

Chapter 10 Outreach

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Outreach is an important component of the WIC Program to assure that potentially eligible individuals are aware of the Program and that current participants continue to stay active. The purpose of this chapter is to provide policy and guidance on the purposes of conducting outreach activities; how to work with the media; eliminating barriers to participation; creating referral agreements; and documenting outreach efforts.

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Required Local Agency Written Policies and Procedures

- Local Agencies must have a written policy describing the strategies used by them to target individuals in priorities I and II for enrollment (Section 2, Page 3).

Purpose of Outreach

The purpose of outreach is to inform potential applicants about the WIC Program and to encourage current participants to continue with the WIC Program.

Outreach includes telling local health, social service, and community organizations about the work that WIC does so that staff at these community organizations can refer their clients to WIC. Likewise, Local WIC Agency staff should learn what these agencies do so that they can refer WIC participants to other community health and social services.

■ **Outreach materials available from the Nutrition Services Branch.**

The Nutrition Services Branch (NSB) has outreach materials available for use by local WIC agencies. These materials are described in Attachment 1, page 7. The outreach materials may be ordered using the NSB requisition form. Many of the resources can also be found on the Nutrition Services Branch website, www.nutritionnc.com. Most of the materials have space available in which the local phone number and address of the WIC agency may be added. For more information, visit the Nutrition Services Branch website www.nutritionnc.com.

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Targeting Priority Groups I and II

It is a program requirement that Local WIC Programs have a written policy describing the strategies used by them to target individuals in priorities I and II for enrollment.

- **Priority Groups.** As defined in the program regulations, there is a priority system that divides applicants/participants into seven (7) priority groups.

Priority I: Pregnant women, breastfeeding women and infants at nutritional risk as demonstrated by hematological or anthropometric measurements or other documented nutritionally related medical conditions which demonstrate the child's need for supplemental foods.

Priority II: Except for those infants who qualify for Priority I, infants up to six months of age of Program participants who participated during pregnancy, and infants up to six months of age born of women who were not program participants during pregnancy but whose medical records document that they were at nutritional risk during pregnancy due to nutritional conditions detectable by biochemical or anthropometric measurements or other documented nutritionally related medical conditions which demonstrated the person's need for supplemental foods.

Priority III: Children at nutritional risk as demonstrated by hematological or anthropometric measurements or other documented nutritionally related medical conditions which demonstrate the need for supplemental foods.

Priority IV: Pregnant women, breastfeeding women and infants at nutritional risk because of an inadequate dietary pattern and eco-social criteria.

Priority V: Children at nutritional risk because of an inadequate dietary pattern and eco-social criteria.

Priority VI: Postpartum women at nutritional risk.

Priority VII: Individuals certified for WIC solely due to homelessness or migrancy.

- **Strategies for Targeting Priority I and II Individuals.** Strategies to target Priorities I and II may include but are not limited to:
 - ▶ Periodic outreach to OB-GYNs, pediatricians and family practitioners using outreach materials such as bookmarks, outreach letters, and in-service presentations.
 - ▶ Accepting walk-in certifications for pregnant women, infants, and postpartum women;
 - ▶ Use of temporary eligibility for pregnant women (see Chapter 6C).
 - ▶ Outreach strategies that target child care centers, schools, shelters, and community centers.

■ Establishing Hospital Certifications

Prior to establishing procedures for certifying individuals outside of the local agency, staff must decide if it is an efficient and effective utilization of agency resources. Some things for staff to consider during this decision making process include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Does the local agency have the resources to expand services to a setting outside of its agency? How will certification, food benefits, nutrition education, and breastfeeding support be provided in accordance with program policy?
- Does the identified partner agency interact with a sufficient number of WIC eligible clients to make the effort an efficient use of WIC resources?
- Does the identified partner agency wish to coordinate with WIC? If so, how & why?

If WIC staff feel the effort is worthwhile to pursue, they should meet with staff in the identified agency to discuss the proposal and its implementation. Discussion topics must include WIC program integrity requirements, collection of medical and nutritional information, provision of program benefits (i.e., food, nutrition education and breastfeeding support), space and internet needs, confidentiality issues, liability issues, client access, and roles and responsibilities of the staff of both agencies. If there is agreement to pursue the effort, WIC staff will need to complete an agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the agencies involved that describes how WIC services will be provided. The MOU must be approved in writing by the local agency's Regional Nutrition Consultant before any WIC Program services may be provided. Changes to any existing MOU must be reviewed and approved in writing by the local agency's Regional Nutrition Consultant.

Annual Media Release

It is a program requirement that on an annual basis, each Local WIC Agency send a media release or general advertisement once a year to relevant print and/or broadcast media.

