Illinois WIC Program Nutrition Practice Standards (NPS)
Nutrition Education
December 2024

Nutrition Practice Standards are provided to assist staff in translating policy into practice. This guidance is intended to be used in conjunction with the Illinois WIC Policy Manual, Nutrition Education section to assist in the planning and presentation of nutrition education and breastfeeding promotion and support contacts.

Nutrition Education Content

Per the USDA, Food and Nutrition Services' *WIC Nutrition Services Standards*, the content of nutrition education and breastfeeding promotion and support contacts must:

1. Consider the nutritional needs and concerns of the household situation, cultural practices, geographic locations, environmental influences, and educational abilities of the participant as identified through the nutrition assessment process.
2. Consider a participant's literacy level and primary language spoken.
3. Describe the relationship between nutrition, physical activity, and health.
4. Take food preferences into account.
5. Tailor education to a participant's motivation to change nutrition-related behavior.
6. Base education on current science (evidence-based and/or effective strategies, methodologies, techniques, and nationally recognized sources) and category specific, common topics (IL WIC PM NE 6).
7. Communicate breastfeeding-friendly messages by encouraging and supporting breastfeeding, especially exclusively breastfeeding for 6 months, and continuing for one year or longer as mutually desired by both mother and baby.
8. Promote a life course perspective approach to improve maternal and child health that emphasizes not only risk reduction during pregnancy, but also health promotion and optimization across the lifespan.
9. Ensure verbal and written communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Uses an effective combination of styles (font size, white space, text wrapping, etc.) and visual images for written materials that represent the participant population (including, but not limited to infant developmental stages, breastfeeding pictures to reflect principles of a good latch).
10. Provide drug and other harmful substance abuse information to all pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women and to parents or caretakers of infants and children.
11. Provide exit counseling for all women participants (Addendum 1 *Exit Counseling Guidance for PG/BE/BP/NP Categories*).

Nutrition Education Resources

The following resources and educational materials can be used to assist in providing effective nutrition and breastfeeding education. For agencies with significant numbers of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) participants, efforts should be made to include materials in languages other than English, and at the reading level of participants.

USDA and Food & Nutrition Services (FNS)

The most current guidance from USDA must be used as a reference for program expectations for required and category specific nutrition education. The following resources provide local agencies with the tools needed to provide effective nutrition education.

1. Provide Nutrition Education | Food and Nutrition Service (usda.gov): the links on this webpage will provide information, educational materials, and creative ideas to make learning about nutrition fun for all ages.
   • MyPlate: shows participants how to eat healthy at every stage of life. Learn more about MyPlate and the food groups, including a Toolkit to communicate MyPlate's messages to participants at www.myplate.gov .

2. Dietary Guidelines for Americans: USDA developed resources for professionals to help promote healthy eating across the lifespan from birth to older adulthood. Use the information at www.dietaryguidelines.gov to get tips and resources to share with your participants.

3. Explore Resources | WIC Works Resource System (usda.gov): is a resource, education, and training center for WIC staff. Resources are provided by topic (e.g., breastfeeding, childhood, nutrition education, infancy, and health and wellness) and include participant handouts, presentations, guidance and assessment tools, images, and videos.

4. USDA Risk Factor Justification Manual: addendum to IL WIC PM CS 6.1, this resource provides details on each WIC nutrition risk (e.g., justification, implications for WIC, references).

5. USDA Infant Nutrition and Feeding Guide: this guide which focuses on the nutrition for the healthy full-term infant, provides current research and guidelines about infant health, nutrition, and feeding. The guide also features citations at the end of each chapter and a detailed index as well as a full glossary at the end of the handbook.

6. USDA WIC Breastfeeding Support: overview of the WIC Breastfeeding Support campaign as well as resources you can download, print, and share with moms to help them learn about breastfeeding, start breastfeeding, overcome common challenges, and thrive with breastfeeding.

7. USDA WIC Breastfeeding Check-In: designed for the CPA/CPAA as a quick reference that contains Breastfeeding Reassurance Tips to help address common concerns among breastfeeding women.

