

New Release: AHEAD 3.0 Journey Map Report and Journey Map

The National WIC Association is excited to announce the release of the Advancing Health Equity to Achieve Diversity and Inclusion (AHEAD) 3.0: Enhancing Equity throughout the WIC Participant Journey, including both a journey map and journey map report.

AHEAD 3.0: Journey Map Report

Guided by an equity-focused approach, this evaluation integrates evidence from a comprehensive literature review of WIC participant experiences, analysis of the **2023 Multi-State WIC Participant Satisfaction Survey**, engagement with NWA's Participant Advisory Council (PAC), and focus groups with WIC participants across five racial and ethnic identity groups.

This report highlights the WIC participant journey across six phases: WIC awareness, application and enrollment, nutrition education and appointments, critical communication, shopping with WIC benefits, and retention and recertification. It also provides recommendations to better meet the needs of diverse WIC participants.

AHEAD 3.0 Journey Map

This journey map illustrates the WIC participant experience across six phases and highlights how experiences vary by racial and ethnic identity. It emphasizes key facilitators, barriers, and participant testimony throughout each phase.

Read the AHEAD 3.0 **Journey Map Report** and explore the **Journey Map!**

Upcoming Webinars

Where Clinics Can Act: Barriers, Facilitators, and Opportunities for Improvement Webinar

Time: 3:00-4:00 PM EST

When: May 21, 2026

[Register here!](#)

Join us for part two of a three-part series within the **[Advancing Health Equity to Achieve Diversity and Inclusion in WIC \(AHEAD\) 3.0: Enhancing Equity throughout the WIC Participant Journey project](#)**. The session will focus on translating participants' insights into practical improvements that WIC clinics can implement to strengthen the participant experiences. Building on findings from the AHEAD 3.0 Journey Map Report, the presentation highlights barriers families face at different stages of engagement—from enrollment and appointments to benefit use and recertification. It examines how clinic environments, communication practices, and administrative processes shape participant trust, dignity, and continued participation. Attendees will explore key facilitators that support successful engagement and identify clinic-level actions that can reduce barriers and improve service delivery. The session will conclude with a discussion of short- and mid-term opportunities for improvement, helping attendees prioritize realistic changes that strengthen access and participant satisfaction.

AHEAD 3.0 Journey Map Report Summary: Findings, Recommendations, and Next Steps Webinar

Time: 3:00-4:00 PM EST

When: June 25, 2026

[Register here!](#)

This webinar is the final session of a three-part series within the **[Advancing Health Equity to Achieve Diversity and Inclusion in WIC \(AHEAD\) 3.0: Enhancing Equity throughout the WIC Participant Journey project](#)**. The session highlights key findings across the full WIC journey, exploring and highlighting both strengths and barriers that shape participant engagement. Drawing on survey data, focus groups, literature, and insights from the PAC, the presentation explores key themes such as relationships, administrative burden, and cultural responsiveness. Attendees will leave with actionable recommendations to strengthen WIC systems and support sustained participation.

Good luck to all IBCLC Exam Candidates!

Are you sitting for the IBCLC exam this spring? Your dedication to supporting WIC breastfeeding families and advancing lactation care in your community is truly inspiring and making a difference. The long hours of studying and preparation have led to this moment. The CIP-WIC team is cheering you on and looking forward to celebrating your success!



Celebrating Black Maternal Health Week

Rooted in Justice & Joy

Every year, the **Black Mamas Matter Alliance (BMMA)** launches a themed campaign for Black Maternal Health Week (April 11-17) to inspire activism and amplify the lived experiences of Black mothers and Black birthing people. **BMMA** is a Black women-led coalition that works to improve Black maternal health and rights by advocating for policy change, conducting research, building community power, and shifting culture for Black justice. Utilize the resources below to raise awareness, activism, and build community around Black maternal health in your communities.

CIPWIC Updates

NWA Publishes its Competent Paraprofessional Authority (CPPA) Landscape Report!

CIP-WIC is proud to announce the release of **NWA's CPPA Landscape Report**. A continuation of work from **AHEAD 2.0: Strengthening and Diversifying the WIC Workforce**, a \$1.2 million grant-funded project through The Walmart Foundation. One of the project's four key objectives was to explore the landscape of CPPAs by conducting focus groups and surveys to understand barriers to recruitment, retention, and career growth. Therefore, this report discusses the opportunities and barriers for recruitment and retention of competent paraprofessional authorities (CPPA) in WIC.

A term not universally used in WIC, both USDA's **Nutrition Service Standards** and **Breastfeeding Policy Guidance** define CPPA as an individual without extended professional

training in health, nutrition, or clinical management who is trained and given ongoing supervision to provide a basic service or function. The role of this report is to shed light on the vital role that CPPAs play in WIC while discussing ways in which the WIC community can support this important subset of WIC professionals.