- **Requirements of the Annual Media Release.** The following information must be included in the annual media release. Refer to Attachment 2, Appendix A for a sample press release and go to NC WIC web site at www.nutritionnc.com for an example of a WIC advertisement.
 - WIC eligibility criteria
 - Program benefits, including:
 - nutrition education and counseling
 - breastfeeding promotion and support
 - referrals to other health and community resources
 - food instruments and cash-value vouchers for healthy foods.
 - Physical address of the local agency
 - The USDA Nondiscrimination Statement: See Chapter 4 for the complete statement.
- **Non-English Media Releases.** If your area has a substantial number of residents who speak a language other than English, translate the annual media release into the appropriate language(s).
- **Documentation of the Annual Media Release.** The local agency must maintain documentation of the release such as a copy of the printed media release, or a copy of a broadcast schedule for radio or television.
- **Working with the News Media.** The first step to working with the news media is to locate the appropriate newspapers, magazines, and radio and television stations. A personal contact with an editor or station manager is always helpful. Refer to Attachment 2: Guidelines for Building Media Relations. Possible media sources follow.
 - Print Media
 - newspapers, including weekly community papers
 - periodicals, including magazines published in your area
 - community newsletters
 - trade association journals
 - Broadcast Media
 - radio stations, including community college and university radio stations
 - television stations, including network affiliated stations, Spanish stations, cable-access stations, and community-access stations

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Eliminating Barriers to Participation

Sometimes, WIC Programs inadvertently create barriers to program participation. These barriers may especially impact participation by individuals who work and/or attend school. Time specific appointments should be made available to these individuals so as to minimize time spent away from work and school.

Local agencies should periodically review their procedures, identify any potential barriers to participation, and make plans to eliminate the barriers. The table below outlines some common barriers to participation and approaches to resolving them.

Potential Barriers

Approaches to Eliminating Barriers

Inconvenient and/or limited hours of operation

- offer lunch time, evening, and/or weekend clinic hours.
- recommend that participants use proxies to pick up food instruments (*The opportunity to assign a proxy must be offered to each participant at each certification. Refer to Chapter 8 for more information*).

Participant has difficulty keeping appointments

- accommodate walk-in applicants and participants, when possible.
- coordinate appointments with other family members.
- coordinate appointments with other clinics, when possible.
- use automated dialers to provide an appointment reminder message.

Participant has transportation difficulties

- establish satellite sites.
- recommend that participants use proxies to pick up food instruments.
- schedule time specific appointment to facilitate transportation arrangements for individual.

Language barriers

- recruit bilingual staff (add preference for bilingual qualification to all job postings).
- include appropriate languages on all clinic signage.
- offer training in cultural competence.
- support staff efforts to learn/improve non-native language skills.

Limited coordination of WIC Program with other agency clinics

- schedule WIC clinic visits to coincide with prenatal, postpartum family planning, or well child clinic visits, when possible.
- use medical information from other sources when available, but do not require it.
- coordinate nutrition education contacts.
- establish a child-friendly waiting room and clinic area.

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Program Referrals

To increase referrals, WIC Programs must establish referral arrangements with other groups. Referrals occur when other agencies send their participants to WIC or local agencies direct WIC participants to other services. By learning about other organizations, local agencies can make it easier for their participants to find services that they need. Agencies should work to establish relationships with other social service organizations such as Medicaid and Food and Nutrition Services.

- **Required Referrals.** WIC staff must provide written information at certification or recertification to adult participants and adult individuals applying for the WIC Program for themselves or on behalf of others about the following:
 - **Medicaid Program** WIC staff will provide Medicaid program materials which includes information regarding income limits, according to family size, applicable to pregnant women, infants and children up to age 5. Information about the income limits for Health Check (State Medicare) and NC Health Choice (State Children’s Health Insurance Program) is available at the following website www.NCHealthyStart.org and is updated every spring. Anyone at or below the NC Health Choice upper limit for income eligibility should be encouraged to apply.
 - **Food Assistance Programs (if waiting lists are in use)** In the event that an applicant is placed on a waiting list (see Chapter 6C), the applicant or their parent/care provider must be referred to other available food assistance programs such as the Food and Nutrition Services, food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, or other emergency meal providers.
- **Creating Referral Arrangements with Other Community Agencies and Services.** WIC staff should encourage staff from other programs to refer their clients to the WIC Program. Similarly, WIC staff should refer clients to these programs as appropriate. Refer to Attachment 1 for a listing of programs with which WIC should consider establishing a referral arrangement. Consider joining community advisory boards, social service organizations, faith based or Latino center to create new relationships. To create referral arrangements:
 - **Increase awareness.** WIC Programs can accomplish this by distributing literature and posters. Refer to Attachment 1 for a list of outreach materials available from the Nutrition Services Branch.
 - **Make contact.** WIC Programs can share information through correspondence. But it is often more effective to establish personal contact. That way, a group can ask questions and can feel more comfortable sending its clients to WIC. Consider working with the groups listed in Attachment 1, pages 1-7.

- ▶ **Provide training.** The first step to creating a referral arrangement is to learn about all the groups involved. To teach the other groups how WIC operates, be sure to share the following information:
 - description of the WIC Program;
 - eligibility criteria for WIC;
 - location of local agencies and outlying sites (including addresses and telephone numbers);
 - USDA Nondiscrimination Statement; and
 - a contact person to handle future questions.Be sure to bring brochures and/or fact sheets so the partner agency can share WIC Program information with others.

