

CALIFORNIA
WIC ASSOCIATION



WIC

WATCH

FALL 2007
SPECIAL WICConnect ISSUE

WICConnect:

Better Foods...Clear Messages...Healthy Outcomes!

Dear WIC Colleagues,

The only WIC constant is change – which is probably why it’s so exciting to be the Director of the California WIC Program! My last letter to you outlined a long list of successful changes that we implemented during 2006-07 with your support and collaboration. But we’ve barely had time to catch our breath before facing further innovations and creative challenges.



On July 1, WIC became a part of the brand new California Department of Public Health. WIC is among the largest and most visible programs in the new department and has an important role in ensuring that the department’s nutrition programs and resources are coordinated and successful in addressing the obesity epidemic and other public health challenges.

In the next few years, we look forward to a set of truly historic WIC changes. We were thrilled to hear that the WIC Food Package rules are in the final stages of review at the federal level. This brings us one step closer to actual implementation, which we have already started to plan and hope to achieve during 2008 and 2009.

WICConnect is an internal WIC education campaign that will help all of us in the WIC community plan and implement the food package changes more strategically. Our vision is that, by 2009, the foods we offer to WIC participants will finally be aligned with the nutrition education messages we share with them. This alignment presents us with an historic opportunity to help our WIC families achieve healthy outcomes .

Because of your hard work increasing participation during last year’s Go For the Gold effort, California WIC could have substantial new funds with which to implement the new food packages in an unprecedented, coordinated fashion. By working together and planning strategically, we can maximize the benefits of the new WIC foods for the families we serve – and for the communities they live in.

I look forward to making WIC history with all of you!

Sincerely,

Linnea Sallack

Linnea Sallack
Chief, WIC Supplemental Nutrition Program
California Department of Public Health

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

▼ WICConnect

- Letter from Linnea Page 1
- WICConnect..... Page 2

▼ CWANews

- WBW Celebrations..... Page 4
- Announcements..... Page 6
- BF Updates..... Page 6

▼ Legislative Update Page 7

▼ Champions for Change ... Page 8

▼ Best Practices Award Winners

- Plumas Rural Services WIC Page 9
- Camino Health Center WIC . Page 10
- Antelope Valley WIC Page 11
- Merced County WIC Page 12

▼ Branch Updates

- Who's the Boss? Page 13
- LCE Changing Behaviors Page 14

▼ Career Corner

- Ask Nancy Page 16

▼ Management..... Page 17

▼ WIC Grapevine Page 17

▼ Educational Resources/ Hot Links/Recipe..... Page 19

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The Shape of Things to Come



WICconnect:

The Planets Are Aligning...

The California WIC Program is poised to take a quantum leap in achieving healthier outcomes among the millions we serve. By 2009, the **foods** we offer to WIC participants will finally be aligned with the nutrition education **messages** we share with them. This presents us with an historic opportunity to support positive choices in a meaningful way – and thus realize **healthy outcomes**.

California WIC has been preparing for this historic shift for several years. We have been implementing our framework for Activating Obesity Prevention, **Changing WIC, Changing Lives**, a strategy which has moved WIC to the forefront of efforts to prevent obesity -- starting at birth and working with the California's youngest and poorest families.

Next, we launched **Go for the Gold**, a simple but successful WIC-wide campaign to increase our caseload. This hard work paid off: increased statewide participation has resulted in a real possibility that substantial new Nutrition Services and Administration (NSA) funds will come our way during FFY 2008. Our success with these system-wide campaigns demonstrates the tremendous power of setting and working together towards common goals.

In the next few years, three California WIC trends will converge:

- (1) sweeping reforms that will finally allow us to match **WIC foods** with our education messages;
- (2) substantial **new NSA funds** with which to implement these changes; and
- (3) our success with recent **collaborative campaigns**: large-scale WIC policy changes implemented in a coordinated fashion.

We have what it takes to achieve a real paradigm shift in California WIC. We must seize this opportunity!

WICconnect is a new campaign designed to take advantage of this “perfect storm” and implement the WIC food package changes in a strategic and coordinated fashion. We will meet together, beginning at the Fall Conference, to come up with ways to inspire and train frontline WIC staff, inform and work with our external WIC partners, and coordinate and standardize our messaging and nutrition education as the new, healthier foods are added to the packages.

