



Ohio Department of Health

WIC Quarterly Report on Increasing Access to and Use of WIC

July 9, 2025

Background

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a federal program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). WIC provides nutrition education, nutritious foods, breastfeeding support, and healthcare referrals to pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age 5.

Participation in WIC reduces fetal and infant deaths, premature birth rates, low and very low birth weight, and incidence of low-iron anemia. WIC also increases access to prenatal care earlier in pregnancy, access to general healthcare, pregnant women's consumption of key nutrients such as iron, protein, calcium, and Vitamins A and C, and overall diet quality.

Ohio WIC operates via 75 local WIC agencies covering all 88 Ohio counties.

Increase Access and Use of WIC

House Bill 7 (135th General Assembly) charged the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) with investigating and determining the services and tools available at the federal level and the services and tools implemented in other states that could be implemented in Ohio to increase access to and use of WIC.

On June 9, 2025, ODH provided the report to the General Assembly summarizing the results of this investigation and a plan to increase access to and use of WIC. House Bill 7 further charged ODH with detailing progress on implementing the plan, including: (1) Expenditures; (2) Changes made to the WIC program; (3) The total number of women and children served; (4) Any other relevant outcomes; (5) Opportunities to further increase the number of women and children served.

Progress on Increasing Access and Use of WIC

Building upon the initial report to the General Assembly, updates are below based on each previously reported strategy to increase access to and use of WIC services.

1. Implemented the cross-enrollment initiative to reach out to potentially eligible SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid recipients who consent to being contacted.
 - Local WIC agencies receive a monthly list of potential applicants who have consented to be contacted by WIC. They must attempt to make contact at least twice.

2. Extended WIC participant certification timeframe from six months to one year for women and children. Certification is defined by active enrollment in the program.
 - Ohio WIC continues to allow this extended certification window while ensuring families receive adequate follow up for nutrition, lactation, and referral needs.
3. Rolled out statewide texting for all local WIC projects to provide automated appointment reminders and ad-hoc messaging.
 - Ohio WIC is now in the process of implementing two-way texting for local WIC projects that opt-in to this service. Two-way texting adds personalization to the communication between WIC staff and participants.
4. Provided a free participant app available for download with important announcements, authorized WIC foods lists, nutrition and lactation educational resources, WIC nutrition card balance information, and the ability to scan products in the store to check for WIC authorization.
 - Ohio WIC has a designated staff person to respond to participant inquiries through the app.
5. Participated in the USDA FNS WIC Workforce Workgroup that has a goal of assessing the national WIC workforce to understand the current challenges to recruiting and retaining WIC Health Professionals, specifically Registered Dietitians to provide individualized nutrition education and counseling to WIC families.
 - Ohio WIC is researching all nutrition-related bachelor's and master's degrees to expand the list of potential WIC Health Professional candidates beyond Registered Dietitians.
6. Implemented an ongoing customer service survey to assess participant satisfaction with local WIC appointment experiences. Survey feedback is being evaluated to implement improvements to local WIC appointment processes.
 - All 188 local WIC clinics have posted a QR code to the survey in their waiting areas.
7. Participated in the annual National WIC Association Multistate Participant Survey that assesses WIC participant views of the program to inform improvements.
 - Received 5,839 responses to the 2024 National WIC Association Multistate Participant Survey. State and county-level results were provided to local WIC projects to inform future changes to the program. Themes from the 2024 survey showed participants preferred text messages for appointment reminders, in-person appointments with some portions of the appointment completed over the

- phone, having the choice between online and in-person nutrition and breastfeeding education and between completing paperwork in the office versus online, prior to the WIC appointment. Eighty-five percent of respondents expressed appreciation for the WIC Shopper app. Transportation and previous formula shortages were the top two challenges to redeeming WIC-authorized foods.
- Launched the 2025 National WIC Association Multistate Participant Survey.
8. Provided WIC 101 presentations to social service agencies; maternal, child, and family health programs; and academic institutions to educate these partners on the basics of WIC and increase the likelihood of referrals to the program.
 - Ohio WIC continues to be available to provide WIC 101 presentations as well as breastfeeding-focused presentations.
 9. Provided outreach, recruitment, and retention resources to local WIC agencies.
 - All 75 local WIC agencies have been provided with rebranded WIC materials to provide clear visual indicators of WIC program locations to enrolled, eligible, and potentially eligible Ohio families. These materials are also used for local, regional, and state-level outreach events to promote the WIC program.
 10. Supported local WIC project outreach via events, farmers' markets, social media, billboards, and advertisement (publications, media).
 - Ohio WIC provided WIC branded materials utilized for outreach events.
 - The Farmers Market Nutrition Program season began on June 1. Sixty-four counties and over 300 farmers and market masters are participating.
 11. Created a WIC taskforce workgroup for WIC agencies and ODH representatives to collaboratively explore opportunities to modernize policies and processes to deliver quality, efficient services to Ohioans.
 - The WIC taskforce has provided a comprehensive presentation on federal, state, and local WIC funding methods to all local WIC agencies.

In addition to the above updates, Ohio WIC continues to actively work on:

12. New Management Information System (MIS) to streamline clinic services and participant appointment requirements.
 - Ohio WIC is drafting Requests for Proposals for the New Management Information System, as well as an Online Electronic Benefits Processor (EBT) to allow for online and real-time benefits issuance.

13. E-solutions for Farmers Market Nutrition Program to move from paper vouchers to an electronic application.
 - Ohio WIC continues to research E-solutions for Farmers Market Nutrition Program to move from paper vouchers to an electronic application.
14. Ohio WIC food package updates to align with the new USDA Food Rule. The new USDA Food Rule provides a wider variety of healthy foods and provides WIC state agencies with greater flexibility to prescribe and tailor food packages that accommodate participants' special dietary needs and food preferences and address key nutritional needs to support healthy dietary patterns. All food package updates are due by April 2026 except for vitamin D in yogurt which is due by April 19, 2027.
 - Ohio WIC has completed research to understand the technological updates needed within the current MIS to support the USDA Food Rule changes and is developing educational resources for WIC participants and staff to ensure understanding of WIC food package flexibility.
15. Social media messaging related to WIC education, eligibility, and services to increase WIC participant recruitment and retention.
 - Ohio WIC provides National WIC Association social media ideas to local WIC projects monthly.
 - Ohio WIC is working on a participant recruitment and retention social media campaign.
16. Increasing access to WIC education materials by providing electronic resources via WICHealth.org, local and state agency websites, and a WIC participant-facing mobile phone application.
 - Ohio WIC participates in the Midwest Regional Operational Adjustment Grant Project to provide WICHealth.org to all Ohio WIC participants. WICHealth.org provides online nutrition and breastfeeding education with the ability to track completion of the education at the WIC clinic level.

Expenditures (Federal Fiscal Year 2025)

- Outreach Materials for local WIC Projects: \$33,019.
- Statewide Texting Contract: \$124,509.
- MIS/EBT RFPs: \$161,980.
- WIC Participant Shopping App: \$37,730.

Changes made to the WIC Program

Please see the above bullet point updates to numbers 1-16.

Total Number of Women and Children Served

Calendar Year	Initial Participation
May 2025*	180,837
May 2024	178,955

* This is an increase of 333 from April 2025 initial participation of 180,504.

Other Relevant Outcomes

Please see the above bullet point updates to numbers 1-16.

Summary

The progress mentioned above highlights Ohio WIC's modernization of the participant shopping experience, WIC clinic operations, WIC food packages, and the Farmer's Market Nutrition Program resulting in increased visibility of the program and WIC caseload while enhancing the health and wellbeing of Ohio women, infants, and children.