Illinois WIC Resources

Printed materials should be easily understood by the participant, culturally diverse, and must be consistent with USDA guidance and WIC Nutrition Services Standards. DHS developed education materials meet these expectations and cover common nutrition concerns for each category. It is recommended that all non-USDA or Department educational materials and audio-visuals be evaluated initially by your Regional Nutritionist Consultant to ensure compliance with Program requirements.

The Illinois WIC Program provides nutrition education materials that have been developed to assist local WIC agencies in incorporating concepts that engage the learner and meet the program expectations. Visit the Community Health Training Center website, Resources pages for details on resources available.

- Materials and Resource Library: View, print, or scan QR codes of DHS handouts using the WIC Centralized Resource Library excel document. To order handouts, complete and submit the WIC Materials Order Form. Review the WIC Centralized Resource Library PowerPoint to learn more about these resources.

- WIC Talks: WIC Talks are developed for group education and self-study modules that cover common nutrition concerns for each category. Local agencies should use the WIC Talk Template (IL WIC PM NE 5.1) to ensure that secondary education topics include effective nutrition education content, engage the participant, and create an opportunity for feedback.

- Circle Charts: Pre-filled circle charts are category specific and include key messages with common nutrition related concerns. Each chart provides suggestions on questions to initiate a conversation and guidance to facilitate behavior change around that topic. Blank circle charts are also available.

- VENA: Utilizing VENA counseling skills is important to providing individualized education that is participant centered, interactive, and promotes behavior change. For more details, review the *NPS Counseling Approach (IL WIC PM NE 4.1)* and attend regional trainings provided by the Department.

- WIChealth: Illinois WIC partners with WIChealth to offer over 50 nutrition education lessons in English and Spanish that are participant-centered, flexible, and tailored to the needs of WIC participants. Education is based on promoting positive behavior change, focusing on where the participant currently is, and moving them towards optimal health. WIChealth also offers staff resources including participant handouts, promotional materials, and has a "Health eKitchen" which allows participants to view recipes focusing on how to use WIC foods.

  When offering this secondary education option to a participant, it is important to explain how WIChealth works and offer guidance on creating an account. The Community Health Training Center website, includes a link to information on how create an account and use WIChealth, including an introduction module.

Secondary Education Contacts

To ensure effectiveness in delivering secondary education contacts, delivery methods should be appealing, creative, relevant, and interactive to engage the participant as well as create opportunities for feedback. Examples include:

1. Utilizing participant-centered counseling approaches through individual in person or telephone education, internet education, group education, virtual education, and self-study modules.

2. Incorporating technology including, but not limited to, telephone, computer modules, social media, and video conferencing that have no cost or barriers to the participant.

Key steps that must be followed to provide effective secondary education contacts:

- WIC staff must follow up with participants before issuing benefits (confirm any questions for the CPA/CPAA, required nutrition education, food package changes).

- Review the last assessment and certification visit note. This would include nutrition risk factors identified, previous nutrition education details and goal(s) identified. This will help tailor the session to the participant's needs. If WIChealth is completed, review the completed lesson topic and goals identified by the participant.

- Follow up on the status of a nutrition or health related condition, medically prescribed formula, prior referral, and assess progress toward goals.

- Offer category-specific education during one-on-one sessions, utilizing any of the nutrition education resources provided in this document, including Illinois WIC handouts and pre-filled circle charts.

- Utilize Illinois WIC Program developed WIC Talks and the WIC Talk Template for group sessions (including virtual education) and self-study modules. If a different template is used, techniques that engage the participant and create an opportunity for feedback must be included.

  WIC Talk Template: Lesson Plan

  The template provides details on topic objectives, targeted audience and risk factors, category specific nutrition education covered, who can present the session, how long the session should take, whether it can be presented in person or virtual (or both), location details, materials, and resources needed. The notes/script section provides a space for an opening and introduction, icebreaker, activities, and discussion. It is recommended to include strategies to engage participants, such as open-ended questions, real-life scenarios, participant experiences, hands on activities, and reflections. The closing and evaluation should review key points, evaluate understanding of the topic, and set goals.

  WIC Talk Template: Self-Study Module

  The template provides details on topic objectives, targeted audience and risk factors, category specific nutrition education covered, and the format (bulletin board or handouts). The implementation section provides a space to plan the set-up if using a bulletin board. The evaluation component must include both participant knowledge and behavior change.

