



ADVOCACY TOOLKIT: THE POWER OF WIC ADVOCACY

NWA'S MISSION

The National WIC Association (NWA) provides its members with tools and leadership to expand and sustain effective nutrition services mothers and young children.

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is one of the greatest tools to protect and strengthen WIC. There are many forms of advocacy - including public education, lobbying, media outreach, regulatory work, and more. At its core, advocacy is defined as support for a particular program, cause, or policy.

While NWA's Public Policy Team advocates for WIC to policymakers, WIC priorities gain more traction when the WIC provider community is speaking with its collective voice. Policymakers need to hear directly from their constituents and the WIC providers who can attest to how WIC is implemented in the communities that they represent.

WHY DOES ADVOCACY MATTER?

It is critical that WIC providers, participants, and partners **educate** members of Congress on WIC in order to build support and keep members informed about WIC.

WIC providers and participants know this program best. You offer a unique, firsthand perspective that is attuned to the present challenges and opportunities for the program.

Advocacy efforts by WIC staff in State and local agencies have led to tangible results that have improved WIC services. For example, as a result of the WIC community rising in collective advocacy, we saw:

- Establishment of the national Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program in 2004;
- Revisions to the WIC food package in 2009;
- Long-term waiver flexibilities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including remote WIC services; and
- The WIC benefit bump to issue more vegetables and fruits to WIC families during the pandemic.

WIC participants, providers, and partners have the power to make positive program changes. The more we can collectively lift up our WIC voice, the stronger the support, awareness, and investment we build for WIC.

TYPES OF ADVOCACY

There are different types of advocacy that encompass a wide range of activities. There is a way for every WIC stakeholder to participate and engage in WIC advocacy in the way they feel most comfortable!

EDUCATION

Education is the foundation of advocacy. Policymakers need to hear from staff and participants about how programs like WIC directly impact their communities and constituents.

Public education lays the groundwork for members of Congress to make informed decisions about legislative action and administrative oversight. Legislators who are informed and in routine contact with their WIC providers can be more responsive to changing circumstances and more inclusive of WIC priorities in broader legislative efforts.

You can educate policymakers in different ways, from participating in a social media campaign to hosting a clinic tour to meeting with legislative staffers via Zoom. Public education stays focused on the situation on the ground - such as sharing personal experience providing or receiving WIC services, the successes and challenges experienced in a clinic, or recent research and data. Public education efforts don't directly influence legislation, but are essential for ensuring that legislative efforts reflect the practical realities of administering a national program.

LOBBYING

Lobbying is a type of advocacy that intends to influence the outcome of specific legislation. If you are a WIC provider, it is important to assess your organizational policies on lobbying and work culture to assess whether you feel comfortable lobbying.

If you are still unsure whether appropriate for you to lobby on paid work-time, you can use lunch breaks, after hours, or personal time when you are not on work time. As a personal citizen, it is your First Amendment right to lobby and engage with your policymakers.

