

**Special Supplemental Nutrition Program
For Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**

**2024 STATE AGENCY PLAN OF
PROGRAM OPERATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

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VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Vermont WIC State Plan 2024 Goals, Objectives, and Planned Activities

Nutrition Services - Nutrition Education

Goal: Improve delivery of nutrition education services to WIC participants.

Objective 1: Improve/increase staff capacity to deliver quality nutrition services.

Activities:

- Provide staff training using revised VENA resources to support increased knowledge, skill development and expertise in nutrition education methods for staff.
- Provide training in motivational interviewing and behavior change, incorporating resources from the WIC Breastfeeding Training Curriculum.
- Provide WIC Nutrition staff training on breastfeeding; Level 3 for all certifiers, and Level 4 for Breastfeeding Coordinators.
- Review nutrition resources to support virtual and in person appointments, including curriculum guides, displays, textbooks, and client education materials to staff who deliver WIC Services. Consider electronic versions for provision after remote appointments.
- Support WIC Nutrition staff to attend virtual national conferences.
- Work to improve staff use of technology to deliver nutrition information and resources to families.
- Facilitate the statewide nutrition education workgroup to coordinate the implementation and assessment of nutrition education activities and projects, including sharing best practices among local WIC offices.

Nutrition Services – Breastfeeding

Goal: Exclusive breastfeeding to six months of age will be the norm for infant feeding in Vermont.

Breastfeeding Prevalence January – December 2022*	
Ever Breastfed	80%
Exclusive breastfeeding at 3 months	51%
Any Breastfeeding at 3 months	73%
Exclusive Breastfeeding at 6 months	37%
Any Breastfeeding at 6 months	66%
Any Breastfeeding at 1 year	72%

* Data for this report from our MIS may not be accurate for this reporting year.

Objective 1: Increase to 86 percent the proportion of infants who are “ever breastfed”.

Objective 2: Increase to 40 percent the proportion of infants who are exclusively breastfed at 3 months of age.

Objective 3: Increase to 25 percent the proportion of infants who are exclusively breastfed at 6 months of age.

Reference: Healthy People 2030 Goal MICH–15: Increase the proportion of infants who are breastfed exclusively through age 6 months - target 42.4 %

Reference: Healthy People 2030 Goal MICH–16: Increase the proportion of infants who are breastfed at 1 year - target: 54.1%

Activities:

Within VDH/WIC

- Provide electric breast pumps to eligible WIC participants not eligible for Medicaid pumps.
- Train all WIC staff and invite community partners to Breastfeeding Essentials training.
- Coordinate training opportunities with the Vermont Lactation Consultants Association (VLCA), Strong Families Vermont, Home Health Agencies, Parent-Child Centers, Children's Integrated Services, Home Visiting, Head Start, EFNEP, AAP VT Chapter and medical care providers.
- Provide bi-monthly trainings for Peer Counselors and WIC Certifiers on breastfeeding and lactation management. Support eligible staff to achieve the IBCLC credential.
- Maintain statewide peer counseling services.
- Continue to support Peer Counseling programs to maintain trained peers. Provide guidance and support to peer counselor supervisors, most notably in the onboarding of new peers. Continue to help the local offices with their peer counselor recruitment. Assess the need for bi-lingual peer counselors in the immigrant and refugee communities. Add peers who speak the languages that are currently dominant in our communities. Begin transitioning the peer counselors to our state contract texting service (InTouch: Notivate) and provide on-going training and support during the process.
- In partnership with games and app developer and Tufts University, complete pilot feasibility study of the interactive mobile breastfeeding education application, Daily Drop. Partner with Agency of Digital services and contractor to add enhancements to application and associated clinical reports based on initial data and feedback gathered. Plan ongoing operationalization and incorporation of the app into existing breastfeeding support services offered by Vermont WIC. Provide staff training and launch promotion of the application statewide if Application complements existing breastfeeding support offered by qualified WIC professionals. This project is funded by the THIS-WIC telehealth initiative.

With Community at Large

- Support and implement local office efforts identified in the Family and Child Health's statewide breastfeeding strategic plan, including promotion of the 10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, professional education for community partners using the Breastfeeding Essentials Curriculum, continued peer program support, and support for breastfeeding within workplaces and early care.

