



# WIC NEWS

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Special Supplemental Nutrition Program  
for Women, Infants, and Children

**March 2023**

## Note from the director

Happy New Year! I would like to thank all of you for your outstanding performance in 2022. Your determination and hard work have paid off, and I am truly grateful to have you as a part of the WIC team! You have shown great tenacity and strength throughout the formula transitions that we faced last year. Thank you for serving with a SMILE! Your efforts are acknowledged and deeply appreciated!

As some of the local agencies are beginning to schedule in-person appointments again, your ongoing hard work on behalf of the clients that we serve is more vital than ever. If you are unable to telecommute or intend to be absent or unavailable during a specific timeframe, please be mindful of when to request leave and coordinate with your supervisor who would otherwise rely upon your availability for assigned work. I appreciate and expect that all employees will continue to fulfill their duties and responsibilities as assigned while also taking necessary steps to preserve their health and safety and attend to the needs of their families.

## National Nutrition Month

Please join me as we celebrate National Nutrition Month in March! During this month, join the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Division and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, as well as many local and regional dietetic associations statewide, to celebrate and raise awareness and support for the important role nutrition plays in our daily lives. This year's theme, "Fuel for the Future," highlights the importance of fueling bodies at every age, eating with sustainability in mind and showcases the expertise of registered dietitian nutritionists and nutrition and dietetics technicians.

## 2022 Highlights

Please look at some of the accomplishments from each section within the WIC Division below.

### Vendor Management & Program Integrity

- Our first in-person Vendor Conference since 2019 took place on Sept. 8 at the Doubletree Hotel in Dearborn and was a huge success!
- Converted all paper files to electronic files.
- Completed the online vendor training course now available on the state LMS platform; vendors can take the required training at a time that is convenient for them.
- Met established monitoring goals with field team conducting onsite visits providing training, answering questions and ensuring our vendors have WIC-approved foods available for our WIC families.
- Updated vendor policies, including an FNS request to develop a Vendor Disaster/Emergency policy.

(Continued on Page 2)

# Director update cont.

## Data Systems Management

- Several enhancements to the WIC eligibility application and the WIC Connect app were released to improve and streamline client services as part of the WIC Special Projects Innovation Grant.
- Michigan WIC received more than 36,000 referrals through the Integrated Served Delivery Portal (ISD) resulting in more than 7,900 appointments.
- Project FRESH was implemented successfully where more than 148,000 coupons amounting to \$742,050 were allocated to local agencies who in turn could issue them to WIC women and children. These coupons were redeemed for Michigan-grown eligible fresh fruits and vegetables at hundreds of authorized farmers markets and roadside stands across the state between June 1 - October 31.

## Nutrition Program & Evaluation

- In response to the infant formula shortage, Michigan WIC implemented contract provisions and USDA waivers to temporarily authorize more than 175 additional infant formulas, including imported options, to assist in maximizing client access to safe formula.
- Michigan successfully implemented increases in fruit and vegetable Cash Value Benefits (CVB), resulting in increased redemptions and consumption of these healthy food choices.
- In August, Michigan WIC celebrated National Breastfeeding Month with the theme “In Every Drop.” Michigan is committed to improving outcomes for breastfeeding parents and helping community health workers such as community-based doulas and the WIC Peer Counseling support program to help diversify lactation support and increase breastfeeding rates in local communities across the state.
- Developed and implemented 50+ trainings and events, serving virtual audiences from 20-800 participants. Our first face-to-face training since COVID-19 was held August 9 and 10.
- Conducted more than 26 remote management evaluations (MEs) and 21 ME follow-up reviews, meeting all USDA and state management evaluation deadlines.
- Upgrade of all webpages.
- Developed a New WIC Coordinator training in response to the 25 percent turnover in WIC Coordinator staff.
- Provided phone assistance to clients when local WIC agencies were closed on weekends and holidays through the formula shortage and recall.
- Developed a WIC Clerical Workgroup to enhance local agency (LA) staff support in response to an increase in LA staff turnover.

