

WIC Case Study: Central District Health Department, Idaho



WIC Agency Profile

Central District Health is part of a local public health district serving four counties, including Ada, the state's largest urban county. CDH WIC serves 5,500 participants per month in six clinic locations in Ada County. Two types of staff are involved in the certification process: a customer service representative collects demographic information and documents income and residence eligibility, and a clinical assistant then conducts the nutrition assessment and completes the certification.

Project Description

Streamline Adjunctive Eligibility Documentation

Challenge Many clients do not carry their Medicaid card with them to appointments and some do not know their Medicaid status. Historically, WIC staff members would call the state WIC help desk to check clients' Medicaid status during the certification appointment because they lacked access to the Medicaid portal. This process took over five minutes per certification, with the participant waiting while the staff placed the call and waited for the response. Over 80 percent of the agency's WIC participants are enrolled in Medicaid, so this inefficient process consumed a significant amount of time.

Goal Reduce the time needed to check and document adjunctive eligibility during WIC certifications

Strategy CDH WIC obtained approval from the Idaho Medicaid program for the local employees who conduct WIC eligibility to access the Medicaid portal directly to check the status of WIC applicants. They now use the portal to check Medicaid status and record the applicant's Medicaid number when starting a WIC application via phone prior to the certification appointment, a process that takes less than one minute. This expedites the certification check-in process and saves time documenting applicants' income eligibility during certification appointments.

Outcome The program shortened certification appointments by approximately five minutes, improving the income eligibility process for participants and staff.

Key Takeaways

The WIC program run by the Central District Health Department (CDH) in Boise, Idaho sought to shorten the time needed to complete certifications by:

- Accessing a state online portal for WIC staff to check for Medicaid eligibility, which automatically confers income eligibility for WIC; and
- Creating a process to document Medicaid eligibility prior to certification appointments.

As a result of these changes:

- The duration of certification appointments fell by about 5 minutes, on average.



Lessons Learned

Getting authorization to access the Medicaid portal and training staff to use the portal were easier than anticipated. Local WIC staff were initially hesitant, but after being trained, they realized how quick and easy it was to check applicants' Medicaid status through the portal. Staff also appreciated not having to call the help desk to request this information. Clients appreciated that their appointments were shorter and their Medicaid status was verified online.

The CDH WIC Program learned that names and birthdates on WIC applications do not always match Medicaid records. Since CDH uses Medicaid information to bill for registered dietician services (such as nutrition counseling that exceeds WIC nutrition education), accurate client information is important. One unanticipated outcome of this project was that WIC staff, by identifying discrepancies and obtaining the names and birthdates from the Medicaid portal, are now helping ensure the accuracy of Medicaid invoices for registered dietician services.

“This new process is convenient and a time-saver for both the [customer service representative] and WIC client.

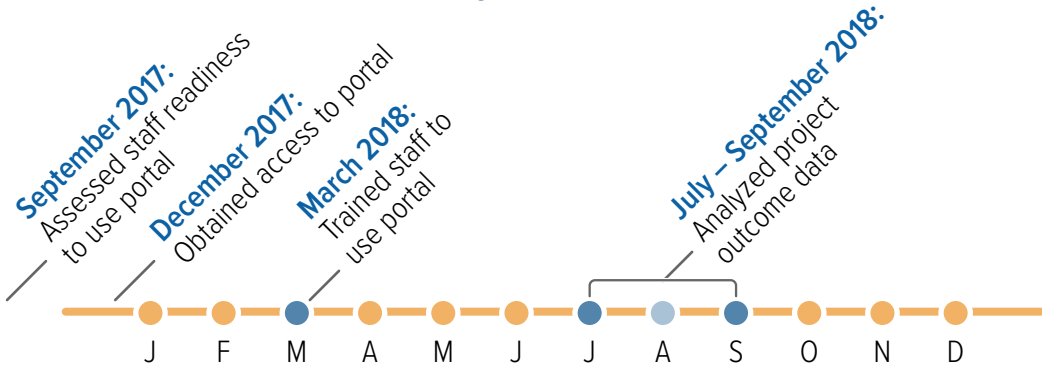
Eliminating time on the phone increases face-to-face time with the client, which is also very valuable.”

WIC customer service representative

Next Steps

CDH is exploring gaining access to the state's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) online portal to verify the status of WIC applicants and participants in SNAP.

Project Timeline



Project Team

Angela Spain – RDN, LD
Martha Alvarez – Office Services Supervisor

Contact

Kristina Spain – WIC Director
Central District Health Department
kspain@cdhd.idaho.gov