5 program.
- Benefits of eligible children staying enrolled in WIC until the age of 5.
- Required counseling, reporting, and evaluation activities associated with WIC to 5.
- Ways incentives can be used to support staff in retaining clients.

What is WIC to 5?

- WIC to 5 is a collaboration between the Illinois WIC program and researchers at the University of Illinois-Chicago, Department of Kinesiology and Nutrition.

- The goal of WIC to 5 is to test strategies to increase participation and retention of eligible children in WIC.
Why WIC to 5?

- Preschool aged children enrolled in WIC have better quality diets
  - (Siega-Riz, J Pediatr. 2004)

- Improved intakes of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
  - (Whaley, JNEB. 2012)

- Increased intakes of B6, calcium, fiber, iron, potassium, and zinc
  - (Rose, J Nutr. 1998; Yen, Food Policy. 2010)

- Obesity reduction among WIC children
  - (Chiasson, Obesity 2013)

Why WIC to 5?

- Decreased risk of food insecurity in households with children
  - (Metallinos-Katsaras, Matern Child Health J. 2011)

- Reduced risk of child abuse/neglect
  - (Lee, Children and Youth Services Review. 2007)

- Increased immunization rates

- Improvements in access to health care/social services

- Increased cognitive development
Why WIC to 5?

Despite the positive impact of WIC participation on the health of children, underutilization and/or premature discontinuation of WIC services continues.

- Coverage of WIC-eligible children continues to lag behind all other participant groups.
- Decline in participation rates as children age.
- Largest eligible participant group, yet lowest coverage rate.
  - 82% of infants but only about 50% of children.

Known barriers/facilitators to utilizing government assistance:

- Social support
- Communication between program provider and client
- Program experience/familiarity
- Travel times
- Food procurement practices

(Buescher et al., 2003; Harrison et al.; Jilcott et al., 2011; Kahler et al., 1992; Kropf et al., 2007; Shlay et al., 2004)

Why WIC to 5?

Previous studies show that WIC participation and retention are influenced by client perceptions:

- Program requires too much effort and the benefits are not worth the time (Woelfel et al., 2004)
- Scheduling and transportation problems (Jacknowitz et al., 2010)
- Participation in other public assistance programs (Buescher et al., 2003)
- Long clinic wait times
- Lack of activities to occupy children
- Difficulties with procurement of WIC foods at the store (Woelfel et al., 2004)
Project History and Timeline

- **2011-2012** Formative Research
- **2013** WIC to 5 Program Development
- **2014** Pilot Program Launch with Four Agencies
  - McLean County WIC, Macon County WIC, Roseland Hospital WIC, Vermilion County WIC
- **2015-2016** Evaluation and Administrative Data Analysis
  - East Side Health District (Additional Pilot)
  - Four Comparison Sites
  - Dekalb County WIC, Kankakee County WIC, Mount Sinai Hospital WIC, Peoria County WIC
- **2017** Statewide Launch

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Formative Research 2011-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
<th>Online/In Person Surveys (n)</th>
<th>Interviews (n)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIC Staff</td>
<td>2 (n=23)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIC Coordinators</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vendors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Start Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current WIC Parents/Caregivers</td>
<td>2 (n=17)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Former WIC Parents/Caregivers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Care Providers</td>
<td>1 (n=2)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>223</strong></td>
<td><strong>111</strong></td>
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N=374
### Reasons Caregivers Leave the Program (Barriers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WIC Families</th>
<th>Clinic</th>
<th>Vendors</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Perceived value of the food package</td>
<td>• Difficulty scheduling/rescheduling</td>
<td>• Difficulty using food instruments</td>
<td>• Lack of awareness about WIC eligibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hectic/busy lifestyles</td>
<td>• Long wait times</td>
<td>• Negative interactions with cashiers</td>
<td>• Transportation issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Access to other food benefits</td>
<td>• Too much paperwork</td>
<td>• Stigma from other customers</td>
<td>• Unsupportive physicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multiple jobs/looking for work</td>
<td>• Unwelcome clinic environment</td>
<td>• Availability of food items</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Staff judgment</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