## Financial Management

- Proposed the idea of providing a cost of living adjustment to all local agencies in FY '23, which was approved by WIC Director Christina Herring-Johnson and will be implemented with the FY '23 budget.
- Added a dashboard specific to the infant formula rebate which brings the total number of dashboards to four. Expanding the LA Caseload and Expenditures Report Dashboard and plan to make it accessible to local agencies.

Christina Herring-Johnson  
Michigan WIC Director

## Public comment period

The annual Michigan WIC Public Comment Period takes place from March 1 through April 30. We welcome any and all comments on any aspect of our program. Please promote the opportunity widely to current, former and potential future WIC families.



# Supporting the road to healing

WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselors and staff across Michigan are working tirelessly to help clients achieve their goals. Some staff have found themselves stumbling on hard truths and past histories that are quickly seen as barriers to breastfeeding success. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) **about 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys in the United States experience child sexual abuse**. These are hard facts to swallow, especially as WIC agencies are opening their doors back up for in-person appointments and we are able to better interact with clients.



How can WIC help support its clients on the road to healing and meeting their breastfeeding goals? Michigan Breastfeeding Network has released a webinar called “Adverse Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse on the Breastfeeding Dyad: A Journey Towards Collective Healing.” This powerful webinar offers viewers awareness of childhood sexual abuse, how it impacts breastfeeding success and ways to help support victims with healing and breastfeeding. This webinar offers continuing education credits and is available to view until January 15, 2024. [Click here to register!](#)

## Michigan WIC Association (MWA) update

*Tracie Bolton, MWA Chair & Ingham County Health Department WIC Coordinator*

In January, I had the privilege of serving as the last-minute alternate representing the Midwest region of the local agency director section at the National WIC Association Board Meeting in New Orleans. It is an exciting time to impact change in WIC! NWA values the voices of Local Agency Directors, or Coordinators as most of us in Michigan are called. The three-day meeting was intense, and we discussed many important issues that impact our clients and our agencies daily. The hot topics included formula rebate contracts, new bylaws which include more local agency representation, opportunities to advocate for more breastfeeding funding and ways to create actual change in the areas of health equity, diversity, and inclusion. Additionally, we spent a significant amount of time discussing the needed education of our legislators regarding the importance of WIC and the changes that are needed. That education is best received from constituents. Please contact me if you would like to participate in upcoming virtual legislative visits. We also worked on a collective response to the proposed food rule.

We met with business partners which included food and tech companies to inform them how they can better serve WIC families. Finally, we were able to visit two local agencies that were doing some exciting and innovative things in their community! It was a great experience, and I was honored with the opportunity to share your ideas and concerns that you have been sharing on our statewide calls.

Please remember your MWA Board is here to serve you! Don't hesitate to reach out to us. Your board includes:

- ⇒ Tracie Bolton, chair [tbolton@ingham.org](mailto:tbolton@ingham.org).
- ⇒ Kali Jones, chair elect [kjones@intercare.com](mailto:kjones@intercare.com).
- ⇒ Lynn Kuligowski, treasurer [lkuligowski@communityfirsthc.org](mailto:lkuligowski@communityfirsthc.org).
- ⇒ Abigail Bishop, secretary [Abigail.bishop@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:Abigail.bishop@kentcountymi.gov).
- ⇒ Anne Bianchi, representative [abianchi@dhd10.org](mailto:abianchi@dhd10.org).
- ⇒ Martha Brooks, representative [martha.brooks@macombgov.org](mailto:martha.brooks@macombgov.org).

# March is National

## Note from Tara

*Tara Fischer, MS, RD*

National Nutrition Month® is an annual campaign created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. During the month of March, everyone is invited to learn about making informed food choices and developing healthful eating and physical activity habits. This year's theme is "Fuel for the Future."



At the time of writing this, the Academy has not yet released the campaign's key messaging or their interpretation of this year's theme. Regardless, I think we can all envision what they are talking about. Nutrition/food providing 'fuel' (calories, carbs, proteins, nutrients, etc.) 'for the future' – today, and beyond.

