

Barbara Longo, MS, RD

Deputy Division Chief for Nutrition and Local Program Services
California WIC Program, CA Dept. of Public Health

Identifying WIC Eligible Populations using Data Linkages and Geographic Information System (GIS) Technologies

Key Partners & Stakeholders

Local WIC programs, California WIC Association, and State Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health (MCAH) epidemiology staff.

Background

State representatives from MCAH and WIC began discussions in January 2010 on how MCAH might be able to assist WIC in identifying unmet need in California. An evidence-based approach was suggested where state birth file data could be linked to the WIC Integrated Statewide Information System (ISIS) to identify those pregnant women who were eligible to receive WIC services but were not participating in the program. GIS maps were then created showing areas of greatest need and where additional allocation of funds might be necessary. A local agency advisory group was formed to assist in this effort.

Project Goal

Identify WIC eligible populations in California who are not receiving WIC services using an evidence-based approach in order to effectively allocate funds to those areas that will benefit most from expanding services.

Methods

The 2008 California state birth file was linked with ISIS information. This linkage identified those women who had not participated in WIC but were eligible due to their participation in MediCal. MCAH epidemiologists geo-coded all the WIC-eligible women and created maps showing the areas where these women lived. In order to protect confidentiality, women were placed randomly within the census tract in which they lived but specific locations were not revealed.

Summary

Every agency has now received maps for their area based on 2008 data. Maps are now being developed with 2009 data. Feedback from local agencies has been very positive and many new WIC sites have now been opened as a result of this data.

The partnership with MCAH has assisted WIC in improved targeting of WIC services, identification of geographic locations where barriers to service may exist, and provision of many other layers of data pertinent to WIC, including information on WIC site locations and authorized vendors.