Building on a strong foundation of existing program improvements, especially Learner-Centered Education, VENA changes, FitWIC, and AAV, **WICconnect** will make sure that the rollout of new WIC foods is optimized by the entire California WIC community. **WICconnect** will strategically “connect the dots,” ensuring that, as the **New Foods** are rolled out, they are consistently accompanied by **Clear Messages** to participants and other WIC partners. With changes in place, we will then find creative and cost-effective ways to document **Healthy Outcomes**—the positive public health impacts brought about by improved WIC foods—and share the good news with political decisionmakers.

New Foods...

At this point, we do not know exactly what the new food packages will look like, and what the timeline for implementation will be. Complete details will be revealed when the Final Interim Rule is published in the Federal Register. On August 22, 2007, USDA forwarded the WIC food package regulations to the Office of Management

and Budget for final clearance. OMB is expected to complete its review within 90 days, so the regulations should appear by the end of the year.

Based on the original USDA proposal, however, we have enough information to begin framing our planning and educational approaches to the key changes to WIC Foods. These include five components:

■ Lower the Fat

- Less milk, eggs and cheese offered overall
- Reduced fat milk for women and children over 2

■ Eat More Fruits & Vegetables

- Cash-value vouchers for women and children
- Baby food fruits and vegetables for infants
- Flexible choice for ethnic and seasonal variety

■ Increase Whole Grains & Fiber

- Whole wheat bread, corn tortillas, brown rice added
- Canned beans allowed
- Whole grain cereals emphasized

■ Drink Less Sweetened Beverages

- Eliminate juice for infants; reduced amounts for others
- Substitute fruits and vegetables for juice

■ Babies are Meant to be Breastfed!

- Amount of formula tied to actual feeding practice
- Additional incentives for exclusively breastfeeding moms: larger quantity and choice of baby food, larger quantities of all foods for mom

Clear Messages...

In order to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the WIC

Better Foods...Clear Messages...Healthy Outcomes!

food package changes, we can't simply "flip the switch" for each change – e.g., re-program ISIS for the new foods, provide handouts to WIC families, and hope for the best. This unimaginative approach would waste a golden opportunity to leverage wider market and community changes, due to WIC's size and credibility. A "switch it on" approach that fails to take participant preferences and market influences into account could badly backfire, even resulting in lost caseload.

Instead, **WICconnect** will enable state and local California WIC practitioners – working with each other and with external partners -- to maximize each food package change with a carefully researched and planned rollout strategy. Partnering this summer with local agencies, the State WIC Program surveyed WIC family food consumption and preferences, using an easy new survey tool. This data will inform food package decision making as well as the design of nutrition education materials. The newly launched **Market to Meals** campaign, which provides pre-tested, ready-to-use materials to local WIC programs around a standardized theme, is a good example of how future changes could be implemented.

WICconnect will help frontline staff "connect the dots" between what they say to each WIC participant, and what participants buy with their WIC checks, in three major ways:

■ Coordinated and Consistent Messages

- Plan and test nutrition messages based on evidence and experience
- Develop user-ready "kits" for local WIC use (like Market to Meals)
- Involve ALL WIC staff in rollouts: use fun and colorful promotional materials!

■ Leverage WIC Partners

- For each change, work with the right manufacturers, growers, and suppliers
- Strengthen ties with grocers to ensure positive promotion of new foods
- Engage the community (local advocates, ethnic groups) in this exciting change!

■ Maximize the Ripple Effect

- Work with other nutrition assistance programs like Nutrition Network, Food Stamps, and Child Care Food
- Build on generic messages: "Less Sweetened Beverages" not "Less Juice"
- Use existing successful materials (1% milk campaigns, 5-A-Day, Sesame Street)

...Healthy Outcomes!

With healthier foods now available to them, and great nutrition education to go along with it, WIC families are bound to increase their intake of healthier foods, right? But how will we know it? It will be critical to carefully document and publicly celebrate our success in achieving positive and measurable outcomes among our large and high-risk population.

