



ADVICE AND HELP FROM THE WIC VOICES STORY TEAM MEMBERS

This section provides advice and tips on collecting stories from some of the local WIC agencies that took part in the original WIC Voices Project. It also describes how WIC agency staff themselves benefited by taking part in the project.

PANHANDLE HEALTH DISTRICT (PHD): BONNER COUNTY, IDAHO

WHAT WAS THE CATALYST FOR PHD'S STORYTELLING EFFORTS?

The Sandpoint WIC office location of PHD participated in NWA's WIC Voices Project in the spring of 2018. The project began slowly with WIC staff selecting clients to invite to participate. As clients started to express their appreciation for being invited to tell their stories, the invitation was extended to all WIC clients as they arrived for appointments. A variety of diverse stories were quickly collected. One key to success was the fact that local WIC agency staff were all genuinely motivated to try to help WIC clients, and the clients sensed that. The clients in turn were wanting to help others in their same predicament, and, therefore, were willing to share their stories.

HOW DID STORY COLLECTION IMPACT SERVICE DELIVERY IN YOUR WIC CLINIC?

The NWA WIC Voices Project was challenging and rewarding. It was challenging to get started and ask to relate in a more personal way to our clients. But once we got started, it became nothing but rewarding. We learned so much about our clients, which helped us to be more individualized in our assistance to them. We realized how many families

**"WE LEARNED SO MUCH ABOUT OUR
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use WIC as a stepping stone so that they can get through a tough time in their lives and get on to better things. Many of our families found themselves in circumstances they were not prepared to deal with. They expressed their gratitude for WIC's assistance as they made their way out of a jam. Many families recognized how far they had come after sharing their stories with us. It caused us as a staff to slow down just a little and carefully assess where a family is on their journey. We were reminded to respect and value each family's uniqueness. We now try to meet families where they are and adjust our services ever so slightly to meet their needs.

SHARING OUR WORK

We have also used content from the project to inspire others in the WIC community. Staff from other WIC programs in our state attended the 2018 NWA Annual Education and Training Conference and were inspired to start collecting their own stories. We also shared the stories we collected with others

" My husband is attending college to further his education. While we are tightening the proverbial budget belt, the food we receive from WIC is help we need to keep on our feet.

I am grateful for the valuable benefit WIC provides to my family of five through this transition in life. Sometimes, a little bit can go a long way. **"**

— WIC MOM, IDAHO



in the Panhandle Health District WIC satellite offices. They are now working on their own story voices projects and have started a bulletin board in the main office where stories are proudly displayed. The next step will be to share these stories with the Bonner County Coalition for Health (BCCH) - a local coalition that was established with funding from NWA - in a presentation.

WHAT ADVICE DOES PHD HAVE FOR OTHER WIC AGENCIES?

Our advice to others considering doing a story voices project is run—do not walk—to the starting line. Ask for permission, get a release signed, and then let your clients guide the process. We had no idea that the grandfather who stepped up to take care of his grandchildren was a retired Marine. We had no idea that some of our families had lucrative careers. Then, a business shut down and let their employees go, leaving the families in a dismal financial situation they could not have anticipated, and, therefore, were not prepared for. WIC helped them get through an extremely challenging time. The WIC Voices Project allowed us to connect to our clients in a more intimate way, and, therefore, serve them better. We are hopeful this will help them move off of WIC faster and on to a future where they can help contribute to the success of others.

We all make assumptions. It's human to do so. By collecting stories, we can help to set the record straight. Be the voice for those whose voices are often not heard. The WIC Voices Project is a rewarding and worthwhile experience that you will not regret!



Above: Story gathered by Panhandle Health District, Idaho, under the theme “Who is a WIC Family?” This story was shared on the National WIC Association’s Facebook page, where it received hundreds of views and likes.

SAMAR MCGREGOR, PHFE WIC SENIOR NUTRITIONIST AND LOCAL AGENCY SECTION CO-CHAIR ON NWA’S BOARD OF DIRECTORS, DESCRIBES WHY SHE CHOSE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROJECT:

“ I FELT STRONGLY ABOUT ENGAGING FORMER WIC GRADUATES AND CURRENT WIC PARTICIPANTS TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH WIC. TO ME, THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE TESTIMONIALS COMING FROM PARTICIPANTS SPEAK VOLUMES OF THE VALUE OF THE WIC PROGRAM AND THE GREAT OUTCOMES IT PROVIDES. **”**

DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT DHD #10: NORTHWEST MICHIGAN

WHAT IS THE VALUE ADD OF A STORYTELLING PROJECT?

