



# SNAPSHOT: THE ORIGINAL WIC VOICES PROJECT

## BACKGROUND— REALIZING A NEED FOR STORIES

The beginning of the Trump administration in early 2017 led to a number of uncertainties and potential threats to the WIC program—specifically, concerns over threats to WIC funding and the whittling away of WIC eligibility criteria. Additionally, the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) recommended [changes to the WIC food package in its food package review](#) and further supported breastfeeding, enhancing participant choice, and improving overall health. Due to the National WIC Association’s strong support for these recommendations, ensuring that the WIC community was equipped to advocate for these recommendations was pivotal. Under the new administration, concern remained that changes to the WIC food package would be blocked.

NWA knew that a proactive approach to storytelling would allow us to control the narrative and influence public perceptions on these issues. Given the clear evidence demonstrating that WIC’s time-limited services are both efficient and effective at improving the health of low-income children, it was more crucial than ever to educate the general public on the importance of WIC through stories and testimonials. With this in mind, NWA conceptualized the WIC Voices Project to elevate the voices of WIC participants using visual stories and to engage policymakers, media, and partner organizations

in the conversation to promote and protect WIC. Because stories and testimonials are a powerful advocacy tool, photo and video testimonials were shaped and developed to highlight the WIC program’s impact on communities across the country.

## TEAM OVERSEEING THE PROJECT

NWA created the WIC Voices Project in collaboration with the WIC Voices Story Team, a group of staff from various local and state WIC agencies across the nation. Members of the WIC Voices Story Team were trained to do a consistent method of story collection and they, in turn, assembled local teams comprised of students, WIC participants, and WIC staff to collect stories through photography, videography, and written testimonials. The team submitted more than 200 photos and videos to NWA and helped to curate content for the final project showcase.

## THEMES

The project’s overall theme was “Why WIC Matters?” NWA staff and the project’s team members also developed a list of sub-themes that were highlighted in the photos and videos submitted by local and state WIC agency staff. Project sub-themes included the following:

- » “I was a WIC baby” success stories
- » Supporting unexpected pregnancies
- » A world with WIC and a world

- » without WIC
- » Family Strong
- » Who is a WIC family?
- » Kid Strong

## PHOTO AND VIDEO SUBMISSIONS

More than 200 photos and videos from WIC Voices Story Team members were collected. NWA staff and WIC Voices Story Team members curated content for project events during scheduled check-in meetings by selecting the most powerful stories—those they believed needed to be shared with key stakeholders. The submissions highlighted the diverse experiences of WIC participants across the country.

**BECAUSE STORIES AND TESTIMONIALS ARE A POWERFUL ADVOCACY TOOL, PHOTO AND VIDEO TESTIMONIALS WERE SHAPED AND DEVELOPED TO HIGHLIGHT THE WIC PROGRAM’S IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.**

## FINAL PROJECT SHOWCASE

Three exhibits were held for the project and structured as a reception, gallery walk, and a week-long, unstaffed exhibit in the Russell Senate Office Building Rotunda on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. A briefing was held in conjunction with each exhibit to contextualize project materials and to strategically engage policymakers, WIC participants, local and state WIC staff, and partner organizations in the conversation to protect and strengthen the WIC program.

One briefing included three WIC participant families, which shared their personal testimonies and highlighted the importance of the WIC program in their lives. In addition to the briefing, the WIC families met with their members of Congress to educate them on the WIC program.

Using video submissions from the WIC Voices Project along with existing videos, NWA commissioned a video editor to create a [video montage](#). The video includes first-person testimonials from WIC participants and local WIC agency staff and highlights innovative community health projects coordinated by local WIC agencies to build a culture of health.

## OTHER USES

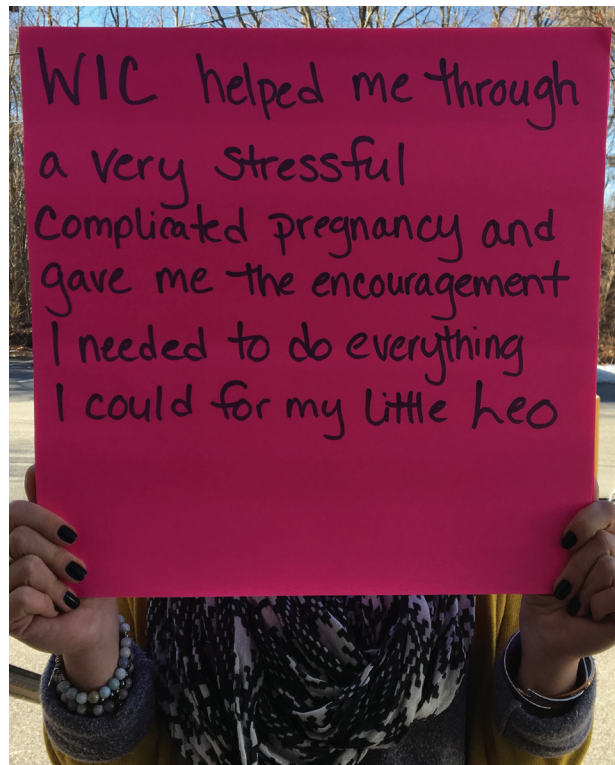
The photos and videos collected through the WIC Voices Project are being used in a variety of advocacy, marketing, outreach, and program-promotion initiatives, including:

- » State and federal advocacy with elected officials
- » WIC promotional materials
- » Social media posts
- » Staff rejuvenation
- » Local WIC agency websites,

- bulletin boards, and Yelp pages
- » WIC 101 trainings
- » Relationship-building with external partners and coalitions
- » Organizational newsletters
- » Conference presentations
- » Placement on [the WIC hub](#)
- » Artwork in a local DC WIC's waiting room

## SUSTAINABILITY AND NEXT STEPS

Story collection is an ongoing effort at NWA. Our vision is to continue to collect general stories from the field and targeted stories to respond to current policy issues as needed and provide members access to our story database through [the WIC hub](#). This website is an online learning community developed by NWA, designed to help WIC staff, researchers, and advocates find WIC related resources to support their work. It will allow us to make the stories we collect accessible to others outside NWA's office.



Left: Photo gathered by Westbay Community Action, Rhode Island, under the theme of "Why WIC Matters?"