Since we're not yet limited by that vision just yet, I'd like to invite us to think even bigger than just nutrition and food – though, of course, that is very important too! Let's expand that theme and think of all the fuel we put into our lives, not just food. I'm talking about all the time, energy and effort you put into your work and personal life every day. From a global pandemic and formula recall to transitioning back to in-person services and contract formulas, many have invested a lot of "fuel."

For all that and more, I want to use National Nutrition Month as an opportunity to thank you for all that fuel you dedicate each and every day, now and into the future. All the choices you make daily impact so many lives. The smiles you give, the tears you share and the countless examples of empathy, affirmation and active listening. I want to encourage you all to take a moment to stop – take a breath – and really think about how you use your fuel to fill your cup and the cups of those around you.

We want to celebrate you and the fuel you bring to work every day, so please keep an eye out for some incentive items coming for you and your clients to celebrate your successes during National Nutrition Month. Shipments will contain the following items\*:



Apple Shaped  
Bag Clips



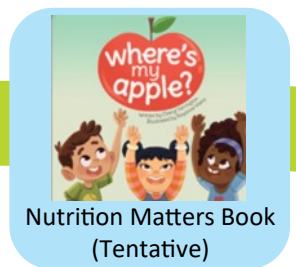
Measuring  
Spoons



Mesh  
Produce Bags



EBT Card  
Sleeves



Nutrition Matters Book  
(Tentative)

**\*Distribution is based on caseload. Please distribute with your subcontract agencies, if applicable.**

We also want to celebrate your fuel by introducing the first ever Advanced CPA Award. This award will go to four deserving individuals who apply to join our inaugural cohort. They will receive an all-expenses reimbursed trip to an approved conference of their choice or tuition reimbursement for an approved training related to a particular nutrition education topic or client-centered skill of interest. We anticipate this to be an annual award and are excited to see what this first year brings for four deserving staff. More details will be announced in early March and at the Nutrition Education Workgroup on March 9.

As always, please share what your agency or clinic is doing to celebrate National Nutrition Month, and we will highlight your activities in the next WIC News.

Thank you again for all the fuel you bring to WIC every day. Happy National Nutrition Month!



# Nutrition Month!

## Nutrition 101

### The Beauty of B9, also known as folate

Mandie Bosch, GVSU intern



A million thoughts likely run through a person's mind when they see a positive pregnancy test. I hope I consumed enough folate recently, is probably not one of them. Even though it is not everyone's first thought when considering pregnancy and growth, folate, also known as folic acid or vitamin B9, is an essential micronutrient. It is a necessary part of DNA, RNA and protein synthesis. Folate is vital for everyone, especially during infancy, adolescence and pregnancy.

Folate offers protective benefits to the neurological health of the fetus even before the pregnancy is confirmed. This means all persons of child-bearing age should consume enough folic acid through dietary sources or, if necessary, supplements so that if one were to become pregnant, the baby would be protected. Studies show the risk of spina bifida, down syndrome and other congenital abnormalities are decreased with ample folate.<sup>1</sup> Folate is not just crucial during pregnancy; adolescents need it to sustain healthy growth.

According to national data, adolescents are at the highest risk of having low folate levels than any other age group in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> Folate works closely with vitamin B12 in the production of red blood cells and can lead to anemia if intake is insufficient, leading to a host of other health issues.

Folic acid can be easily incorporated into everyone's diet if they are intentional about it. Folate can be found naturally in dark green leafy vegetables, beans, peas, oranges, lemons, bananas and strawberries—all WIC-authorized options! The USDA also requires the fortification of folic acid in all enriched grain products because of its importance in preventing neural tube defects. Because of this, there are 1,300 fewer babies born each year that have a neural tube defect.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the previously listed examples of folate-rich foods, all WIC-approved breakfast cereals and breads contain folate. WIC clients are among those the most affected by potential folate deficiency and may benefit from education on this nutrient.