- ▶ **Assure participant confidentiality.** Mutual referral agreements should include provisions to protect participant confidentiality. The Nutrition Services Branch and local agencies may not freely give out information obtained from WIC Program applicants and participants found in the medical record or computer system. Refer to Chapter 16: Confidentiality for further information.

Documentation of Outreach Activities

It is a program requirement that Local WIC Agencies maintain a file of all outreach/referral activities. This file should include the following information.

- **Media Releases.** Retain a copy of all media releases (*such as press releases, newspaper ads, radio and television public service announcements*), including the following information:
 - ▶ list of media organizations who received the releases;
 - ▶ a copy of the printed media release; and/or
 - ▶ a copy of a broadcast schedule for radio or television.

- **Agencies Contacted.** Maintain a list of all agencies and organizations contacted for outreach/referral. This list can include group training/information sessions. Include the following information for each outreach contact.
 - ▶ name, telephone, physical address of group and email address;
 - ▶ date and method of contact;
 - ▶ brief outline or description of information/training provided; and
 - ▶ other notes.

- **Training Activities Attended by WIC Staff.** Maintain a list of WIC staff who attend information trainings held by other organizations in the outreach network. Include the following information for each event.
 - ▶ name, telephone, and address of sponsoring group;
 - ▶ list of WIC staff who attended; and
 - ▶ brief description of the event/information shared, (agenda if available).

- **Referral Arrangements.** Maintain a description of all referral arrangements. Consider establishing referral arrangements with the organizations listed in Attachment 1. Include the following information in the file for each referral arrangement.
 - ▶ name, telephone, physical address of group, and email address;
 - ▶ brief description of arrangement, including provisions to protect patient confidentiality.
 - ▶ Mutual referral agreements should include provisions to protect participant confidentiality. The Nutrition Services Branch and local agencies may not freely give out

information obtained from WIC Program applicants and participants found in the medical record or computer system. Refer to Chapter 16: Confidentiality for further information.

Outreach Campaign: Checklist for Local WIC Agencies

The purpose of this checklist is to provide local agencies with a myriad of options for outreach activities. It is by no means a list of activities that local agencies *must* complete, but merely a broad list of ideas for outreach. In fact, some of the suggested activities may not be applicable to your agency. However, many of the ideas listed here may serve as a springboard for developing your own outreach ideas.

This checklist will cover the following areas.

- person-to-person outreach
- targeting special groups
- creating referral systems
- media
- increasing accessibility
- a list of organizations



Encourage person-to-person outreach.

Ask participants to bring friends and family members who may qualify for WIC benefits. Provide written materials such as the Healthy Habits, Healthy Families Fact Sheet for them to hand to a friend or relative.

Host special contests like "Bring A Friend to WIC." The participant who brings the most eligible people to WIC in a specified time wins prizes that have been donated. Some agencies may be able to incorporate this into the Baby Bucks Program if they have one.

Hire WIC clients or volunteers to be outreach workers to recruit women from local communities.

Remind clients of appointments ahead of time. Make special efforts to get women who missed appointments back, including making phone calls (some agencies use an automated calling system), or mailing letters.



Target special groups and families.

Send direct mail to potential participants in local utility or telephone bills or pay check stuffers. Keep in mind that some of your own staff may be eligible for WIC and do not know it!

Conduct special outreach campaigns targeted at specific groups, such as minorities, disabled individuals, migrant farm workers, homeless families, non-English-speaking participants, pregnant women in their first trimester, pregnant teens, teen moms, employed women, rural residents, to name a few.

Place doorknob hangers with WIC information in target neighborhoods or sponsor a door-to-door campaign on a Saturday to sign up women and children for appointments.



Create intra-agency referral systems.

Ask local Medicaid staff if you can set up a table in their office once a week to make appointments while their clients wait. Provide literature for potential participants and well as Medicaid staff. Then reciprocate. Invite Medicaid staff to take applications at WIC offices.

Care Coordination for Children Services (CC4C), and Pregnancy Care Management (PCM) workers routinely work with clients who may be WIC eligible. Provide them with information and materials on WIC and discuss their role in getting potential eligible participants into WIC.

Hold a brown bag or potluck lunch honoring staff in another department. Give a short presentation about WIC thanking them for working so closely with you and your program.

Provide in-service presentations on WIC to immunization staff, public health nurses, school lunch staff, and community and migrant health workers.



Ask the medical community to refer.

Meet with doctors who are Medicaid providers or manage large practices, such as obstetricians, pediatricians, and family practice physicians. Explain the eligibility criteria, the benefits to participants, and how they can refer people to WIC. Provide them with copies of the "WIC Makes a Healthy Difference" outreach folders. Leave waiting-room materials and explain how they can get additional copies.

Share WIC information with childbirth educators, midwives, and maternity and childbirth centers.

Ask local pharmacists to include WIC information with prenatal and Medicaid prescriptions.

Talk about WIC with local hospital staff. Contact social workers, OB and emergency-room nurses and physicians, and administrators. Tell them about WIC and ask them to refer potential clients. Leave materials with your address and telephone number, including the "WIC Makes a Healthy Difference" outreach folders. Some agencies perform in-hospital certifications to new mothers upon delivery.