### Reasons Caregivers Keep Children Enrolled in the Program (Facilitators)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WIC Families</th>
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<th>Vendors</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Perceived value of the food package</td>
<td>• Friendly or helpful WIC staff</td>
<td>• Ability to select (fruit and vegetable)</td>
<td>• Support from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expands the family food budget</td>
<td>• Integrated services at some sites</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of Proxy</td>
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<tr>
<td>• SNAP is never enough</td>
<td>• Immunizations, dental care, food centers (Chicago only)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• For some: “WIC is the only help I get”</td>
<td>• Appointment reminders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Welcoming clinic environment/ fun for kids</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interesting/ useful nutrition education sessions</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Proposed Solutions to Improve Child Participation and Retention

**WIC Families**
- More Social Support

**Clinic**
- Mobile Clinic
- Tailor education to WIC experience
- Participant incentives
- Automated text reminders
- “Get to Know WIC Staff”

**Vendors**
- Vendor Training
- WIC grocery store tour
- Switch to EBT
- Improved WIC labeling
- Grocery delivery

**Community**
- Public education campaign
- Linkage with other services
- Partner with healthcare and childcare providers

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WIC to 5 Key Messages

**Save**
Helps our family save money.

**Nourish**
Provides nutritious foods kids need.

**Grow**
Supports healthy growth and development

**Connect**
Links families with other programs, providers, and resources.

**Learn**
Free advice and counseling from caring staff.
WIC to 5: Intervention

Goals of WIC to 5

- Raising Client Awareness of WIC Eligibility and Benefits
- Increase Staff Incentives and Promote Staff Wellness
- Increase Image/Understanding of WIC among Health Care and Child Care Providers
Intervention Activities

**Clinic**
- Targeted Communication
- Staff and Incentives

**Vendors**
- Shopping Education Module

**Community**
- Awareness Materials for Health and Child Care Providers
- Posters for Other Agencies

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**WIC to 5: Targeted Communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Materials</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy through 5 months</td>
<td>Increase Awareness about WIC Eligibility and Benefits</td>
<td>Posters, Plastic Sleeves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 month visit</td>
<td>Increase Awareness about WIC Eligibility and Benefits</td>
<td>Flip Cards, Brochure, Tote Bag, Magnet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 month visit</td>
<td>Reduce barriers to appointments, Shopping, WIC foods</td>
<td>Flip Cards, Tip Sheet, Magnet, Board Book, Birthday Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 year visit</td>
<td>Acknowledge participation, stress value of package to child’s diet, remind of 5 reasons to stay in WIC</td>
<td>Tear Off pad, WIC to 5 Question Card, MyPlate placemat, Growth Chart, Sticker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 year old visit</td>
<td>Highlight benefits of program for preschool, target healthy growth and development</td>
<td>WIC and School Readiness brochure, Piggy Bank, WIC Graduation Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anytime</td>
<td>Reduce barriers, stigma to shopping and enrollment</td>
<td>Group Shopping Education Curriculum, Fotonovella</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Posters

1. Did your family enjoy making chocolate chip cookies?" Compare them!
2. "It helps a lot through the month. It saves money on fruits, vegetables, meat and milk."
3. "You think about the kids. It's good for them. Get the best food possible."
4. "If a healthy diet for the kids, and keeps them growing."

Why we stay with WIC to 5:
- Save
- Nutrition
- Skills
- Women
- Children
- Men
- view
- Homeless
- Poor
- Coordinated
- Connect

Take 5 for WIC to 5
- Brochure
- Flip Cards

6 Month Visit Materials

- Magnet and Tote Bag
- Get To Know You materials

Come in and meet our Vermilion County WIC staff!
- Malinda
- WIC data entry clerk
- 2 months
- I also have a child participating in WIC!
- I really enjoy:
  - Spending time with my child, family, and friends;
  - antique shopping and fall weather
- Favorite WIC food or recipe:
  - apples dipped in peanut butter and grilled cheese
  - Ask me about:
    - where to shop for WIC foods

20
12 Month Visit Materials

- Birthday Card
- Child Food Package Magnet
- Board Book about WIC Foods
- 1 Year Tips
  - Targeted Communication Tool/Flip Book
- 1 Year Tips Brochure

Board Book about WIC Foods
**2 Year Old Visit Materials**

- My Plate Placemat
- Tear-off Notepad
- Watch Me Grow Sticker
- Question Card
- Personalized Growth Chart

**3-4 Year Old Visit Materials**

- Graduation Certificate
- WIC to 5 Piggy Bank
- WIC to 5 Benefits Card
- School Readiness Brochure

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**WIC to 5**

**Watch Me Grow Sticker**

**WIC to 5**

**Question Card**

**Personalized Growth Chart**

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**How WIC Helps**

- WIC addresses the many social, economic, and health problems that affect the diet and health of young children.
- Children who are eligible for WIC meet certain income guidelines and are at risk for not getting enough to eat. Once children are older, they may be eligible for nutrition education programs.
- WIC helps by providing food, nutrition education, and other services to help keep children healthy.