Documentation is important because WIC, as a domestic discretionary program, continues to depend on Congress for funding. More than ever, we need make a strong case that WIC is getting results – not just serving more families. In the Program Assessment and Review Tool (PART) of WIC released by OMB last February, WIC's only weak "grade" was in the "Outcomes" category. As part of a national trend in evidence-based accountability, federal decision makers want WIC to

do a better job in setting and achieving measurable public health improvements, particularly in the area of obesity prevention. The new WIC food packages give us the opportunity to shine in new ways!

We need to start with realistic and measurable results -- interim measures that get us to better health outcomes. For example, say we all agree to work on increasing consumption of lower-fat milk, since this is a key food package change. The State WIC Program can use dairy or grocery industry statistics to see if our benefit changes and educational messages are resulting in a consumption "uptick." With expert support from the new Department of Public Health, simple random surveys can be used to track particular behavioral changes and attitudes about milk in the entire WIC population. Repeat for fresh produce, whole grains, breastfeeding, etc.

The key to Healthy Outcomes in **WICconnect** is to agree on common, measurable goals that we will work on over time, as a community. Over the next few months, we will be discussing what these goals could be and how they will be measured. Some form of accountability mechanism will also be in the mix, so that collaborative work becomes part of the formal expectation for any local WIC program.

The **WICconnect** discussion began during a Task Force Special Session in August, and will continue at our Fall Managers Meeting in Palm Springs. Nothing will be finalized until details about the WIC Food Packages, as well as FFY 2008 WIC Appropriations, are fully available.

**Stay Tuned...CWA will keep YOU connected to:
WICconnect....
The Shape of Things to Come!**

World Breastfeeding Week Celebrations - August 7, 2007



Alameda County conducted Breastfeeding Awareness Walks in many locations. In Oakland, the Native American WIC team built a balloon arch to welcome the many WIC families who participated in the event.

Glenn County WIC celebrated WBW in a local park with forty enthusiastic supporters. The county Health Officer and Health Department Director spoke of their commitment to breastfeeding promotion support services at the event.



Dr. Mark Horton, Director of the Department of Public Health, presented the Governor's Proclamation of Breastfeeding Awareness Month at the State Capitol.



Breastfeeding advocates and supporters thronged to the state Capitol to participate in the Breastfeeding Awareness Walk.



Yolo county WIC program celebrated with a walk in a local park with supporters and advocates from Early Head Start, First 5 Yolo, and the county Health Department. Bette Hinton, director of the Health Department, read the proclamation presented by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors.



▲ The CWA and State WIC Branch resource table at the Capitol was a hive of activity. From left to right, Daisy Silverio, Karen Farley, Melissa Melcher, Blanca Nunez and Nancy O'Connor.



▲ Alameda County WIC families join a Breastfeeding Awareness Walk at Lake Merritt in Oakland .



▲ Contra Costa County WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Claudia Salmeron and Director Beverly Clark at one of the information tables set up at the clinic to celebrate World Breastfeeding Week.



▲ The CRP crew conducted a successful day of education and advocacy by hosting an event at the clinic with information booths, and joining the walk at the State Capitol.



▲ Trinity County organized events at Weaverville and Hayfork and almost a hundred breastfeeding supporters participated. Walkers at the Breastfeeding Awareness Walk and Celebration at Hayfork.



Changed Dates for 2008 Annual CWA Conference!

*WICconnect:
The Shape of Things to Come*

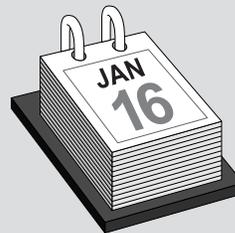
PRE CONFERENCE:
Monday, May 5th
CONFERENCE:
May 6, 7 and 8

Town and Country
Resort & Convention Center
500 Hotel Circle, San Diego

Save the Date!

WIC Food Package Summit
January 16, 2008, 9-5 pm
The California Endowment
The Center for Healthy Communities
Los Angeles, California

To leverage and maximize the positive and health-promoting impact of the upcoming new WIC Food packages, CWA, in partnership with the Department of Public Health and PolicyLink will convene key WIC



partners to share creative ideas around planning, implementation and evaluation of the rollout of the new WIC Food Packages.