Talk with pediatricians, OB/GYN, and family practice physician's offices about the WIC Program. Provide WIC brochures, bookmarks, and WIC Program fact sheets so they can educate their clients about the WIC Program. Use the sample outreach letter to physicians in your outreach efforts. Visit www.nutritonnc.com for a copy of the letter.



Build community partnerships that include referral systems.

Place a booth at a local store or shopping mall to explain WIC, who it serves, and how to make appointments. Ask permission from the store manager.

Send information home with students who participate in the school lunch or summer feeding program.

Create an in-school program for teen moms or develop a way to bring these young women to WIC regularly without missing school.

Ask churches and other faith based groups to spread the word about WIC. Make sure all churches in your area have WIC flyers or brochures for potential clients.

Work with Head Start, child care centers, Smart Start coalitions and other agencies that serve potential WIC applicants.

Establish a WIC Growth Task Force for the community. Task Force members should include key leaders from the community who serve potential WIC clients, the medical community, and women who are WIC eligible. Address infrastructure issues and better integration of community resources related to WIC growth.

Join community coalitions or advisory boards in your community. Make known that you work for the WIC Program. Share information about WIC to let other board members know about the services the Program offers.

Present WIC information to many different organizations, businesses, and clubs. Offer training to appropriate personnel to inform about WIC which includes a description of the WIC Program, eligibility criteria, the location of local agency and outlying sites (including addresses and telephone numbers), civil rights statement, and a contact person.

Send thank-you notes to all who refer potential clients to WIC. Let them know they are performing an important community service.

Talk to your Public Affairs officer about utilizing social media. Establish a Facebook or MySpace page for your agency. Reach out to different social service organizations on these social media sites. Their participants may be potential participants for your program. Try to update or post to the social media site one time per week.



Produce print and broadcast media pieces.

Put posters, flyers, or brochures where participants will be. Consider grocery stores, laundromats, child care centers, resale and thrift shops, maternity shops, church fellowship halls, and employment offices (see page 6 for places to disseminate outreach materials). Please refer to Chapter 4 in the WIC Program Manual for information about the required non-discrimination statement.

Use bus cards that travel targeted routes or billboards. They have worked well in many locations.

Ask local newspapers, television, local cable access stations, and radio stations to play public service announcements and cover stories about your clinics. Get the WIC story in the news. If you expand your hours, open a Saturday clinic, or hire new staff, let people know. Emphasize that WIC is a nutrition program for working families! Make your clinics accessible to working families. Please refer to Chapter 10, Attachment 2, in the WIC Program Manual for more information about working with the media.



Make WIC user friendly and accessible.

Provide waiting room toys or activities for children. Ensure a routine for cleaning the toys and the area where toys are kept.

Minimize waiting time to get an appointment and during clinic visits.

Provide extended hours during lunch, the evening, early morning, or on the weekend.

Increase the number of sites that offer WIC services.

Recommend that participants use proxies to pick up food instruments.
(See Chapter 8, of the WIC Manual – Procedures for Proxies)

Refer participants to transportation resources.



Organizations for Outreach and Referral

Domestic Violence Shelters
 Breastfeeding Women -- organizations for
 Carolina Access (Medicaid managed care network)
 Children's Developmental Services Agency (CDSA)
 Community Action Agencies
 Cooperative Extension: Expanded Foods and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).
 Counseling / Health Services:

- ▶ Alcohol and Drug Abuse
- ▶ Care Coordination for Children Services (CC4C)
- ▶ Family Planning
- ▶ Immunization (see Chapter 6C, for more detail)
- ▶ Pregnancy Care Management (PCM)
- ▶ Prenatal Care
- ▶ Well Child Care (including Health Check)

 Department of Social Services

- ▶ Eligibility Intake Workers
- ▶ Work First Counselors
- ▶ Child Support Enforcement
- ▶ Food and Nutrition Services
- ▶ Medicaid Program (required referral, see Chapter 10, Section 5)
- ▶ NC Health Choice (children's health insurance)

 Employment Security Commission
 Faith Based Organizations
 Food Bank
 Food Pantries / Meal Programs
 Head Start / Child Care Centers (note: early Head Start is available in some high need areas)
 Health Management Organizations (HMO's)
 Homeless Shelters
 Hospital Nursery Staff
 Hospital Outpatient Clinics
 Housing Authorities
 Hunger Network / Food Security Organizations
 Indian Tribal Organizations
 Legal Services
 Low-Income Citizen Organizations
 Mental Health Centers (Alcohol & Drug Abuse Counseling)
 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker's Association
 Physicians
 Rural Health Centers
 Smart Start Partnerships
 Urban Indian Organizations
 WIC Authorized Vendors (Grocers and Pharmacists)

WIC Outreach Resources by Target Category

(This table provides suggestions for materials that may be useful for specific outreach targets.)