Here is a folate-packed recipe that is easy to make, allows for many variations and will have you reminiscing about summer days during the cold winter months. The spinach and strawberries in this recipe make it perfect for fitting in some extra folate and the vitamin C from the oranges will even help with iron absorption. It's a win-win!

References: Brown JE, Lechtenberg E. Adolescent Nutrition. In: *Nutrition through the Life Cycle*. 362nd ed. Cengage; 2020:356-362.

Key findings: Folic acid fortification continues to prevent neural tube defects. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/features/folicacid-prevents-ntds.html>. Published June 17, 2022. Accessed February 2, 2023.

### Strawberry Spinach Summer Salad

Time: 5 minutes

Yield: 4

#### Ingredients:

- 2 cups fresh spinach (you may use spring mix as well)
- 2 cups fresh strawberries, sliced
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese
- ½ cup chopped pecans, or any nut of your choice
- Poppyseed dressing
- ½ cup mandarin oranges

#### Instructions

- Mix spinach, strawberries, feta cheese, and pecans in a large bowl. Top with poppyseed dressing and serve!

#### Variations:

- Add chopped apples.
- Add grilled chicken for extra protein.
- Use different vinaigrettes in place of the poppyseed dressing (raspberry or balsamic pair well).



# Client Advisory Council (CAC) update

Whitney Jackson, WIC strategist

Thank you all for your continued support as we have convened the first-ever Michigan WIC Client Advisory Council. We worked hard throughout 2022 to ensure that we designed an effective and equity-based approach to convene our CAC and we are so pleased with the results! As you may know, we received more than 20,000 applications from folks interested in serving on the CAC. It was so encouraging to know that so many current and former WIC clients were interested in sharing their quality feedback. With support from other WIC Division staff and community partners, we have brought together 11 people to serve on the CAC. We are confident that our CAC members understand the ongoing responsibility of their positions and will continue to enthusiastically engage with us and with each other throughout their terms. We have asked our council members to commit to one year of service, during which time we will consider the potential for subsequent terms and leadership opportunities. The inaugural meeting took place in late January and the group will continue to meet monthly throughout 2023.

The CAC will provide feedback on various ongoing projects, assist with material development and partake in events like the WIC Conference. One of the first items they tackled was a submission of public comment on the proposed food package changes. If you have questions about the CAC or issues that you'd like to be considered for their agenda, please reach out to Whitney Jackson at [JacksonW6@Michigan.gov](mailto:JacksonW6@Michigan.gov) or Myra Lee Fowler at [leefowlerm@michigan.gov](mailto:leefowlerm@michigan.gov).

## Training, Evaluation & Compliance (TEC) Corner



### Setting SMART Goals

Kait Skwir, MS, RDN

Whether you have made resolutions for the New Year, writing a Corrective Action Plan after a Management Evaluation or drafting your annual Nutrition Service Plan, setting goals can help you get there. Using the acronym SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound) when setting goals can help to clarify the direction of a project or initiative, and focus staff attention on what the priority needs are.

Ask yourself these questions when writing your goals:

**Specific-** What will be accomplished?

**Measurable-** How will you know when you have accomplished the goal?

**Achievable-** Do you have the skills and resources needed?

**Relevant-** Does this goal align with your overall vision and mission?

**Time-Bound-** What is your deadline? Do you need check-ins along the way?

Keeping these parameters in mind can help you write clear and concise goals to achieve personal and professional success. If you need help writing goals for State-required activities, ask your state consultant for

# WIC STAFF CELEBRATIONS

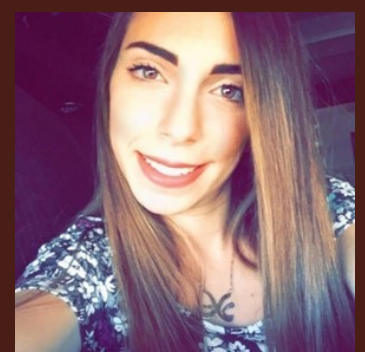
## Macomb County Health Department



The Macomb County Health Department bid farewell to Nutritionist Jane Hanson, who served as the Nutrition Education Coordinator. Jane took a well-deserved retirement in early Feb. after 22 years of loyal public service. Jane is looking forward to traveling and convincing her daughters to bring on the grandchildren.



