

WIC Local Agency Conference Call

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2024, 8:30-9:30 AM

Agenda and summary notes

Agenda items:

- Updates - Tami
- WINNIE rollout complete – Tami
- Hardware update - Tami
- Operational adjustment grants – 2024 local agency outreach projects – Megan
- Conference highlights - Carole
- Fresh herbs – Jessie
- Minnesota immunization information connection (MIIC) presentation – MIIC team

Updates - Tami

Wednesday Oct. 9, Congress passed a short-term continuing resolution, extending federal funding until Dec. 20 and averting a government shutdown. Congress is expected to resume funding discussions before the end of the year, no further updates to date. Hope to have more information by the Dec. 18 call.

Other program updates

WINNIE rollout complete – Tami

Thank you to everyone across the state for a successful WINNIE rollout. The last agency was completed the first week of November. Continue to watch the weekly update and Thursday emails for updates and additional information. The transitional guide is still available. First stop for assistance is to call the help desk. Big thank you to all state and local agency staff for their time, patience, and assistance. The success of this rollout and transition can be attributed to the highly organized and skilled state MIS/data team members that managed this project and all state and local agency staff that helped pilot and test.

Hardware update – Tami

In December, watch for a comprehensive memo coming out on hardware. HuBERT icons can be deleted now that WINNIE rollout is complete. Can also uninstall the HuBERT application. Over three-quarters of local agencies use their own hardware, asking agencies that have state issued hardware and have transitioned to locally owned to send it back now. You can reach out to the help desk to request mailing labels to send back the machines. We plan to have a hardware inventory in the spring of 2025, if you send back before that time, you will have less on your inventory list.

Operational adjustment grants – 2024 local agency outreach projects – Megan

MDH WIC applied for and received \$25,000 for outreach grants to local agencies. Seven applied and received the funding, six completed their projects. Spent nearly \$16,000.00. Local WIC agencies that applied for and received funds were Cass County, Isanti County, LeSueur County, Polk Norman-Mahnomen, Saint Paul-Ramsey, and Waseca County. Reports on projects were turned in at the end of September to MDH. Project goals, budgets, and photos were shared. A document highlighting all the

agencies from 2023 and 2024 will be created and shared on our website. Look for information in a future weekly update. We intend to apply for these funds again and hope more local agencies will apply.

Conference highlights – Carole

A big thank you for everyone that was able to attend the 2024 WIC conference. We had 489 in attendance including state and local agency staff, community partners, 14 speakers, and a representative from the USDA Midwest Regional office. The conference was kept to one day due to the rising costs post COVID.

Evaluation is now closed. Most of the feedback was positive. Many comments were regarding having a one-day conference versus two days. Some appreciated that it was just one day, some stated they would have liked more time between sessions, with speakers, and the overall time felt rushed. Overwhelming responses are in favor of future conferences to be in person. We review all comments and appreciate them. We use them to help plan for future events and webinars. We shared feedback with our speakers who also expressed their gratitude.

- Most popular keynote: Dr. Cutts on anemia.
- Most popular breakouts: I love what I do, wish I wanted to go to work presented by Monica Smith, It Takes Two: Engaging Fathers by William Moore, and Addressing Pediatric Feeding by Amber Valentine-Forston.

Carole is working on getting recorded sessions from the conference on [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\) Learning Center](#), they should be ready mid-December. We have been approved for continuing education credits from CDR and IBLCE. The preconference sessions are still available as well!

- Reminder: One must view all the recorded sessions to get credits.

Look for all [Continuing Education](#) opportunities under **Training** on our [WIC Local Agencies](#) webpage. Also, check out our [Important Dates Calendar](#). Dec. 11 is the next live webinar, and we will have many participant-centered training opportunities coming next year.

Herb update – Jessie

Information is coming out in the weekly update today about herbs.

Fresh herbs in the produce section are now WIC allowed. This is one of the first changes from the WIC rules revisions for WIC food packages effective on June 17, 2024.

This My MN WIC app message will go out to participants on Nov. 25, so there is an awareness of fresh herbs being deducted from their cash value benefit.

Subject: Food package changes

Message: WIC is adding fresh herbs to WIC allowed foods using your fruit and veggie dollars. Not all fresh herbs are added yet, but you may notice your food benefit paying for fresh herbs at check out as more are added to the WIC allowed food list. More fresh herbs are added as state staff gather information from stores.

WIC staff can begin telling WIC participants about the addition of herbs using fruit and vegetable dollars.

What herbs are allowed?

Any fresh herbs like, cilantro, basil, parsley, chives, lemon grass, thyme, oregano, rosemary, and ginger.

Not Allowed:

- Pastes, tubes, and jars
- Dried fruits, vegetables, herbs, or spices like cinnamon
- Decorative or potted fruits, vegetables, and herbs

In preparation for this change, state staff have visited stores of varying sizes and in different regions to gather information about herbs available and added herb PLUs and some UPCs to the WIC APL over the past month. Participants have purchased over \$4,000 worth of herbs since the end of October while state staff gathered and added herbs to the WIC APL.

Vendors know they will need to map herbs, like fruits and vegetables. Any calls from WIC participants unable to purchase herbs should be managed the same way we troubleshoot issues with fruits and vegetables. CPAs can send an email to health.wicvendor@state.mn.us with photos of the herb(s), including the UPC.

New regulations for WIC food packages are intended to provide WIC participants with a wider array of foods to align with current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and reflect recommendations from the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine. All the new food package rule changes must be implemented by 2026 except for yogurt in 2027.

Minnesota immunization information connection (MIIC) presentation – MIIC team

Refer to the November 27, Weekly Update for summary information that was presented by the MIIC team.

Questions & Answers

Could all this information be shared again with pictures perhaps in a weekly update? (outreach projects)

Yes, Megan is creating a document to share with projects from the past two years. Watch a future weekly update for that information.

Just wondering what would change with yogurt and why the delay?

Yogurt is delayed because of Vitamin D. A lot of Greek and even non-Greek yogurt do not have sufficient Vitamin D and the delay is to see if manufacturers will make product changes. Yogurt also has new added sugar requirements.

Do we have to use MIIC? Or is this just a tool to help assist and make sure they are up to date with vaccines?

Use of MIIC is not required. It is an optional tool that is available for WIC staff to verify a participant's residence.

Do WIC staff need a release of information to update information in MIIC?

From a MIIC/MN Immunization Data Sharing Law perspective, WIC agencies are within public health and other provider organizations; therefore WIC staff can review client and/or immunization data in MIIC. WIC staff cannot update MIIC records or share participant information with MIIC without a Release of Information consent form at this time.

What if our agency doesn't have access to MIIC?

Provider organizations are encouraged to review the MN Statutes [§144.3351 Immunization Data](#) to determine if their agency is eligible. If organizations have questions about eligibility, they can contact the MIIC Help Desk for guidance: health.miichelp@state.mn.us.

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\) Learning Center](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/about/tools/learningcenter.html>)

[Continuing Education](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/index.html#NaN>)

[WIC Local Agencies](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/index.html#conted1>)

[Important dates calendar](#)

(<https://calendar.google.com/calendar/embed?src=500k4ns9eqb26v51529qg1fpuo%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America/Chicago>)

[144.3351 Immunization Data](#) (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/144.3351>)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 625 Robert St N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.

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