

Title of Project: California WIC Renewal: 2000 Strategic Plan

Agency Name: California WIC Association (CWA) and California WIC Branch

State: California

Key Word Descriptors: Collaboration, Strategic Plan, Strategic Audit, Improving Customer Service, Reinventing Nutrition Education, WIC "Plus," Participant-Centered Planning and Education.

Description of Project:

This project is an innovative and dynamic partnership between the California State WIC Agency and California WIC-local agencies (via the California WIC Association (CWA) to develop a new Strategic Plan for California WIC. Using blended public and private funding, a stakeholder group, assisted by consultants, spent a year working on the four-year Strategic Plan (Plan). A strategic field audit, conducted over four months by Stefan Harvey of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, allowed this group to take a hard look at important local service issues, particularly customer service and nutrition education. Her report, *California WIC Voices: A Hard Look at Realities on the Front Lines*, is available from CWA.

The Strategic Planning Stakeholder Group, made up of the State WIC Task Force (an advisory body), the CWA's Board of Directors, and other public health representatives, then worked collaboratively over a year to develop and implement a joint outcome-based Strategic Plan to (1) improve customer service, (2) revitalize nutrition education, and (3) expand capacity to provide WIC enhancements with additional funding (WIC "Plus"). The Plan is available at www.calwic.org.

Results of Project:

State WIC Committees, along with the CWA Board, immediately started implementation of this comprehensive and ambitious plan. Below is a sampling of first-year implementation activities.

Customer Service: California WIC has made a multi-year commitment to plan, implement, and evaluate a statewide Customer Service Campaign. First year activities include the formation of a Customer Service Committee (Committee). The Committee has started to develop an internal and external customer service mission and vision, to identify new statewide customer service standards. This will be accompanied by a comprehensive staff-training program and a commitment to build an infrastructure to collect continuous input from participants on their needs, opinions, perspectives, and changing realities.

Nutrition Education: In the first year, the Nutrition Education Committee has contracted with Samuels & Associates to assess resources and conduct a critical review of the published and available literature in order to identify what currently works in support of WIC nutrition education. The Task

Force will then build consensus among WIC practitioners regarding participant-centered models and philosophies, and pursue specific approaches for implementation.

WIC Plus: The WIC Branch has already compiled the results of a local agency enhanced funding survey, which will be updated annually. So-far, three large California foundations have funded CWA for "WIC Plus" activities, most notably The California Endowment, for a large health access pilot program in six agencies. Other projects include a WIC Workforce Development grant to start three new "Grow Your Own RD" internships and a "Small WIC Agency Caucus" grants pool for innovative health interventions serving the rural poor.

California WIC's commitment to overhauling and renewing core WIC services stems from the belief that our participants' lives are changing rapidly and we must change our program in order to continue to meet their needs. One of the principal themes built into the Strategic Plan is the institutionalization of gaining ongoing participant input at all levels of WIC; in the form of focus groups, interviews, surveys, and other forms of feedback. Participant input will allow California WIC to redesign nutrition education to be participant and family-centered. It will also inform the design of an effective customer service campaign.

The decision to blend public and private funds and join two parallel processes will result in a more coordinated approach to program planning, training, and technical assistance to local WIC programs that will be mutually beneficial during the next four years.

Contact person:

Phyllis Bramson-Paul, Chief
California Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition Branch
3901 Lennane Drive Sacramento, CA 95834
Telephone: (916) 928-8806
Fax: (916) 928-0706
E-mail: pbramson@dhs.ca.gov