Frontline staff may issue benefits following Addendum 2 *Benefits Issuance By Frontline*.

Conducting Virtual Education

Virtual education offers the same benefits as in-person education, while also improving access, flexibility, and streamlining services. Here are tips for effective secondary education in a virtual setting: (*Adapted from Using Technology to Optimize VENA.)*

- To ensure confidentiality, conduct remote appointments in a private setting.
- Gather materials or resources (e.g., handouts, websites, apps, visual aids) that will be needed during the discussion.
- During introductions, confirm that this is a good time to talk.
- Remember to set the agenda, including the purpose of the visit, the estimated time needed, the collaborative nature of the session, and instructions for what to do if the video or audio call disconnects.
- Like in-person education, virtual education must be appealing, creative, relevant, and interactive to engage the participant as well as create opportunities for feedback.
- Limit note taking during the appointment to key points such as things to remember or come back to during the appointment. Communicate to the participant what you are doing, such as by saying, "I am going to make a note of that, so I remember to share those recipes you asked for."
- If you are doing data entry on the same device, explain to the participant what you are doing.
- After the appointment, follow up by sending any necessary information, such as nutrition education and referral information, using the participant's preferred communication mode (e.g., mail, email, texting). Ensure the information it is sent in a format that can be easily read on a mobile device.

General Tips for Conducting Telephone Appointments

- In the absence of body language, tone of voice becomes even more critical.
- Smile. Research has shown that participants will sense when a speaker is smiling by the tone of the speaker's voice.
- Use a slightly slower pace of speech during telephone appointments.
- Use plain language with limited jargon.
- To account for technology lags, allow a pause after open-ended questions or reflections that may be longer than in-person pauses.

General Tips for Conducting Video Appointments

- Ensure that the participant is comfortable with the technology and has any necessary software downloaded before the appointment. Send the participant instructions about the appointment and how to prepare for it. Include information such as what to expect, technology requirements, and tips such as choosing a quiet place for appointments.

- Prepare your space for remote appointments. Create a professional, inviting appearance for the room. Things to consider should include having a neutral or virtual background, arranging lighting to light the front of your face, positioning the camera for the best eye contact, and ensuring that background noise is limited. For the best sound, use a noise-canceling headset, which has better audio quality and reduces background noise.

- Close out unneeded computer windows before the session to avoid accidentally sharing the wrong screen, especially if sharing content such as growth charts.

- Turn off pop-up notifications for email and/or chat.

- Practice screen sharing. This can make the appointment more engaging for the participants. Some examples of content for screen sharing and discussion are nutrition education materials and resources, and referral information.

- Make sure your WIC employee badge is visible to the participant.

- During the session, ensure eye contact by periodically looking directly at the web camera when talking with the participant.

- Be sensitive to body language such as slouching, crossing the arms, leaning back, or fidgeting. Refrain from eating or drinking during the appointment.

- Allow the participant time to think about responses. Communicate listening by using body language such as leaning forward and nodding.

Addendum 1
Exit Counseling Guidance for PG/BE/BP/NP Categories

The following guidance is intended to assist staff with providing required education during secondary education contacts following IL WIC PM NE 5.2. CPA/CPAA staff should use a participant-centered approach, following VENA guidance, to reinforce important nutrition and health messages and provide anticipatory guidance appropriate for each category.

Individual Nutrition Education Contact

1. Before starting the individual education visit, review the certification visit note for any previous nutrition education details and goal(s) identified. This will help tailor the exit counseling session to the participant's needs.

2. Use the appropriate *Stay Healthy & Connected with WIC* handout as a guide for exit counseling messages (Addendum IL WIC PM NE 5.2) *.

3. The following sample script(s) may be used when providing exit counseling during this visit:

    "Hi, _____. Welcome back to WIC. Today's visit is a nutrition education visit. How have things been going since we last saw you?... At your last visit, we discussed _[education topic/health goal(s)]___. What questions can I answer today about __[nutrition/health/breastfeeding/etc.]___?... Tell me about your progress on your goal(s) so far."

    Probe for additional needs, if appropriate, focusing on exit counseling messages:

    "Can we offer you any information on your WIC food package (e.g., recipes), healthy eating, supplement needs, breastfeeding support, immunizations information, or the risk of using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs?"