Participating in NWA's WIC Voices Project was rewarding for DHD #10 staff because it reminded us of how our daily work makes a difference in the lives of WIC families. We felt particularly moved to share the Missaukee mom's story because she demonstrates how the WIC program helps participants in a myriad of ways. This woman was a single mom, attended college while working full time, and needed a little extra help. By using WIC services, she was able to succeed and improve both her and her daughter's life. Therefore, WIC was a valuable stepping stone in getting her to where she is today.

DHD #10'S PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

In order to garner participation from WIC participants, we approached families and asked if they would be willing to share their story. We learned that participants were more than willing to share their testimonials due to the value and validation that participants receive from our WIC staff.

At DHD #10, we truly care about our clients. Building relationships with our families and forming great connections is key to our success. The WIC Voices Project provided an opportunity for our staff to discern the value that our participants see in WIC. Oftentimes, our daily work can feel mundane, stressful, and very busy. As a result, sometimes we lose sight of the bigger picture. Participating in this project allowed us to take a step back and refocus on the positive, invaluable difference we make in the lives of our WIC families. Reading the

“WIC provided resources when I could not do it all on my own. Pregnant during college, I was determined to get my degree. WIC provided formula for my baby and relieved a huge financial stress while I was also trying to pay for college.”



Now I have my bachelor of science in criminal justice. I am two years into my career in law enforcement. I am grateful that I had WIC to help me in my time of need. ”

— WIC MOM, MICHIGAN

participants' testimonials enabled us to better understand the importance of WIC in their lives by raising voices that typically don't speak out. The WIC Voices Project gave us a new perspective and prompted us to focus on our service delivery and motivations for working for WIC.

WHAT ADVICE DOES DHD #10 HAVE FOR OTHER WIC AGENCIES?

The biggest challenge we faced while participating in WIC Voices was the short turnaround time, but, nonetheless, we had a great time gathering our stories. One piece of advice we have for other WIC agencies

“PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT ALLOWED US TO TAKE A STEP BACK AND REFOCUS ON THE POSITIVE, INVALUABLE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE IN THE LIVES OF OUR WIC FAMILIES.”

Left: Story gathered by District Health Department #10, Michigan, under the theme of “Mom Strong.”

interested in doing a story collection project is there's no need to be afraid to ask clients to share their story. Sometimes we worry that we might be bothering participants, or we're afraid of hearing no. We learned to overcome these fears and found that participants were eager to share their testimonials. We would also encourage agencies to have a separate appearance release form from your parent organization in addition to the general release form that is shared when collecting participant stories or to combine both release forms into one form for simplicity's sake.

SHARING OUR WORK

We are currently using a variety of channels to disseminate stories from the WIC Voices Project. The work was displayed at a community open house and the Annual Michigan State WIC Conference. In October 2018, our Photo Voice project will be displayed at the Michigan Public Health Premier Conference. Moving forward, we plan on making additional boards for each of our ten counties to display at various events.

CRESCENT CITY WIC SERVICES, INC. (CCWIC): JEFFERSON PARISH, LOUISIANA

WHAT INSPIRED CCWIC TO DO A STORYTELLING PROJECT?

During our participation in [NWA's CDC project](#), NWA staff urged us to take our communications and social media engagement to the next level. Mary Schultheis, Executive Director for CCWIC, became fully engaged in snapping photos and videos to highlight the project's efforts. This gave CCWIC the opportunity to integrate creativity and passion into our WIC work by way of our newly found social media platform. With a new focus on communications, we have been able to share visual stories that engage clients across all generations.

WIC VOICES STORY TEAM

The opportunity to participate in NWA's WIC Voices Project allowed us to come face-to-face with clients and hear about the positive impact that WIC is playing in their lives. We also engaged staff so that we could provide both agency and client perspectives on WIC's importance in our community. Our approach to the WIC Voices Project consisted of two angles:

1. What is the world like with WIC?
2. What would the world be like without WIC?

Approaching the project, one key factor of success was our agency's longstanding tradition of providing excellent customer service. This made it easy to engage our clients and get them to share their WIC stories. Hearing their testimonials, as well as the passion that WIC staff exuded

during conversations on this topic, was a reminder of the good that WIC does for the world.

WAS THERE ALIGNMENT WITH STATE AND LOCAL PRIORITIES?

NWA's WIC Voices Project also overlapped nicely with the Louisiana State WIC marketing campaign. The [Louisiana State WIC video](#) features interviews from CCWIC staff and clients, and it's now being used across the entire state of Louisiana. In addition, the state has also put out brochures and other marketing materials with pictures of CCWIC participants. We were so honored to participate in both projects, helping to promote the great services that

WIC has to offer. It has created so much excitement here at CCWIC, that now when the cameras do come out, everyone is ready to share their story about why WIC matters.