Special thanks to NWA's WIC Workforce Development Committee who worked tirelessly to not only draft and administer the survey questions for the report but authored the report as well.

Keep Up with CIP-WIC!

Want to stay in the loop with everything the CIP-WIC team is working on? Visit the **CIP-WIC webpage** to explore our priorities, work portfolios, committees and workgroups, and ways to get involved.

Black History Month

Spotlight: Lifelong Lessons in Lactation with Dr. Kimarie Bugg



Dr. Kimarie Bugg made history as the first African American International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) in 1987. Last year, she was featured as a guest speaker on the *Evidence Based Birth* podcast channel, where she shared a deeper look into her lifelong commitment to lactation, health equity, and breaking down systemic barriers to breastfeeding.

As Co-Founder of **Reaching Out to Sisters Everywhere, Inc. (ROSE)** and **Reaching Our Brothers everywhere (ROBE)**, Dr. Bugg has advanced community-driven solutions that

center African American families. Through innovative **programs** like Breastfeeding Summits, ROSE Community Transformers, ROSE Breastfeeding Clubs, The Drip, and others, Dr. Bugg highlights the power of policy change, workforce development, and healing generational trauma to improve breastfeeding outcomes.

Tune in to hear more about how Dr. Bugg has changed the landscape of lactation care and opened doors for future generations!

Dr. Bugg is Black History- past, present and future!

Spotlight: Feed Me The Facts Podcast



Diversify Dietetics, co-founded by Deanna Belleny Lewis and Tamara Melton (RDNs) is on a mission to transform the nutrition field by increasing racial and ethnic diversity and uplifting nutrition leaders of color. Their podcast, **Feed Me the Facts**, brings that mission to life.

Every episode blends expert insight with powerful personal stories that inspire meaningful change. Whether you're just beginning your journey in nutrition or are a seasoned professional, this is your space to learn, connect, and be part of a more inclusive future in nutrition!

National Children's Dental Health Month

Healthy Teeth, Happy Smiles

Supporting your child's healthy diet and dental hygiene during infancy and toddlerhood plays an important role in preventing tooth decay later in life. During breastfeeding consults, share center African American families. Through innovative **programs** like Breastfeeding Summits, ROSE Community Transformers, ROSE Breastfeeding Clubs, The Drip, and others, Dr. Bugg highlights the power of policy change, workforce development, and healing generational trauma to improve breastfeeding outcomes.

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the care tips below from the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) and encourage parents to build habits that keep their children's teeth strong, healthy, and cavity-free. Helping your child maintain a healthy diet and good dental hygiene during infancy and toddlerhood helps prevent tooth decay as they grow older.

Tips to keep teeth healthy!

Bottle-Free bed
Sugars in breast milk and formula can remain on teeth and increase decay risk if not brushed away before bedtime.

Importance of water
Water helps clean a child's mouth by supporting saliva flow and washing away bacteria that cause tooth decay.

Skip sugary drinks
The AAP advises against giving juice to babies under 12 months. When children do have juice, it should be diluted with equal parts water and juice.

Introduce cups at 1 year old
Using a cup helps reduce tooth decay. Offer milk at meals and plain water between meals.

Clean mouths after every meal
Clean your baby's gums with a clean, damp washcloth after feedings. When teeth appear, brush with a soft-bristled toothbrush using a rice-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.

Limit sticky treats
Sticky foods can cling to children's teeth and create an ideal environment for bacteria to grow.

Happy Valentine's Day from CIP-WIC!

Share this strawberry ladybug recipe from the [Monongalia County Health Department](#) with your participants and let this snack serve as a reminder that caring for your heart is the sweetest gift of all.

National Nutrition Month

"Discover the Power of Nutrition"



This year's National Nutrition Month® theme, "Discover the Power of Nutrition," from the **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND)**, is a great opportunity to connect everyday food choices to the real lives of the families you serve.

AND provides **resources**, available in 7 languages, that can help you share food safety reminders and tips for enjoying more fruits and vegetables. You can share the printable nutrition word search to keep kids engaged and entertained during in-person appointments. Together, we can make healthy food choices more realistic (and more delicious) for families.

National Nutrition Month® is a registered service mark of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Happy IBCLC Day

March 4, 2026

International Lactation Consultant Day[®], celebrated on the first Wednesday in March, honors the more than 37,000 certified IBCLCs worldwide who provide expert, evidence-based lactation care. These clinical specialists help families navigate feeding challenges with skill and compassion.