4. Offer the appropriate *Stay Healthy & Connected with WIC* handout to the participant:

    "Would you like this handout [we just reviewed/to review later] with information on a variety of nutrition and health topics to take home?"

Internet (WIChealth) Education

1. After receiving participant's WIChealth certificate, the participant must be contacted by a CPA/CPAA.

2. Before calling the participant, on the N/Ed screen in IWIC, review the WIChealth lesson topic and any goals identified by the participant. Also review the certification visit note for any previous nutrition education details and goal(s) identified. This will help tailor the exit counseling session to the participant's needs.

3. When calling the participant, the following sample script may be used:

    "Hi, _____. Thank you for completing your nutrition education lesson online/at WIChealth.org There are just a few things we wanted to follow up on before issuing your next set of benefits; do you have a few minutes to go over those now?"

4. When participant is ready, discuss required items per IL WIC PM NE 5.1(I):

    a) Offer/provide exit counseling messages using the appropriate *Stay Healthy & Connected with WIC* handout.

The following sample script(s) may be used when offering exit counseling:

"I see that you recently completed a lesson on _____ on the WIChealth website, and your goal was _____. We also discussed [education topic/health goal(s)] at your certification visit. What questions can I answer about anything you've learned so far?... Tell me about your progress on your goal(s) so far."

Probe for additional needs, if appropriate, focusing on exit counseling messages: *"WIC food package (e.g., recipes), healthy eating, supplement needs, breastfeeding support, immunizations information, or the risk of using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs?*

Offer to email/mail/text the appropriate *Stay Healthy & Connected with WIC* handout to the participant:

"Is it ok if I send you our handout with information on a variety of nutrition and health topics for you to review later?"

Group nutrition education

1. Group nutrition education for woman category participants should focus on one or more key exit counseling messages and must be incorporated into the group education lesson plans.

2. Offer the appropriate *Stay Healthy & Connected with WIC* handout to the participant:

"Would you like this handout [we just reviewed/to review later] with information on a variety of nutrition and health topics to take home?"

Self-study module

The *Stay Healthy & Connected with WIC* handouts are designed to be used as self- study modules.

1. Provide participant with a copy of the appropriate *Stay Healthy & Connected with WIC* handout; instruct them to read/review the content, and complete #s 1 and 4 while they wait to have a brief visit with the CPA/CPAA.

2. When complete, a CPA/CPAA will then meet with the participant discuss required items per IL WIC PM NE 5.1(I):

   b) Offer/provide exit counseling messages using the appropriate *Stay Healthy & Connected with WIC* handout.

   c) Offer the appropriate *Stay Healthy & Connected with WIC* handout to the participant.

   d) See Individual Education section for sample scripts.

Documenting Exit Counseling

Document that exit counseling was provided on the Nutrition Education screen in WIC MIS. Select the Topic "Exit Counseling" from the dropdown options. If education and/or handout offered and declined, clarify in the note per *NPS: Documenting in WIC MIS.*

*These handouts are intended to be used for category specific education during the certification and secondary education visits, based on the WIC assessment and participant needs.

Addendum 2
Benefit Issuance by Frontline

- Food packages are *assigned* only by the CPA/CPAA on the Food Prescription screen.
- Benefits may be *issued* on the Benefits Issue screen by the CPA/CPAA or Frontline.
- Frontline should use the following decision tree to help identify if they can issue benefits.
- Benefits may be issued remotely following IL WIC PM SFD 8.1.

Is the participant a child?

Yes → | No →

Do you have any questions for the CPA/CPAA today? → Yes →

No ↓

Preview food package assigned on the Food Prescription screen:

Medically Prescribed Formula (MPF) prescribed?

Ask: Would you like to make any changes to your WIC benefits? → Yes →

No ↓

Frontline can:

1. Issue Benefits
2. Ensure participant has the current:
   a. Vendor List
   b. Illinois WIC Authorized Food List
   c. Family Shopping List (secure transmission)

CPA/CPAA will:
3. Answer any questions
4. Provide required education
5. Modify food prescription / Confirm need for MPF*
6. Complete steps 1-2

CPAA must refer MPF to CPA.

See Addendum 1 for required education for "Exit Counseling."

Frontline may issue benefits after the CPA/CPAA has followed up with the participant.