Hospital Breastfeeding Report Out Soon

CWA and the University of California at Davis Human Lactation Center will release a second annual report on the state's Hospital Breastfeeding Rates in October. This report will rank maternity hospitals throughout the state. It will include county-specific fact sheets. Advocates are already preparing for a successful media launch for this report.

For more information, please contact Karen Farley at kfarley@calwic.org.



Preventing obesity should start as early as the day a child is born.



Legislative Update

FEDERAL NEWS

WIC Food Package Action: Hooray! On August 22, the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) received the USDA WIC Food Package Regulations for final clearance! OMB now has 90 days to review these major changes. Barring any unanticipated problems, we should see Interim Final Rules by the end of the year. At this point, we do not know exactly what the new food packages will look like, and what the timeline for implementation will be. Complete details will be revealed when regulations are published in the Federal Register, but California WIC has already begun planning for these positive and health-promoting changes, and Program Chief Linnea Sallack is leading the NWA WIC Food Package Task Force efforts to develop guidance for effective state implementation. CWA will be hosting a California WIC Food Package Summit on January 16, 2008, in Los Angeles, to strategize ways to maximize the positive health impacts of the new WIC foods in California communities. Stay tuned for details.

WIC Appropriations, Good News

So Far: Both the Senate and House Appropriations Committees have completed work on the bills that fund WIC, and a conference committee is supposed to begin work after Labor Day. The Senate bill (S. 1859) provided WIC with approximately \$5.7 billion in funding, \$75 M more than the House version of the bill (HR 3161). This funding level exceeds the President's WIC request by \$308 M and is \$500 M more than WIC's '07 funding level. High food costs, particularly milk, have increased both the demand for WIC among needy families, and the overall costs

of running the program, prompting National WIC Association and other WIC supporters to call for a funding level for WIC of at least \$5.687 billion to serve a caseload of approximately 8.4 million. The Center on Budget & Policy Priorities posted a new brief discussing the funding estimates, at www.cbpp.org. Neither bill contains any caps on Nutrition Services (NSA) funding, but a final WIC appropriation is still at risk, especially if the Ag Appropriations bill is folded into a larger "omnibus" spending bill: veto threats, across-the-board cuts, and other fiscal nightmares could arise. Please stay tuned this fall: your support will soon be needed!

SCHIP Showdown. Over the past ten years, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP-Healthy Families) has been effective at reducing the number of uninsured children. However, 9 million children are still uninsured - that's one out of every nine children. Bipartisan majorities in both houses of Congress voted to strengthen and improve SCHIP, with strong support from Governors from both parties, but President Bush has already threatened to veto any bill that expands coverage to additional children - and his Administration has proposed new rules that actually roll back coverage for current SCHIP kids. When the House and Senate cast a final vote on the SCHIP reauthorization bill, extra votes will be needed to ensure a veto override.

Farm Bill. On July 27, 2007, the House of Representatives passed its 2007 Farm Bill: H.R. 2419. The nutrition provisions include about \$4 billion over five years in modest improvements for the Food Stamp Program (re-titled "Secure Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program") and

the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). These include: the minimum standard deduction that households of 1-3 members receive would increase from \$134 to \$145 in 2008 and would be indexed for inflation in later years; the \$10 minimum benefit, which goes overwhelmingly to the elderly or disabled would increase to \$16 and would be indexed in later years; the child care deduction would no longer be capped, so that workers who pay for child care could deduct the full amount; the food stamp resource limits have been increased; TEFAP funding was significantly increased. The Senate Agriculture Committee expects to introduce its version of the Farm Bill shortly.

STATE NEWS

Budget Woes Sap Health Reform

The Governor signed a \$102 Billion state budget on August 25 after lengthy and contentious legislative negotiations. As part of the deal he used his line-item veto authority to cut \$703 million from a variety of programs - including modest funding to start the WIC Gateway project. Health care advocates are concerned about other Medi-Cal related cuts, including a \$13.8 million veto that would have enrolled an estimated 94,000 eligible children for state health coverage and a \$15 million cuts for local outreach. Read the details at www.cbp.org.

