

Innovative Technology in WIC

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Introduction:

The Montana WIC program serves about 20,000 participants who live in one of the largest and most rural states in the country. This poses several challenges to program delivery including distance to clinics and hiring qualified, professional nutrition staff. As a result, we have utilized wichealth.org and remote RD services to reduce these barriers while complying with federal regulations and nutrition services standards set forth by USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS).

Goals:

- Promote Wichealth.org for use by participants to complete low risk, secondary education.
- Promote use of technology (WebEx, Facetime, and phone) for high-risk follow up with Registered Dietitians.

Methods:

Montana WIC contracted with wichealth.org for secondary, low-risk nutrition education. Training and promotion has been done via conferences, conference calls, monitoring visits, and in newsletters. Staff can assign a participant to complete their follow-up education online and mail benefits once completed.

Each Clinic is required to have access to an RD for high-risk participant follow-up. When an RD is not available on staff, participants may receive follow-up using distance technology including WebEx or phone contact.

Results:

Wichealth.org use 2013 included 510 lessons completed among 5 local agencies with a goal for 2014 of 1600. Distance technology is being used by 13/27 agencies for RD services.

Summary:

Use of distance RD services has been successful, participants and local staff appreciate the convenience and feel like quality services are available where they would otherwise be lacking.

Wichealth.org has been slow to take hold. About 5 clinics are using it regularly, but many others are hesitant for a variety of reasons. We continue to work on training staff, promoting the cost/time benefit, and working with wichealth.org to keep the lessons current and relevant.