

**Special Supplemental Nutrition Program  
For Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**

**2025 STATE AGENCY PLAN OF  
PROGRAM OPERATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

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**VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

# Vermont WIC State Plan

## 2025 Goals, Objectives, and Planned Activities

### Nutrition Services - Nutrition Education

**Goal:** Improve delivery of nutrition education services to WIC participants.

**Objective 1:** Improve/increase staff capacity to deliver quality nutrition services.

**Activities:**

- Provide staff training using revised VENA resources to support increased knowledge, skill development and expertise in nutrition education methods for staff.
- Provide training in motivational interviewing and behavior change, incorporating resources from the WIC Breastfeeding Training Curriculum.
- Provide WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselors and WIC Nutrition staff training on breastfeeding; Level 2 for peer counselors, Level 3 for all certifiers, and Level 4 for Breastfeeding Coordinators.
- Review nutrition resources to support virtual and in person appointments, including curriculum guides, displays, textbooks, and client education materials to staff who deliver WIC Services. Provide electronic versions for participants after remote appointments.
- Support WIC Nutrition staff to attend national conferences.
- Work to improve staff use of technology to deliver nutrition information and resources to families.
- Continue the statewide nutrition education workgroup to coordinate the implementation and assessment of nutrition education activities and projects, including sharing best practices among local WIC offices.

### Nutrition Services – Breastfeeding

**Goal:** Exclusive breastfeeding to six months of age will be the norm for infant feeding in Vermont.

<b>Breastfeeding Prevalence January – December 2023*</b>	
Ever Breastfed	80%
Exclusive breastfeeding at 3 months	55%
Any Breastfeeding at 3 months	73%
Exclusive Breastfeeding at 6 months	43%
Any Breastfeeding at 6 months	68%
Any Breastfeeding at 1 year	74%

**\* Data for this report from our MIS may not be accurate for this reporting year.**

**Objective 1:** Increase to 86 percent the proportion of infants who are “ever breastfed”.

**Objective 2:** Increase to 58 percent the proportion of infants who are exclusively breastfed at 3 months of age.

**Objective 3:** Increase to 46 percent the proportion of infants who are exclusively breastfed at 6 months of age.

**Reference:** Healthy People 2030 Goal MICH–15: Increase the proportion of infants who are breastfed exclusively through age 6 months - target 42.4 %

**Reference:** Healthy People 2030 Goal MICH–16: Increase the proportion of infants who are breastfed at 1 year - target: 54.1%

### **Activities:**

#### **Within VDH/WIC**

- Provide electric breast pumps to eligible WIC participants not eligible for Medicaid pumps.
- Train all WIC staff and invite community partners to the WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum training.
- Coordinate training opportunities with Strong Families Vermont, Home Health Agencies, Parent-Child Centers, Children's Integrated Services, Home Visiting, Head Start, EFNEP, AAP VT Chapter and medical care providers.
- Provide bi-monthly training for Peer Counselors and WIC Certifiers on breastfeeding and lactation management. Support eligible staff to achieve the IBCLC credential.
- Maintain statewide peer counseling services.
- Continue to support Peer Counseling programs to maintain trained peers. Provide guidance and support to peer counselor supervisors, most notably in the onboarding of new peers. Continue to help the local offices with their peer counselor recruitment. Assess the need for bi-lingual peer counselors in the immigrant and refugee communities. Add peers who speak the languages that are currently dominant in our communities when possible. English-speaking peers will be trained to use language lines to support families that speak languages other than English if bi-lingual/multi-lingual peers are not available.
- WIC staff and peer counselors promote the Daily Drop app to pregnant and postpartum WIC participants and use the clinical report tool to inform clinic visits and assess for changes in breastfeeding knowledge, confidence
- Invite all interested WIC staff to a Lactation Symposium, a day of lactation education and breastfeeding coalition planning for the upcoming year.

#### **With Community at Large**

- Support and implement local office efforts identified in the Family and Child Health's statewide breastfeeding strategic plan, including promotion of the 10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, professional education for community partners using the WIC Breastfeeding Curriculum training, continued peer program support, and support for breastfeeding within workplaces and early care.
- Invite community partners to attend the Lactation Symposium and include them in the networking and coalition planning session.

#### **With Worksites**

- Continue to promote awareness of State and Federal laws and the breastfeeding provisions of the Affordable Care Act and PUMP Act.
- "Vermont Worksites Support the Lactating Employees" was revised to include the provisions of the PUMP Act which expanded existing employer obligations under the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- Provide support and updated resources to local office staff as they reconnect with existing Breastfeeding Friendly Employers to ensure they are continuing to support their staff and adhere to the accommodations they submitted at the time of their original application.

