Montana WIC Needs Assessment

Team: Montana WIC Program Team and Yarrow (Contractor)

Introduction: The Montana WIC Program developed a Needs Assessment to better understand the needs and resources of the WIC program, its participants, and services to guide a comprehensive statewide nutrition services plan for the Montana WIC Program. This Assessment includes an overview of WIC in the State of Montana, demographics of the WIC population, various indicators of program participation including eligibility, maternal and child health indicators, and detailed overviews of breastfeeding and nutrition services.

Goals:

- Create a comprehensive statewide nutrition services plan for the Montana WIC Program.

Methods: This Needs Assessment was conducted from summer 2020 to summer 2021 by the Montana WIC program in conjunction with a contracted public health consulting organization.

Data for this Assessment was sourced from both primary and secondary data sets at the national, state, and local levels.

Results: Two striking aspects of life in Montana provided additional focus areas for this assessment: rurality and the state's high Native American population. Montana consists of more than 147,000 square miles and has a population of fewer than 1.1 million people; when considering how people access services, the state's rural nature cannot be overemphasized. Encompassed in this rural setting are seven Native American reservations. Just over six percent of the population in Montana identifies as Native American— much higher than the national average of just under one percent (ACS 2019 1YR Estm Det). The Montana WIC Program has considered these factors in many aspects of their program planning, including the annual Affirmative Action plan and funding decisions, to ensure that Native communities are provided services that work towards creating equitable health outcomes.

Summary: Major recommendations resulting from this assessment center around improving State-level WIC data quality, improving reach to the potentially eligible and at-risk population, expanding services, implementing workforce improvements, identifying funding priorities, continuing efforts to engage and serve special populations equitably and in a culturally appropriate manner, further integrating WIC services into primary care and federally qualified health center settings, and continuing to adjust services to meet current technological standards.

Creating an Online Submission Form for Utah WIC Eligible Foods

People Involved in the Project and Their Organizational Affiliation

Utah State WIC Office Staff: Chris Furner, Mark Nielsen, JoDell Geillman-Parke, Angela Sorrells, John Radmall, Brandy Peterson

State of Utah Department of Technology Services Staff- Aryavash Aryazand

Various food distributors, manufacturers and vendors

Background/Introduction

Utah WIC is in the process of creating an online submission portal that would allow food distributors, manufacturers, and vendors to submit their food items that they would like considered for the Utah WIC Program in a more efficient and simple way.

Utah WIC currently requires all food items to be submitted via an excel sheet and email on a yearly basis to ensure they meet USDA WIC regulations.

Project Goals

With the assistance of Aryavash Aryazand of the Department of Technology Services and John Radmall of the Utah WIC Program, we hope to have an online portal created and functioning by December 2022.

Methods

1. Ensure adequate funding for the project
2. Initiate communication with Aryavash Aryazand and John Radmall
3. Contact other State WIC Programs that use an online system for support and demonstration. Texas WIC has been a big help and provided a demonstration for us of their portal.
4. Create a portal outline using Microsoft Office materials and share materials in Google Drive.
5. Perform translation of materials into an online system (coding and program development via Ary Aryazand).
6. Preform testing with the help of food distributors/manufacturers.
7. Resolve bugs and issues before launch.
8. Complete the project by December 2022

Results/Summary/Discussion

Utah WIC has provided the necessary materials to Ary Aryazand and we are in the process of translating our submission form to an online system with his help. We hope to have a beta version available this summer for testing.