Resource	Media	Children 1-5 / Working Families	Clinicians/ Providers	Child Care/ Head Start	Government/ Non-Profit Agencies*	Public Health Agencies		
						Prenatal Clinics	Child Health Clinics	Staff Reference
WIC Makes A Healthy Difference! (English/Spanish, trifold flyer, NSB #0020)		*	*	*	*	*	*	
Healthy Habits, Healthy Families Fact Sheet (NSB # 0066/0066S)				*	*	*	*	
Got Kids? Get WIC! Bookmark (NSB # 0021)		*	*	*	*	*	*	
Moms Need WIC Too! Bookmark (NSB #0024)		*	*		*	*	*	
Are You Pregnant? Bookmark (NSB #0025)			*			*		
Outreach Flyer (available electronically at www.nutritionnc.com)		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Partner Piece (available electronically at www.nutritionnc.com)			*					*
Sample Child Care Agency Outreach Letter (available electronically at www.nutritionnc.com)				*				
Sample Social Services Agency Outreach Letter (available electronically at www.nutritionnc.com)					*			
Sample Community Food Assistance Outreach Letter (available electronically at www.nutritionnc.com)					*			
Sample Physician Outreach Letter (available electronically at www.nutritionnc.com)			*					
Sample Newspaper Article (available electronically at www.nutritionnc.com)	*							
Outreach PowerPoint Presentation (available electronically at www.nutritionnc.com)			*	*	*			
Media Talking Points (available electronically at www.nutritionnc.com)	*							*
Tips for Talking to Reporters (available electronically at www.nutritionnc.com)	*							*
Website: www.nutritionnc.com		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
WIC Program Manual, Chapter 10								*
WIC Program Manual Chapter 6, Section 24 (Certifying Children through Head Start and Child Care)								*

* Departments of Social Services; Employment Security Commissions; Housing Authorities; Community Action Agencies; Churches; Food Pantries/Soup Kitchens, Homeless Shelters

**WIC OUTREACH:
GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING
MEDIA RELATIONS**

WIC Outreach: Guidelines for Building Media Relations

One way to gain public awareness and support for the WIC Program is through your local media – newspapers, radio and television. Working with the media can also help reach potential clients who may not be aware of the important services provided by WIC. Having good relationships with the media can markedly improve the effectiveness of using them for outreach purposes.

Local WIC agencies can facilitate establishing and maintaining positive relations with media personnel by remembering certain guidelines. This publication has been designed to outline several of these guidelines to assist agencies with media interactions. Although the topics in this publication were not written in the format of sequential steps, it might be helpful to consider them roughly in the order as they appear. **Also, please note that as you read these guidelines, it is important to take into account any media rules and regulations specific to your local WIC agency. This includes any social media and internet usage. Be sure to check with your public affairs officer before utilizing any type social media.**

As an overview, the guidelines briefly describe the following eight topics.

- Preparing a list of key media personnel
- Characteristics of a newsworthy story
- How and why to prepare a media kit
- How to build media relationships
- How to prepare a fact sheet
- How to write a news release
- Guidance for holding a news conference
- Tips for hosting media visits or interviews

Establish social media tools to help promote your Program. Social media sites include:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube

Refer to Attachment 3 for more information on incorporating social media into your outreach efforts.

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1. Preparing a Media List

Compile a list of the following local media. Organize each list by market served. Some publications or stations are appropriate for some types of news, but not all.

- Print Media – newspapers, magazines, “shoppers” and other give-aways, and entertainment magazines
- Broadcast Media – radio and television stations

News staff decides what is newsworthy based on what they believe interests or affects their audiences. So, in your list, include the names, titles, addresses, and telephone numbers of the following key players. Update your media list every four to six months.

- Editors for city desk, city/county government, health, lifestyle decide what goes into newspapers and edit the news.
- Reporters on relevant beats for city/county government, health, lifestyle (at small papers, these might be the same person) write the stories.
- TV and Radio producers decide who goes on shows/programs.
- News directors decide what goes on the air.
- Assignment editors decide what goes in the story. They are supervised by news directors.
- Public service directors review and decide which community groups, programs, or projects to promote. Serve as publication or station’s liaison to community.
- Post news stories to your WIC Program’s Facebook page or YouTube account.

2. What News is Newsworthy?

Before you contact the press to cover a story, you must have something newsworthy to say. Remember your main objective for media coverage related to outreach is to raise public awareness of WIC and to increase WIC enrollment.

What is newsworthy? Something.....

- News that no one has ever said or heard before.
- Timely—yesterday’s news is old news.
- That involves a public figure, celebrity, or well-known organization.
- That affects a large number of people.
- With a human-interest angle. (Success stories with women and children always score high). Include pictures (with consent) with personal stories.
- Visual (for television and news photography).
- That centers on an event or happening.
- That is “good news” such as lower, statewide anemia rates that can be directly tied to WIC.
- That is a variation of a theme already receiving media attention.
- Accessible to the media—give location, time, and other important information.
- Interesting on what would otherwise be a slow news day.
- Unusual or ironic.

3. Preparing a Media Kit

Media kits are the primary tools used to attract the media. They provide media personnel with newsworthy and background information in a clear and concise fashion. Their specific purposes are:

- To start conversation with reporters, editors, or radio/TV staff when making initial contact or requesting time on a talk show, airing of a PSA, or story coverage.
- To distribute at a media event, such as a press conference or charity drive.

