



WIC VOICES: AN INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THIS GUIDE?

This guide provides step-by-step instructions, tips, and ideas for gathering and sharing stories of WIC participants. Stories are the personal details of actual people who are current or past participants in the WIC program and their accounts of their time in WIC. These stories illustrate WIC participants' successes in the program, how they have benefited from the program's services, and sometimes the challenges they have faced.

WHY ARE STORIES IMPORTANT?

WIC is a large, nationwide program of the US government with many implementing structures, policies, and financial concerns. The WIC program is also a large nutrition and public-health operation. But at the heart of it, the WIC program is about people. WIC's mission is to assure healthy pregnancies, healthy birth outcomes, and healthy growth and development for women, infants, and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk. Health is very personal and human-centered. With a focus on something so fundamentally human, the WIC program needs to make this aspect of its work very visible.

Stories are a way to convince others of the value of the cause that WIC is addressing. Talking about the actual health, the well-being of people, and their related effects is a way to use emotion to identify values. And when we connect with our values, we are

sometimes inspired to act. Stories allow us to express our values as lived experience, and they have the power to move others to act as well.

Stories are valuable in many types of social service work, including in WIC's work. Stories can be used:

- » in advocacy work—to convince elected officials to establish favorable and effective policies in WIC
- » to encourage more families to enroll in WIC
- » to help others in a community understand WIC's purpose and benefits in order to encourage those other parts of the community to work with WIC

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide puts the people—specifically WIC participants—in the center and explains how WIC staff can enable WIC participants to speak for themselves and tell their own stories. With the storytellers' permission, WIC staff can use those stories for the purposes mentioned above.

This guide provides the how-to steps for story gathering and collection by WIC staff at the federal, state, or local level.

SOME BACKGROUND

This guide is an outgrowth of the National WIC Association's WIC Voices Project. The project was funded

STORIES ALLOW US TO EXPRESS OUR VALUES AS LIVED EXPERIENCE, AND THEY HAVE THE POWER TO MOVE OTHERS TO ACT AS WELL.

by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and ran from June 2017 to June 2018. The original project was aimed at elevating the voices of WIC participants using multimedia exhibits and briefings as a means to engage policymakers, press, and partner organizations in the conversation to protect WIC. Photo and video testimonials were shaped and developed as part of the project to highlight the WIC program's impact on communities across the country.

In addition to producing tangible products, the original project also helped a group of state and local agencies establish story collection and sharing procedures. This guide attempts to capture that knowledge and share it with additional WIC agencies so more of them can successfully collect and share their own stories and make storytelling a regular part of their work. This is a guide to storytelling based on using the WIC Voices Project as a model.