"I became an IBCLC because I believe families deserve compassionate, evidence-based support during one of the most vulnerable and powerful seasons of their lives. Helping parents meet their feeding goals isn't just clinical work—it's advocacy, equity, and care in action."

-Stacy Davis, MPH, IBCLC

CIP-WIC Director



National WIC Association

Within the WIC program, IBCLCs play a vital role in expanding access to high-quality lactation support, improving health outcomes, and advancing equity for families facing barriers to care.

The **International Lactation Consultant Association[®] (ILCA)** offers resources to celebrate IBCLCs- download the 2026 toolkit **flyer** and spotlight your team in your clinic.



We Have International Board Certified Lactation Consultants[®] (IBCLC[®]) on Staff

IBCLCs are the highest-accredited experts specializing in breastfeeding and lactation care.

IBCLCs can help with...

- Establishing an optimal breastfeeding routine
- Finding the best breastfeeding position for you and baby
- Issues related to latching, milk supply, breast anomalies, cleft palate, tongue ties, and more
- Breastfeeding pain and conditions like mastitis and plugged ducts
- Common and complex lactation challenges

Your image here

Ask to meet with an IBCLC today!


Developed by
International Lactation Consultant Association

Happy RDN Day

March 11, 2026

Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) are at the heart of WIC's mission. Every day, they empower families with nutrition education and compassionate support that helps promote lifelong health.


In honor of RDN Day, we interviewed a few of our RDNs here at NWA to hear what inspired them to pursue this work, what they've learned along the way, and what keeps them passionate about serving WIC families.



National WIC Association

Sarah Younker, RDN, MBA, CPT


"The most important tool in my dietetic toolkit is flexibility. We are always learning new things about nutrition, and everyone has unique nutritional needs and a unique life circumstance that impacts what, why and how they eat. As a country the food landscape is always changing due to shifts in public policy, the food supply, and trends. As an RDN I have to be flexible so I can work effectively with everyone, in a huge variety of situations. It's a fun challenge!"



National WIC Association

Ali Hard, MS, RD

"I became an RDN because I wanted to bring a credible, science-based nutrition background to work on policies and systems change to transform our food system"



National WIC Association

Darlana Birch, MBA, RDN

"I became an RDN because I believe that optimal nutrition is a human right, not one that should only be accessible to those who can afford access."

CIPWIC Updates

Open CIP-WIC's Research-to-Practice (R2P) Newsletter!

Explore the latest research, where we highlight:

- ✓ Key Findings from USDA, NWA, and Academic Research
- ✓ NWA Update on Research Requests
- ✓ WIC Caseload Trends and Insights
- ✓ Requests to Spotlight Your Work

Register Now!

How Families Experience the WIC Journey: Centering Participant Voices to Strengthen Practice Webinar

Time: 3:00-4:00 PM EST

When: March 19, 2026

Join us for part one of a three-part webinar series within the **Advancing Health Equity to Achieve Diversity and Inclusion in WIC (AHEAD)3.0** project and explore how families experience the WIC journey through the voices of WIC participants themselves. From first awareness and enrollment to benefit use and recertification, this session draws on findings from a mixed-methods evaluation, highlighting where WIC works well and where friction points may undermine trust, dignity, and retention.

Attendees will examine how experiences vary across racial, ethnic, and geographic contexts, and why high satisfaction can coexist with real-world challenges. Attendees will leave with a shared narrative of the WIC journey and practical, participant-informed insights to support reflection and continuous improvement across WIC programs.

[Register Here](#)

Get Ready for the 2026 Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) Season with NWA's Resources!

As we gear up for the 2026 FMNP season, NWA is excited to share a suite of practical resources designed to support WIC Agencies at every stage of FMNP implementation and promotion.

Drawing on findings from NWA's **FMNP Landscape Scan Report**, the following resources highlight promising practices, common challenges, and opportunities to improve accessibility, participation, and redemption across FMNP, eFMNP, and CVB programs nationwide.

- An **FMNP Implementation Toolkit** with field-tested strategies to strengthen program delivery, engage farmers and participants, integrate technology, and boost redemption.
- An **FMNP Social Media Toolkit** with ready-to-use, equity-focused content to raise awareness, educate participants and farmers, and promote FMNP effectively throughout the season.

Whether you're refining your FMNP operations or looking for new ways to reach families and farmers, these resources are here to help you maximize impact in 2026!

Join the Virtual FMNP Community of Practice



Launched in 2025, this online space is designed to help agencies strengthen FMNP implementation and increase the use of FMNP and WIC Cash Value Benefit (CVB) benefits at farmers' markets. Members can exchange ideas, share tools, access resources, and collaborate on strategies to expand impact and equity.

Access the group [here](#) and click "Join" to connect with peers, share best practices, review FMNP resources, and strengthen WIC FMNP together!

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