- Provide support and updated resources to local office staff so they are well equipped to outreach to new employers about the benefits of being a Breastfeeding Friendly Employer and feel they can adequately answer their questions.

### **With Providers**

- Continue to support public health detail visits to OB, Pediatric, and Family Practice provider offices to strengthen the collaboration and overall communication between WIC and health care providers with the goal of increasing enrollment in WIC prenatally and referring postpartum families to WIC for breastfeeding support through individual appointments as well as through group education.
- Continue to partner with health care providers in the hospitals and community to provide prenatal and postpartum education (in-person and virtually) and support for breastfeeding dyads.

### **Nutrition Services - Risk-Related**

#### **Goal I: Improve birth outcomes for both mothers and infants.**

**Objective 1:** Increase to at least 38 percent the proportion of women entering WIC during pregnancy who are at a healthy pre-pregnancy weight.

Baseline: 34.4%, data source: Vital Records, Vermont Resident Births between January 1, 2018 and December 31, 2020.

**Reference: Healthy People 2030 Goal MICH-13:** Increase the proportion of women delivering a live birth who had a healthy weight prior to pregnancy to 47.1%

#### **Activities:**

- Work with Health Equity partners to ensure work is informed and incorporates DEI strategies.
- Engage the Nutrition Education Workgroup to strategize ways to improve pre-pregnancy weight status.
- Use the evaluation results of WIC staff access to the Vermont Health Information Exchange (VHIE) to inform best practices for accessing clinical measurement data to complete health assessments. Develop and test a system connection between the VHIE and the WIC Management Information System. Partner with VITL (the organization that runs the VHIE), local agencies, and health care providers to improve and increase measurement data for the WIC population in the VHIE.

**Objective 2:** Reduce to 30 percent the proportion of pregnant WIC participants who report smoking during their pregnancies.

**Reference: Healthy People 2030: Increase abstinence from cigarette smoking among pregnant women — MICH-10.**

Increase abstinence from cigarette smoking among pregnant women to 95.7%.

#### **Activities:**

- Continue to work with FCH/LH and the Tobacco program to ensure that all pregnant women who smoke and want to quit are referred to appropriate resources.
- Continue to refer eligible pregnant women to incentive-based smoking cessation programs.
- Ensure that all prenatal participants are screened for nicotine/tobacco use and encouraged to accept referral to a quit resource.

## **Goal II: Improve the health status of Vermont WIC participants.**

**Objective 1:** Reduce to not more than 10 percent the proportion of two-, three- and four-year old children that have BMIs above the 95th percentile. Reduce to not more than 10 percent the proportion of two-, three- and four-year old children that have BMI's between the 85th and 95th percentile.

**Reference: Healthy People 2030 Goal NWS-04:** Reduce the proportion of children and adolescents with obesity to 15.5%

### **Activities:**

- Work with local WIC staff, partner agencies and programs to incorporate Fit WIC activities into ongoing prevention efforts. Utilize the Nutrition Education Workgroup to share ideas and support these efforts.
- Continue partnering with Vermont Parks Forever to grow our connection ensuring all WIC participants can receive free entry into our state parks throughout the season.
- Continue to build our list of WIC discounts especially as it relates to locations offering opportunities for movement.
- Participate in the Farm to Early Childhood Coalition and work with childcare providers to promote and coordinate nutrition education options for childcare and provide outreach tools to district staff to promote to WIC to eligible families.
- Continue to engage Family Advisory Council members to inform activities.

**Objective 2:** Increase the proportion of fruit and vegetable cash value benefits redeemed each month to 77%.

**Reference: June 2023 redemption was 74.08%**

### **Activities:**

- Promote full redemption of CVB through social media, newsletter, text message, WICShopper App, and through staff education during the WIC appointment.
- Review nutrition education materials to ensure produce selection and preparation/recipes are available.

## **9. EBT and EBT Implementation Goals**

### **Procurement Update:**

Vermont WIC is a member of the Northeast Coalition of States (NCS). The NCS engaged to develop an EBT RFP to procure EBT services for SNAP and WIC in 2019. The contract process for the lead state, New York, had been delayed due to a bid protest and was not executed until September 2023. NCS states, including VT WIC, were required to wait until New York SNAP has a fully executed contract in place before entering into a contract. VT WIC put in place an extension to our EBT contract for up to 24 months (12 months, plus two 6-month extensions) to ensure EBT services were not disrupted for families. We have worked to refine the contract timeline and have set a goal for August 2024. We anticipate transition work to begin in September 2024 with an estimated conversion planned for Spring 2025.