Kait Kulp, Nutritionist (formerly from Berrien County and now with Macomb), married her best friend Dakota in late January.



Tala Mughrabi, nutritionist for Macomb County HD, has completed her first rotations for the WIC/MSU dietetic internship. Congratulations Tala and hang in there!

Karri Howard, a health technician for 21 years has transitioned careers from her first love (WIC) to her true love (animals). She will be serving as the manager at a pet services facility that trains and boards dogs and other furry creatures. Karri takes with her all the lessons she learned at WIC. Karri was provided WIC logos in all sizes for her tattooist!



## Berrien County Health Department

Samantha Wright (née Samantha Beyerlein), former Berrien County WIC coordinator, had a beautiful wedding in August 2022.



# STATE UPDATES - E-NOTICE RECAP

## Policies and Procedures:

- #2022-363: System-Related Equipment Inventory Review and Policy Update – See changes to MI-WIC Policy 10.01.
- #2022-369: Revised Policy 8.05 Returned Formula and Re-Issuance of Benefits – See E-Notice for summary of changes.
- #2022-03: WIC Coordinator Connections Call 11/30/22 Meeting Minutes and New Invite for January 2023 – Please see E-Notice and attachments for minutes, chat record and slide deck.
- #2023-06: Urgent Coordinator Call- Formula Update 01/09/2023 Meeting Chat Record & Slides – Please see E-Notice and attachments for chat record and slide deck.
- #2023-10: Newly Revised Breastfeeding Policies – Please see E-Notice for summaries of changes to MI-WIC Policies 4.02 and 4.05.
- #2023-18: MI-WIC Time Study Abbreviated Recordings – [Click here to view archived recordings.](#)
- #2023-25: WIC Coordinator Connections Call 1/25/23 Meeting Minutes and Chat Record – Please see E-Notice and attachments for minutes and chat record.
- #2023-26: Newly Revised Michigan WIC Policies – See changes to MI-WIC Policies 7.02, 7.03, 1.07 and 1.07A.
- #2023-30: Implicit Bias Training – See E-Notice for details and resources.

## Nutrition:

- #2022-349: Emergent Situation - Abbott Formula Recall #86: Redemption of Alternative Formulas, Store Inventories, and Formula Samples – See E-Notice for details and please refer to subsequent E-Notices with the same title, numbered sequentially, for additional formula information.
- #2022-361: Quaker Grits & Oatmeal Package Size Decrease – Clients may no longer redeem 9.8 oz Quaker Grits & Oatmeal with WIC benefits.
- #2022-366: Nutrition Education Updates – See E-Notice for several updates and resources.
- #2023-04: Register for upcoming Nutrition-related webinars – See E-Notice for details and [click here to view archived webinars.](#)
- #2022-05: Implementation of Increased CVB Extension for January – September 2023 – See E-Notice for details.
- #2023-15: Emergent Situation – Similac Transition Plan #01: Update of Shopping List Description – See E-Notice for details and please refer to subsequent E-Notices with the same title, numbered sequentially, for additional transition information.
- #2023-21: Formulary Update – Michigan WIC Formulary Revisions & Alternative Hypoallergenic Options – See E-Notice for details.
- #2023-32: Emergent Situation – Abbott Recall #1: Recalled Similac Formula Reminder – See E-Notice for details.

## Vendor:

- #2023-09: WIC Vendor Winter Newsletter – [Click here to access newsletter.](#)

## Breastfeeding:

- #2022-374: Breastfeeding Awards of Excellence Application Deadline and Upcoming Peer Counselor Trainings – See E-Notice for details.
- #2023-17: Winter Breastfeeding Connections & Peer Training – [Click here to access newsletter.](#)

## Promotion and Retention:

- #2022-385: December WIC News – [Click here to access newsletter.](#)
- #2023-16: Promotion and Retention Workgroup (PRWG) Meeting Minutes – January 13, 2023 – See E-Notice and attachments.