The Legislative Session ends September 14, so time is running out to overhaul California's healthcare system. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez are working on a strategy to raise business and hospital taxes through a ballot measure that would circum-

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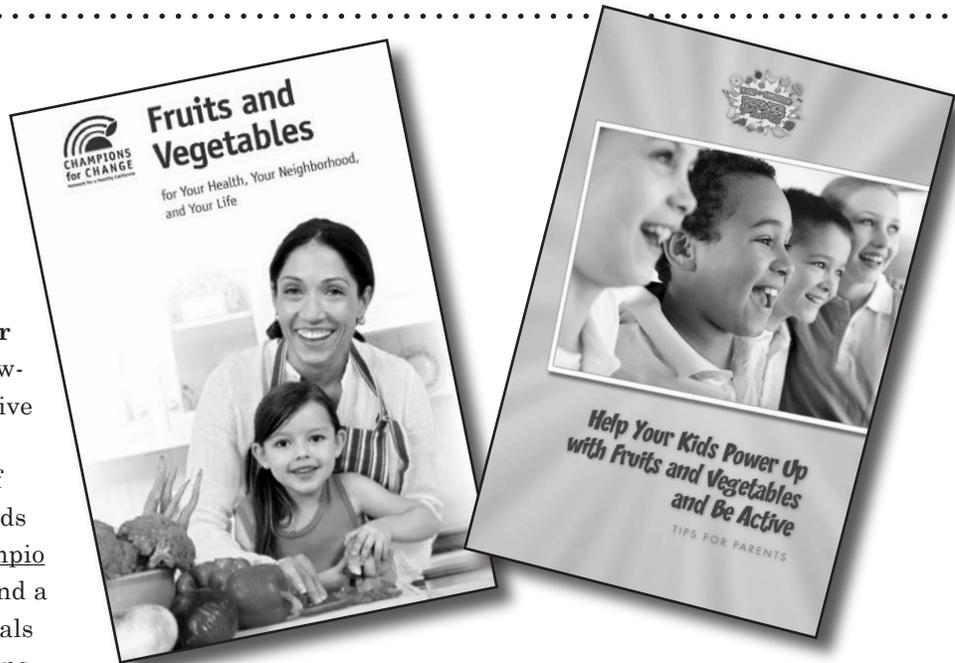
Connect the Dots

WICConnect to Champions for Change

California is serious about helping people be healthier by eating more nutritious foods. Stimulated by Governor Schwarzenegger's Obesity Prevention Plan, last March the California Nutrition Network launched **Champions for Change**—a campaign to empower low-income Californians to live healthier lives.

You may have seen some of their television and billboard ads (to see more, go to www.cachampionsforchange.net). With those and a wealth of informational materials available on the Web, Champions for Change highlights the key role that moms play in healthy eating. "Real" California mothers, not actors, talk about how they are improving their family's eating by incorporating more fruits and vegetables into their meals and how they are encouraging physical activity in their family's lives—from taking a walk together to sharing a bike ride. Although moms aren't the only ones responsible for how their families eat, they have a powerful influence on their kids' diets.

The Champions for Change materials can be powerful tools for WIC, reinforcing the campaign message that Change is Good. They can be incorporated into nutrition education sessions to show WIC participants how they can make a difference in their family's eating.



Action Steps You Can Take:



✓ Empower Moms and Dads, Aunts and Grandmothers to be Champions for Change!

The rollout of the new WIC Food package is a perfect time to urge WIC moms and dads, aunts and grandmothers to be Champions for Change in their families and communities. The Champions for Change campaign can help WIC families embrace the healthier food package and educate them about the key ingredients for a healthy lifestyle.

✓ Take the Champions for Change Challenge. How many WIC moms and dads can you help to become champions for their family's health?

Check out the Resources at www.cachampionsforchange.net and share them with WIC families.

✓ Pass on the Champions for Change Attitude:

- ◆ Change is good – families and communities are adopting healthy eating and active living practices.
- ◆ Every neighborhood deserves to have clean, safe places for people to get good quality, low-cost fruits and vegetables and to be physically active.
- ◆ Everyone can do their bit to make healthy communities a reality - meet with community leaders and city officials to discuss healthy changes.
- ◆ Join the parent group at your child's school. Talk about the problems you see and help make solutions.

www.cachampionsforchange.net