“ THIS PROJECT CREATED SO MUCH EXCITEMENT HERE AT CCWIC, THAT NOW WHEN THE CAMERAS DO COME OUT, EVERYONE IS READY TO SHARE THEIR STORY ABOUT WHY WIC MATTERS. ”



“ WIC services have benefited my family in so many ways. Due to financial strain, the services provided have helped me in being able to provide fresh fruits and veggies to my child. They have also allowed me to get support from the staff of Crescent City WIC services. As a first-time WIC participant, I was very hesitant (pride), but the staff made the process easier and welcoming. As a community advocate, I would always recommend WIC services to families and mothers because I knew how much the family would benefit from the services.

Now, I am benefiting from the same services I would recommend to so many. WIC services are needed throughout the community due to the lack of nutritious eating. With the understanding of the various services provided through WIC, I have seen the benefits not only with myself but also with my child. ”

- WIC MOM, LOUISIANA

TRI-COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT (TCHD): COLORADO

TCHD used photos and testimonials from their WIC Voices Project to create a two-page flier highlighting its WIC program. The document was designed with the national WIC brand from NWA's Recruitment and Retention Campaign and is a great example of aligning efforts on multiple projects to enhance brand identity and the WIC participant experience.

This document is a wonderful resource for state and local WIC agencies looking to refresh promotional materials in their clinics or seeking inspiration and ideas for sharing WIC participant stories.

TCHD fully embraced the WIC Voices Project and used its stories for state and federal advocacy, social media posts, staff rejuvenation, WIC 101 training sessions, community outreach, e-publications, conference presentations, WIC promotional materials, and its agency website. Recognizing story collection as an added benefit to their core clinic functions, TCHD decided to continue their story collection efforts after NWA's WIC Voices project ended.

WIC: EMPOWERING FAMILIES, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

Please direct all questions to Quinney Harris, Director of Health Equity and Community Partnerships, at qharris@nwica.org or 202-232-5492.

Right: Story gathered by Tri-County Health Department, Colorado, under the theme of "Why WIC Matters to Me."

"Doy Gracias a Dios por programas como WIC. Ellos me ayudaron no solo con comida para mí y mis bebés, sino también con consejos y motivación para poder amamantar. Gracias WIC no hubiera podido hacerlo sin ustedes."



I give thanks to God for programs like WIC. They helped me with not only food for me and my babies, but also counseling and motivation to be able to breastfeed. Thank-you WIC, I couldn't have made it without out.

— WIC MOM, COLORADO



HOW WIC HELPS
ADAMS, ARAPAHOE
& DOUGLAS COUNTIES

WHAT IS WIC?

WIC stands for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. WIC is the nation's most successful and cost-effective public health nutrition program. WIC provides wholesome food, nutrition and breastfeeding education, as well as community support for income-eligible women who are pregnant or postpartum, infants, and children up to five years old. Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) WIC has 11 locations throughout Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas County.

FUN FACTS

OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE RATES FOR CHILDREN 2-4 ENROLLED IN TCHD WIC CONTINUE TO DROP FROM 22.1% IN 2012 TO 19.3% IN 2017

84% OF TCHD WIC MOMS INITIATE BREASTFEEDING THEIR INFANTS EXCEEDING THE HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020 GOAL OF 81.3%

1 IN 6 COLORADO CHILDREN ARE EXPERIENCING HUNGER. TCHD WIC'S AVERAGE FOOD PACKAGE OF \$53 PER PERSON, PER MONTH GIVES FAMILIES ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS

FROM OUR PARTICIPANTS



WIC is nutritious foods: "I am especially thankful for the wide variety of foods to pick from. I love that the food I get for my family is healthy and nutritious."

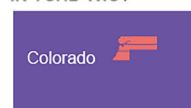


WIC is knowledge and resources: "WIC provided me with the tools I need to be a successful parent and armed me with the knowledge to be a better parent to my son. I am forever grateful to this program."



WIC is breastfeeding support: "As a full-time student, I wasn't prepared as well as I had hoped when I discovered I was pregnant. The WIC benefits have allowed me to stress less about meeting my son's breastfeeding needs."

WHO PARTICIPATES IN TCHD WIC?



22,444
Total WIC
participants
each month



5,639
Infants (under
the age of 1)



5,594
Women
(pregnant,
breastfeeding,
post-partum)



11,211
Children (aged 1
until their 5th
birthday)

Tri-County Health Department WIC Participation Monthly Averages FY 2017