## Events:

- #2023-22: Registration Open for the 2023 Michigan WIC Training & Educational In-Person Conference – [Click here to register.](#)
- #2023-34: Conference Room Block Expanded for Annual WIC Conference – [Click here for Registration Information.](#)



# STATE UPDATES - E-NOTICE RECAP

## Legislation and Partner Updates:

#2022-367: Immunization Update from our partners at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services - See E-Notice for several updates and resources.

#2023-12: National Public Health Emergency Extension – WIC waivers apply through at least July 2023.

#2022-31: Michigan Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program is requesting your participation in a brief survey – [Click here for survey](#).

## Data and Systems:

#2022-353: DSM Reports Shared During WIC Coordinator Summit – See E-Notice and attachments for the Fall Biannual Breastfeeding Report, Deduplicated Enrollment Reports for the Fiscal and Calendar Year, Top 10 WIC Indicators for 2021, and the Average Day in Michigan WIC Summary for 2021.

#2022-355: Present for Certification Ad Hoc Report – See E-Notice and attachment.

#2022-357: WIC Client Connect Platform Training – [Click here to access the training](#).

#2022-376: Present for Certification Ad Hoc Report – November 2022 – See E-Notice and attachment.

#2022-368: Food Dollars Spent by WIC Participants FY 2022 – See E-Notice attachment for report.

#2022-370: Scheduling Tasks: 'How to Tips' Recorded Trainings Now Available on SharePoint and MHPI Website – [Click here to access trainings](#).

#2022-381: Referral Category Added: Birthing Center/Hospital – See E-Notice and MI-WIC Policy 6.02 for details.

#2023-11: FY 2022 Local Agency Caseload and Expenditures Report – See E-Notice and attachment.

## Highlight on Client Centered Services

*Monica Smith, MA, LPC, RD*

Hello all! As we approach the change of the seasons, several other changes are on the horizon. Many of your clinics are seeing clients in person again. The formula shortage is nearing an end. I am sure many clinics have openings that everyone hopes will be filled. There is a transition time with all change and it is during this transition time that stressors float to the surface.

For example, it is great to have anthropometric and hemoglobin results again, but that means crying littles in the clinic and some apprehensive parents. It means appointments are longer and no-shows might increase. Enough formula translates to the return to contract formula. New hires mean finding time to train. I call this the collision between the positive and the unwanted. This collision creates tension and at times, fear and anger. It requires energy and awareness to navigate these types of transitions without being pulled into the mind frame of negativity and defensiveness.

If you feel that participants, coworkers or supervisors might demand more than what is possible as we return to a new normal, join me at the WIC Conference! I am excited to be with you all in person to present "It's Safe to Disagree: Using CCS to Navigate MORE Change." [Visit www.miwicconference.com to register](http://www.miwicconference.com). Hope to see you there.



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Questions/Comments  
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PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE



## UPCOMING EVENTS/TRAININGS/WORKGROUPS

### March

7-8: Senior Peer Counselor Training  
9: Nutrition Education Workgroup  
14-16: Breastfeeding Basics  
16: Exploring Hispanic Culture  
webinar  
28: Lab Training  
29: Anthro Training

### April

6: PC Survey Q&A Webcast  
12-13: Clerical Training  
14: Breastfeeding Workgroup  
18: Milk Expression  
19: Advanced CPA Training  
20: Clerk/Tech Workgroup  
25: Breastfeeding Coordinator Training  
26: Peer Counselor Manager Training

### May

9-10: CPA Training  
12: Promotion & Retention Workgroup  
23-24: WIC Training & Educational  
Conference, Grand Rapids

**Visit MPHI to sign up for trainings!**

Note: Training dates are sometimes adjusted. Please be sure to verify training information on MPHI's WIC Events Calendar, as this list may not reflect the final schedule.