

# San Francisco WIC Linkage with Epic Electronic Health Record System

## Summary

The Maternal Child and Adolescent Health (MCAH) Section of the [San Francisco Department of Public Health](#) transitioned to Epic to streamline services for the MCAH population and support healthcare providers in delivering whole person care. In that transition, the Department and healthcare providers were eager to link [WIC](#) to Epic, which is used across several health systems in the county. The linkage includes a WIC referral that can be placed in Epic by providers and directed to a WIC referral work queue for staff follow-up. In addition to the referral function, WIC staff have read only access to patient records in Epic to look up information needed for certification or for providing nutrition care.

## Process

WIC worked with a team of Department staff and Epic experts to design the process. The referral mimics the WIC paper referral form using data from the patient's Epic health record, including contact and demographic information, measurements, and lab values. City attorneys reviewed the referral process to ensure it complies with regulatory requirements. WIC staff retrieve the referrals and enter the information into the WIC information system when a referred patient is enrolled. WIC is currently refining the workflow for referral follow-up and will soon transition from centralized follow-up to assigning referrals to WIC clinics. While WIC staff can access records in Epic to view relevant information, they do not update the patient records.

## Outcomes

The response to using Epic for referrals and to WIC having access to patient records is very favorable. WIC receives 25-30 referrals for patients that are new to WIC each week. Referrals for families that need to reconnect to WIC services and for therapeutic formula are also being sent through Epic. The referral process removes significant barriers and streamlines the process for WIC families and for healthcare providers, nurses and social workers. It also improves communication and care coordination. WIC staffing capacity and the diverse language needs of families impact the timeliness of enrolling referred patients, but the program strives to schedule enrollment appointments within a week of receiving the referral.

## Looking Forward

Based on experience with Epic, WIC will work on refining the referral process and maximizing use of patient information to provide individualized nutrition services and coordinate care with providers. Identifying a way to document the referral status in patient records (e.g., contact made, appointment scheduled, enrolled), that complies with participant confidentiality requirements, would help avoid duplicate referrals and improve coordination. Organizing referrals by type within the queue and increasing referrals for lactation support are additional enhancements. The linkage with Epic will help San Francisco WIC improve participant recruitment and retention.

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