**What can parents do?**

- Read a nutrition picture book
- Make a hand-on nutritious snack
- Grow fruits and vegetables in your yard or flowers in your garden
- Play or sing songs about fruits and vegetables

**What WIC does for you?**

- Help you learn about healthy eating
- Help you stay healthy
- Help you have more energy
- Help you feel better

**WIC and School Readiness**

It is never too early to start preparing the kinds of experiences that will help your child enter school.

"School readiness" refers to the academic, social, emotional, and physical development that helps children enter school with the skills and attitudes needed to learn and succeed.

A healthy diet and regular physical activity are essential to children’s school readiness.
Shopping Education Module

- Utilizes WIC Talk format and facilitated leadership principles
- Takes approximately 30 minutes
- Focuses on clients discussing shopping barriers and empowering them to come up with their own strategies

Roseland Hospital WIC Program
Staff Incentives and Wellness

- Tote bags, water bottles, pedometers, and other incentive gifts selected by sites
- Incentive program developed by WIC coordinators
- Wellness newsletters
- Empowerment Survey

Community

- Pocket guide for health care providers
- Handbook for childcare providers
- Online newsletter content
- Prescription pads
- Standing banner
- Table runner
- Package for offices: posters, band aids, outreach brochure
WIC to 5: Evaluation and Results

Process/Outcome Evaluation Plan

Cornerstone Questions

- 6 month Tear-off Card
- Longitudinal Survey with WIC Parents/Caregivers 3-6 months (n=144)
  - Recruit ~30 mother/child dyads from 4 pilot agencies and 4 control agencies for longitudinal survey
- Administrative Data Analysis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant ID: H100-6327-2353-00</th>
<th>Cur Last Name</th>
<th>Cur First Name</th>
<th>Sec Last Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>HFP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RETASTAULIM</td>
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**Group ID:**

| Address: 111413 Thursday | Age: 40 | SPRINGFIELD | IL 62744 |

**Birth Date:** 12/12/1972

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**ASQ1 - ASSESSMENT**

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<tr>
<th>Assess Type: WCOE WIC - CERT VISIT EDUCATION</th>
<th>Assess Nbr: 1 of 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assess Date: 12/03/2013</td>
<td>Assessor: 8051960 USER, CORNERSTONE</td>
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</table>

- Reviewed WIC to 5 Program Script.
- Provided WIC to 5 Materials to Client.
- Reasons to Stay in WIC.
- Time intended to participate in WIC.
- WIC is a partnership.
- Nutrition Assessment.
- Health Care.
- Length of time (refer to category): P, B, N, I, C.

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**ASQ2 - ASSESSMENT**

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- Nutrition Assessment.
- Health Care.
- Length of time (refer to category): P, B, N, I, C.

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**ASQ3 - ASSESSMENT**

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<tr>
<td>Assess Date: 12/03/2013</td>
<td>Assessor: 8051960 USER, CORNERSTONE</td>
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- Reviewed WIC to 5 Program Script.
- Provided WIC to 5 Materials to Client.
- Reasons to Stay in WIC.
- Time intended to participate in WIC.
- WIC is a partnership.
- Nutrition Assessment.
- Health Care.
- Length of time (refer to category): P, B, N, I, C.
Results:

- Over 26,000 clients were asked the time intended question.
- 5050: 6 month old intervention
- 3066: 1 year olds intervention.
- We received 4390 tear-off 6-month cards
6 months tear off cards (n=4390)