Media kits usually consist of a 9” by 12” two-pocket folder and contain any or all of the following:

- News/press release (see page10 – Writing a News Release)
- Biographical sketch of the WIC director and/or other key personnel
- Fact sheet (see page 9 – Preparing a Fact Sheet)
- Photographs
- Graphs and charts
- Collateral and miscellaneous items
- Contact information

The outreach folder titled, “Health Care Provider Outreach and Referral Packet” (NSB #0068) may provide a starting point for the media kit. Add the pertinent elements from the list above that support your story. Remove any inserts from the folder that may distract from the focus of your story.

4. Meeting the Local Media

It is a good idea to get to know the local reporters and editors. You learn what they consider newsworthy, who to call when you have a story idea, timing of deadlines, and other useful information. In return, they learn who you are and that you are a source of good story ideas and information about the WIC Program.

Try to establish yourself as friendly to the media, but remember, a reporter's job is to seek news. Answer their questions accurately and quickly and offer your services as a "background source" to provide information about public health programs, including WIC. Also, offer to direct questions about other public health issues to the appropriate health department personnel. The key to developing good media relationships is *availability* and *credibility*.

Consider the following tips when developing your relationships with reporters.

- A reporter is never completely off duty. If you say something newsworthy, it could show up in the news.
- Offer to review any technical material for accuracy prior to publication or airing.
- Don't try to buy reporter's attention with gifts or flattery. Good reporters can't be bought.
- Don't tell reporters how to do their jobs or ask to see a story before it is printed.
- Don't expect reporters to think something is newsworthy just because you do.
- Don't play favorites among reporters by giving one reporter a story before the others. You may alienate too many people and get less coverage overall.

When making **initial contact** with media personnel, consider the following:

- Make an appointment to introduce yourself to the appropriate reporter, editor, or the public service director, although this may be more difficult in a larger town. Mid to late morning is the best time to visit reporters and editors. They are *very* busy in the afternoons.
- Tell the reporter or editor about the WIC program and provide a media kit. Hand-deliver your media kit to the editor/s of the section's in which you wish to publicize your information.
- Depending on time available, offer one or two story ideas for consideration.
- Leave business card with your name, phone number, and email address.

Once you have made initial contact with local reporters and editors, it is important to establish an **ongoing relationship**. The best way to do this is through sending out periodic press releases and holding press conferences when you have important news. Be open to visits from the media.

When you have a story you would like covered, consider the following steps:

- Identify the media personnel who handle your issue and send them a media kit.
- Call media personnel in advance of sending your information or place a follow-up call to make sure they received it. Fax the information immediately if they have not received it.
- After they have had time to review the information, re-contact the reporter or editor to determine their interest in placing a story.
- Do not hesitate to re-send the information if they have not received it or say they have not seen it.
- Refer to the NSB materials entitled, “Tips for Talking with Reporters” and “Media Talking Points”, both of which can be found on our website, www.nutritionnc.com.

5. Preparing a Fact Sheet

Fact sheets should be included in media kits. They contain information about the WIC Program in general and about your project or clinic. The details on a fact sheet may depend on the focus of your press release or PSA. See the WIC outreach folder, “Health Care Provider Outreach and Referral Packet” (NSB #0068), for information on the program. All fact sheets should contain the following:

- Name, location, hours, and services provided at your WIC clinic, including any recent changes, agencies website and social media sites if any.
- Key dates for special events, such as walk-in blitz clinics.
- A brief summary of the WIC Program as well as its mission and successes. (Include Medicaid savings associated with the WIC Program.)
- Information about WIC services (i.e. nutrition education, WIC foods, referral to other health and community resources, and breastfeeding support), the importance of these services for good health, and the means by which participants obtain them.
- Statistics (e.g., number of participants served last month and any recent changes, amount of food dollars spent in the community last year, number of people potentially eligible for the WIC Program, etc.).
- Eligibility requirements for the WIC Program.
- The civil rights statement. (See the WIC Program Manual, Chapter 4.)
- Contact information including names, addresses, phone numbers as appropriate, and program’s/health department’s website.

6. Writing a News Release

News releases must be.....

- Timely – News is now. Something that happened yesterday, last week, or last month is old news. If a story isn't timely, hold off. You don't want to get a reputation for wasting reporters' time.
- Urgent – Use interesting information and attention-getting facts to put the story in perspective.
- Brief and focused – Length should be 1 ½ to 2 ½ pages maximum. Hook the assignment editor or reporter quickly, or you may lose him or her – and your chances of coverage. Isolate the message you want to share and make it clear.
- Important to people – Tell the practical importance of your announcement. What impact will your news have on people's lives? Include a description of the WIC Program, eligibility criteria, location of the local agency (including addresses and telephone numbers), civil rights statement, and a contact person to handle future questions.
- Authoritative – Quote appropriate experts.
- Easy to understand – Use lay terms. Scrap bureaucratic, scientific, and medical terminology when possible. If you must use any term, define it simply and concisely. Don't assume that non-health professionals understand terms that are commonplace to you.
- Complete – Begin by answering the six basic questions of journalism – Who? What? Where? When? How? And Why? End with contact information.
- Formatted properly – Put the subject of the press release and the contact person's name and telephone number at the top of the first page. If the press release takes more than one page, write "more" on the bottom of each sheet but the last one. For subsequent pages, repeat the contact person's last name, the topic and page number in the upper left corner. Avoid splitting sentences or paragraphs between pages, even if it means leaving excessive empty space. Type #### centered at the end on the last page. Remember to double-space the text (See Appendix A for a sample press release).
- Photo friendly – Suggest photographic possibilities. Remember to obtain consent form/s when you arrange a photo session. The media representative (newspaper, magazine, or TV station) will obtain his or her own consent forms for photos he or she takes.

