

# Riverside County Department of Public Health WIC Partnership with Inland Empire Health Plan

## Summary

The Department of Public Health WIC Agency, part of the Riverside University Health System (RUHS), has a long history of collaborating with the Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP). This includes contracts for nutrition services provided by Registered Dietitians (RDN) shared by WIC and health clinics.

Planning is underway to further leverage the WIC workforce to partner with IEHP in the implementation of the statewide initiative CalAIM to improve health outcomes in the Medi-Cal population. Opportunities for collaboration include data sharing, case management, engagement, and workforce capacity building. Five WIC employees who are Degreed Nutritionists (DN, bachelor's degree in nutrition) or WIC Nutrition Assistants, (WNA, trained paraprofessionals), completed training offered by Loma Linda University to become Certified Community Health Workers (CHWs) in order to leverage funding through California's new Community Health Worker Medi-Cal benefit. Through contracts with the health plans, these employees could work half time in WIC and half time as CHWs. Contracts could also include nutrition care for Enhanced Care Management (ECM) patients provided by Registered Dietitians (RDN) that work part-time for WIC part-time with ECM patients.

## Process

This is a work in progress as the partners are among the early adaptors taking advantage of reforms.

- The partners committed to collaborate to identify ways to tap opportunities in the health reforms, establishing new approaches to benefit participants/patients and the mission of their organizations.
- They set up regular communication and include leadership at many levels.
- They engaged in a learning process to understand the qualifications of WIC staff, the expectations of services of the new CHW benefit and the need for RDNs to improve care especially for patients in ECM.

## Outcomes and Next Steps

### Outcomes:

- Five WIC staff, working as WNAs or DNAs, are now trained as CHWs and available for service.

### Next Steps:

- Agreements between the organizations will define the roles and conditions for the CHWs and the RDNs.
- Details will need to be agreed upon for staffing assignments, documentation of work hours and billing rates and codes.

## Looking Forward

- Depending on the outcomes of these efforts, WIC staffing, and community needs, more WIC staff could be co-trained as CHWs or provide care for ECM or other areas of need.
- Opportunities exist to convert WIC sites into community hubs with other programs and cross trained staff.
- Staff recruitment and retention should be evaluated when staff are offered co-training and these additional opportunities.

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