Intention to Stay Enrolled
(Six month: Tear-Off Cards n=4390)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>% Until 1 year % Until 2-3 years % Until 4-5 years</th>
<th>N=Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macon County Health Department WIC</td>
<td>5.4 % (85) 10.2 % (160) 84.4 % (1328)</td>
<td>1573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McLean County Health Department WIC</td>
<td>4.4 % (25) 5.6 % (32) 90.0 % (515)</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roseland Hospital WIC</td>
<td>2.1% (36) 5.9 % (99) 92.0 % (1555)</td>
<td>1690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermilion County Health Department WIC</td>
<td>4.1% (23) 11.2 % (62) 84.7 % (470)</td>
<td>555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.8 % (169) 8.0% (353) 88.1% (3868)</td>
<td>4390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Awareness Child Eligible Until 5 Years of Age (Six month: Tear-Off Cards n=4390)

Reason to Stay Enrolled (Six month: Tear-Off Cards n=4390)
Longitudinal Survey (n=144)

- Recruited parents/caregivers of infants 3-6 months
- 4 intervention/4 comparison sites
- Longitudinal survey includes:
  - Theory of planned behavior questions to assess attitudes, social norms, perceived behavioral control, and intention
  - Intention to stay enrolled
  - Demographics and dyad/household characteristics
  - Potential modifiers including food security, infant feeding, perceived stress, food values, household organization, and hardship
  - Some process evaluation questions
  - Match survey responses to administrative data for program participation outcomes

Likelihood to Stay Enrolled (n=144) Time 1
Longitudinal Survey
Has anyone ever spoken to you about the benefits of staying in WIC until your child is 5 years old? (n=144) Longitudinal Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intervention Time 1</th>
<th>Intervention Time 2</th>
<th>Comparison Time 1</th>
<th>Comparison Time 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>56.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

Have you ever seen any materials promoting “WIC to 5”? (n=144) Longitudinal Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intervention Time 1</th>
<th>Intervention Time 2</th>
<th>Comparison Time 1</th>
<th>Comparison Time 2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>68.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Intention to Stay Enrolled Until 4-5 (n=144) Longitudinal Survey

Next Steps

- Disseminate two year old intervention and materials and outreach cards
- Continue to follow participants in the longitudinal survey.
- Complete evaluation to determine which materials and strategies are most effective for discussion about broad dissemination.
WIC to 5: What Agencies Can Do Now

Outreach
- Community partnerships: health fairs; committees; networking events
- Program awareness: flyer to local agencies, doctor offices, daycares, schools
- Visibility: promotional materials displayed in the community

Caseload
Schedule changes

- Walk-ins
- Late Monday clinic
- Saturday clinic

Customer service

- Efficient quality service
  - Most important topic for today
  - Participant centered services
- Staff training and development – provide tools to be confident educators
- Staff recognition – staff that feels supported and appreciated provide better service
Summary

- What WIC Agencies CAN do to help Families Stay on WIC
  - Raise Client Awareness of WIC Eligibility and Benefits
  - Increase Staff Incentives and Promote Staff Wellness
  - Increase Image/Understanding of WIC among Health Care and Child Care Providers through Community Outreach
  - Enhance Client’s Education Related to Vendors/Shopping Experience

WIC to 5 Key Messages

**Save**
Helps our family save money.

**Nourish**
Provides nutritious foods kids need.

**Grow**
Supports healthy growth and development

**Connect**
Links families with other programs, providers, and resources.

**Learn**
Free advice and counseling from caring staff.
## Acknowledgements

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pilot/Intervention Site WIC Coordinators</th>
<th>Comparison Site WIC Coordinators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhagya Kolli, East Side Health District (Melissa Banz, RNC)</td>
<td>Kay Chase, DeKalb (Ginny Belt, RNC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Shiflett, Macon County (Region 4 RNC)</td>
<td>Glynnis Cailteaux, Kankakee (Ginny Belt, RNC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim Anderson, McLean County (Sarah Deig, RNC)</td>
<td>Kristin Thornburg, Peoria County (Sarah Deig, RNC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tammie Brooks, McLean County</td>
<td>Kim Howard-Shores, Sinai Community Institute (Bindi Lessing, RNC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharon Johnson-Jadeja, Roseland Hospital (LaShon Reese, RNC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrice Hughes, Roseland Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheryl Sprague, Vermilion County (Sarah Deig, RNC)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**UIC Staff**
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- Molly McGown, MPH, Research Assistant
- Jana Wichelecki, MPH, Interviewer
- Tanine Murdock, Administrative Assistant
- Yvette Whorton, Interviewer