NOTE: Remember to include a non-discrimination statement at the end of all press releases.

7. Holding a News Conference

News conferences follow a certain style. Remember to.....

- Open with a short statement, lasting no more than 30 to 60 seconds. State the reason for the news conference and give the basic story. Say who you are and why you are there.
- Introduce key speakers. Never have more than three speakers at a press conference.
- Don't be surprised by questions. Reporters are there to ask questions. It's their job. Be sure to allow plenty of time for questions and answers. Always answer honestly and directly. If the reply requires some thought, stop and take the time to think it through. Do not brush aside a reporter's question.
- Listen closely and respond to each question. If you don't know the answer, don't speculate. Write down the question and the reporter's phone number and respond as soon as possible on that and other related information.
- Share media kits. Include vital facts or statistics, staff biographies, the text of the opening remarks.

Carefully select the location and time of the press conference. Consider:

- Location: Are the building and room easy to find?
- Timing: Is the time convenient for reporters? Mid to late morning is usually best to give reporters enough time to write their stories by deadline. Try to avoid a schedule conflict with other events.
- Parking: Is there enough?
- Space: Is the room large enough for all the reporters and their equipment?
- Electricity: Is there sufficient power for reporters' tape recorders, lighting, and sound equipment?

8. Hosting a Media Visit/Providing Interviews

When a news reporter asks to visit the WIC clinic and/or to interview you....

- Be prepared! Provide supplemental information such as media kits, fact sheets and research reports. Reporters may need the information to more fully understand your program. Prior to any interview, make a list of all possible questions (including negative) the reporter may ask and develop answers carefully. This will result in conveying the information correctly and concisely, helping you avoid damaging misstatements and making you a more effective spokesperson.
- Be accessible and accommodating. Have professional experts and program recipients available for interviews and photos. Meet reporters at the door and show them where to go. Offer information as requested.
- Know media deadlines. News crews have rigid daily deadlines. If they need something, they generally need it quickly. Mid to late morning is usually convenient for a media visit or interview.
- Be concise. When you are interviewed, speak in brief, focused sentences. Use layman's terms. Stick to the subject – you need not tell everything you know, particularly if it involves proprietary or confidential information.
- Admit to bad news, if you must, but emphasize any positive aspects. Point out what has been done to rectify the negative. Use it as an opportunity.
- Never speak “off the record.” Don't say anything you don't want to see in the news.
- Don't say “no comment.” It is perceived as an indication of guilt and/or dishonesty. Tell them you will get the information and get back to them. Ask for their deadline.
- Don't take reporter's insulting questions personally. It could be a tactic to get you to react angrily. Stay calm and continue to make points rationally.
- Don't argue with reporters or lose your temper. They're only doing their jobs.
- Make sure you understand the exact question being asked. Reporters don't always ask the right questions. Ask them to repeat the question if you're not sure.
- Be honest even it hurts. It is much better than lying to a reporter. They may find out. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Defer to another source or offer to find out and call with an answer as quickly as possible. Don't let reporters press you into answers you don't know.
- Above all, RELAX. Advise your staff in advance when the media is coming. Ask them to act naturally and to cooperate.

Television Interviews

If your local health department receives coverage by a television station and they request an interview, remember to...

- Prepare by selecting your “must air” points and stressing them in the interview. Write them out and be sure to watch the time so they all get said. Script the interviewer. Although they may not use all of it, it may help get some of your questions asked.
- First impressions are critical – establish your likableness. Smile and thank the interviewer; call the interviewer by name.
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer – the “crossover” moment between question and answer is critical to credibility on tough questions. To lose contact could indicate evasion, dishonesty, or anxiety.
- Speak up clearly and distinctly. Maintain an even pace to word delivery. Words should not slur together, nor go too fast or too slowly.
- Color important words – Go up the scale to a higher note. This is a good way to underscore major points. Then, take a slight pause to reinforce the importance of what you’ve said.
- Do not swivel or lean to one side in the chair. Sit fairly erect with a slightly forward tilt. This will help your energy level and make you look more attentive.
- Keep your answers short, simple, and free of unfamiliar jargon. Get to the conclusion first, and then explain. (e.g., Good nutrition results in having healthier babies with fewer developmental problems. WIC contributes to good nutrition by providing...)
- Work the name of your organization into your answers, but make the interjections logical and unobtrusive (e.g., “We at the Monroe County Health Department believe...”).
- Offer to bring appropriate visual materials that could illustrate your points. Film or videotape clips are especially desirable
- Refer to “Tips for Talking with Reporters” and “Media Talking Points”. These items are available on the Nutrition Services Branch website at www.nutritionmc.com.

