

NLN 2016 Abstract Submission from Colorado

Title: Strategies to Increase Colorado WIC Program Participation

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Background Information and Project Goals:

Similar to national numbers, the Colorado WIC Program has experienced decreasing program participation since 2009. According to the most recent data (2013), Colorado is currently 47th in the nation for access to the WIC Program. Decrease in participation is driven by a decrease in demand and/or access (fewer new participant enrollments and less program retention). Knowing this and receiving extensive feedback, a strategic planning process was initiated. Thru this strategic mapping process, priorities were identified and increasing program participation was selected as one of our priorities (goals) for the program over the next 3-5 years.

Methods:

In order to explore the reasons for the decrease in demand/access to the Colorado WIC Program, market research is being conducted specifically for Colorado. Participant interviews (1000) will be carried out to determine the value of the program from the participants' views and hopefully bring to light ideas to reduce barriers to access. This research will drive program improvement strategies at both the state and local levels. Colorado WIC is also focusing on identifying potentially eligible populations by census tract and/or by county. This will enable the state to prioritize geographic areas of focus and to strengthen outreach and referrals to those areas. There are also internal and external strategies being explored and/or implemented to improve program participation. Internal strategies include: implementation of eWIC, 'Texting for Retention', expansion of WICHealth.org, auto-income eligibility/pre-certification, elimination of county borders and participation in the NWA outreach campaign. In addition, the performance management WIC Impact was created to further define strategies to improve program quality and outreach and will measure the effectiveness of the interventions. External strategies include leveraging the AAP policy statement on food security screening and working with local partners to enhance eligibility and enrollment. These partners include: Hunger Free Colorado, Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) and National WIC Association (NWA), Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), SNAP and Head Start.

Results and Summary:

As we are in the process of exploring and implementing many strategic processes to increase Colorado WIC Program participation, we know that increasing program participation impacts those we serve by improving breastfeeding duration and exclusivity, improving nutrition intake, increasing physical activity and increasing access to healthy foods.