With Worksites

- Continue to promote awareness of State and Federal laws and the breastfeeding provisions of the Affordable Care Act.
- Revise the "Vermont Workplaces Support the Nursing Mom" resource to better align with the introduction of the PUMP Act of 2023 which expands existing employer obligations under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

- Revamp the Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Project Initiative with VDH Partners by updating the Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Fact Sheet, streamlining the employer application process, and renaming the employer award structure.
- Provide support and updated resources to local office staff as they reconnect with existing Breastfeeding Friendly Employers to ensure they are continuing to support their staff and adhere to the accommodations they submitted at the time of their original application.
- Provide support and updated resources to local office staff so they are well equipped to outreach to new employers about the benefits of being a Breastfeeding Friendly Employer and feel they can adequately answer their questions.

With Providers

- Continue to support public health detail visits to OB, Pediatric, and Family Practice provider offices to strengthen the collaboration and overall communication between WIC and health care providers with the goal of increasing enrollment in WIC prenatally and referring postpartum families to WIC for breastfeeding support through individual appointments as well as through group education.
- Continue to partner with health care providers in the hospitals and community to provide prenatal and postpartum education (in-person and virtually) and support for breastfeeding dyads.

Nutrition Services - Risk-Related

Goal I: Improve birth outcomes for both mothers and infants.

Objective 1: Increase to at least 38 percent the proportion of women entering WIC during pregnancy who are at a healthy pre-pregnancy weight.

Baseline: 34.4%, data source: Vital Records, Vermont Resident Births between January 1, 2018 and December 31, 2020.

Reference: Healthy People 2030 Goal MICH-13: Increase the proportion of women delivering a live birth who had a healthy weight prior to pregnancy to 47.1%

Activities:

- Work with Health Equity partners to ensure work is informed and incorporates DEI strategies.
- Engage the Nutrition Education Workgroup to strategize ways to improve pre-pregnancy weight status.
- Complete evaluation of Vermont Health Information Exchange and determine next steps and/or refine protocols for obtaining clinical measurement data for height/length, weight, head circumference, and either hematocrit or hemoglobin level for pregnant and postpartum WIC participants from the Vermont Health Information Exchange.

Objective 2: Reduce to 30 percent the proportion of pregnant WIC participants who report smoking during their pregnancies.

Objective 3: Increase to 45 percent proportion of pregnant WIC participants who are smoking at WIC entry who accept a referral to a quit resource.

Reference: Healthy People 2030: Increase abstinence from cigarette smoking among pregnant women — MICH-10.

Increase abstinence from cigarette smoking among pregnant women to 95.7%.

Activities:

- Continue to work with MCH/OLH and the Tobacco program to ensure that all pregnant women who smoke and want to quit are referred to appropriate resources.
- Continue to refer eligible pregnant women to incentive-based smoking cessation programs.
- Ensure that all prenatal participants are screened for nicotine/tobacco use and encouraged to accept referral to a quit resource.

Goal II: Improve the health status of Vermont WIC participants.

Objective 1: Reduce to not more than 10 percent the proportion of two-, three- and four-year old children that have BMIs above the 95th percentile. Reduce to not more than 10 percent the proportion of two-, three- and four-year old children that have BMI's between the 85th and 95th percentile.

Reference: Healthy People 2030 Goal NWS-04: Reduce the proportion of children and adolescents with obesity to 15.5%

Activities:

- Work with local WIC staff, partner agencies and programs to incorporate Fit WIC activities into ongoing prevention efforts. Utilize the Nutrition Education Workgroup to share ideas and support these efforts.
- Continue partnering with Vermont Parks Forever to grow our connection ensuring all WIC participants can receive free entry into our state parks throughout the season.
- Continue to build our list of WIC discounts especially as it relates to locations offering opportunities for movement.
- Participate in the Farm to Early Childhood Coalition and work with childcare providers to promote and coordinate nutrition education options for childcare and provide outreach tools to district staff to promote to WIC to eligible families.
Continue to engage Family Advisory Council members to inform activities.

Objective 2: Increase the proportion of fruit and vegetable cash value benefits redeemed each month to 77%.

Reference: June 2023 redemption was 74.08%

Activities:

- Promote full redemption of CVB through social media, newsletter, text message and WICShopper App, including ARPA funded CVB increase.
- Review nutrition education materials to ensure produce selection and preparation/recipes are available.

9. EBT and EBT Implementation Goals

Procurement Update:

Vermont WIC is a member of the Northeast Coalition of States (NCS). The NCS engaged to develop an EBT RFP to procure EBT services for SNAP and WIC in 2019. The contract process for the lead state, New York, had been delayed due to a bid protest. NCS states, including VT WIC, are required to wait until New York SNAP has a fully executed contract in place before entering into a contract. VT WIC put in place an extension to our EBT contract for up to 24 months (12 months, plus two 6-month extensions) to ensure EBT services were not disrupted for families. We continue to work to refine the contract timeline, working with VDH Business Office contract lead and VT Agency of Digital Services .