Radio and Telephone Interviews

Frequently radio interviews are conducted by telephone. When providing radio interviews, remember to.....

- Ask whether the interview is to be aired live, live-taped, or taped. Turn off any “noise” makers in your office. Cut other telephone calls. Close office door.
- To sound alert, sit up straight in the chair or stand up.
- Don’t shout or whisper. Speak in normal tones over the telephone mouthpiece.
- Tilt mouthpiece slightly away from your mouth to avoid “popping” or “hissing.”
- Make sure you have a clear telephone line.
- Watch pauses. “Uh” sounds worse on radio than anywhere else. Silence is better.
- Avoid using numbers unless absolutely necessary. If numbers are needed, round them off.

Appendix A: Sample Press Release

Use agency letterhead

RELEASE: IMMEDIATE *(or date, month, year, and time)* DATE: *(date distributed)*Contact: *(Name and telephone number of contact person for more information)***WIC PROGRAM PROVIDES ASSISTANCE FOR ELIGIBLE
WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN**

(CITY) – WIC or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program provides supplemental nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health care and community resources to participants. The WIC Program is available at *(insert name and location of local WIC agency)*. You may apply for the WIC Program on *(insert days of the week)* from *(insert times of day)*.

To be eligible a person must:

- Be a pregnant woman; a breastfeeding woman who has had a baby in the last 12 months; a woman who has had a baby in the last six months; an infant; or a child up to the fifth birthday;
- Reside in North Carolina and in the health delivery area of the WIC agency;
- Meet the income eligibility scale - The gross annual household income cannot exceed 185% of the Federal poverty income guidelines - All **Medicaid, Food and Nutrition Services (SNAP) and Work First recipients meet the WIC income eligibility criteria;** and
- Have an identified nutritional risk as determined by a health professional. Nutritional problems include anemia, poor growth, previous poor pregnancy outcome, inadequate dietary intake and other nutrition related health problems.

-MORE-

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WIC Program Provides Assistance

Contact: *(Name and telephone number of contact person for more information)*

For more information about WIC or to make an appointment please visit *(insert local agency name and location)* or call *(insert local agency phone number)*. Or, you may call the NC Care-Line at 1-800-662-7030.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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Social Media

Talk to your public affairs officer before diving into any social media for your WIC Program. Social media is not for everyone, so if you feel that you cannot devote the time or workforce do not attempt to utilize social media. Consulting with your public affairs officer or designee for guidance on the use of social media can help facilitate your transition into this medium.

Social Media integrates technology, social interaction, and content creation, using the "wisdom of crowds" to collaboratively connect online information. Through social media, people or groups can create, organize, edit, comment on, combine, and share content.

Social Networking sites are online communities where people can interact with friends, family, coworkers, acquaintances, and others with similar interests. Most social networking sites provide multiple ways for their users to interact such as chat, email, video, voice chat, file sharing, blogging, and discussion groups.

Some popular social networking sites include:

- Facebook
- MySpace
- Twitter

YouTube can also be a way to provide outreach to your community. Videos can be uploaded into the YouTube site for others to view. Government pages can be created as well. Send the following information to government@youtube.com

- The name of your government, government department, agency
- Your .gov website URL
- The account name you have registered on YouTube (i.e., your YouTube username)
- The email address you are using to manage the account
- What type of content you plan to post

Social Networking Best Practices

1. Consult with your public affairs officer or designee to obtain information and guidance on your counties social media policy.
2. Become familiar with the site: There are hundreds of social networking sites available, each with distinct targets, purposes, and functions. Visit the sites to gain an understanding of the participants, the culture, and the functionality.

3. Consider the overall communications strategy and objectives: Before launching a page, make sure social networking activities mesh with the communication strategy and objectives.
4. Be thoughtful about resources: Ensure that adequate resources (time and staff) are available to support ongoing maintenance of the page to keep content fresh and fans engaged.
5. Provide engaging posts and communication material on the site: Incorporate videos, quizzes, games, images and other materials to actively and repeatedly engage users.
6. Create a comment policy: Develop a policy that covers the response to inappropriate or derogatory comments.
7. Collect and store comments: Develop a system to archive comments.
8. Develop a promotion plan: Establish a promotion plan before launching the page; encourage fans to share and cross promote using other social media channels and web pages.
9. Develop an evaluation plan: Have an evaluation and metrics plan in place prior to launch to determine if efforts are successful. For example, it will be helpful to:
 - Determine how participation will be measured. Evaluation can include simple measures of user engagement (e.g. How many followers/fans/friends does the account have? How many users commented on recent posts?)
 - Take advantage of the analytic packages available on the social networking sites. These can be utilized to determine the number of people (“fans”) participating in the activity and observe how users engage with the site. For example, Facebook Insights are available to users (administrator) who maintain a page for an organization. Facebook Insights allows the administrator to see demographic information and fan interactions with the page over time.

Be sure to check with your public affairs officer before utilizing any type of social media.