

WIC Case Study: Oklahoma

WIC Agency Profile

The Oklahoma WIC program, administered by the Oklahoma State Department of Health, serves 72,000 participants per month through 110 county health departments and 26 independent contractors. The caseload is distributed among two major urban areas and many smaller, rural communities.

Project Description

Strengthen Collaboration with Head Start

Challenge In Oklahoma, children who qualify financially for Head Start also qualify for WIC, but many of these children are currently not enrolled in WIC.

WIC collects health information for participating children (such as height, weight, and blood test values) that Head Start often has difficulty obtaining.

Goal Increase the number of children in Head Start who are enrolled in WIC and strengthen the referral process, collaboration, and information sharing between the two programs.

Strategy Oklahoma WIC initiated meetings with Head Start programs to increase collaboration and cross-referrals between the programs. The WIC Verification of Certification document was identified as a way for WIC to send measurements and blood test values for children enrolled in WIC to Head Start. WIC and Head Start staff were trained on the new referral policies.

In addition, one of the largest Oklahoma WIC agencies, the Tulsa City-County Health Department (TCCHD), and the Tulsa Community Action Project (CAP), which administers Head Start, established a memorandum of understanding outlining a strategic partnership to cross-promote programs and share data.

Key Takeaways

The Oklahoma WIC program sought to strengthen its collaboration with Head Start, lower the share of certifications that are temporary, and shorten certification appointments by:

- Initiating a referral system with Head Start;
- Allowing applicants to provide electronic documents for certification; and
- Shortening the health/nutrition assessment form for applicants.

As a result of these changes:

- The share of certifications that are temporary fell from 3.3 percent to 2.8 percent and
- The new health/nutrition assessment forms take 50 percent less time for participants to complete.

Outcome Referrals to WIC from Head Start have increased. As a result of the data sharing agreement between Tulsa CAP and TCCHD, 18 children participating in Head Start were enrolled in WIC.

The new health/nutrition assessment forms take 50 percent less time for participants to complete.

50%

Encourage Use of Electronic Certifications and Shorten Certification Appointments

Challenge Program applicants and participants often forget to bring documents proving their income or residence to appointments. Oklahoma WIC policies allow participants with incomplete documentation to be certified for 30 days. Prior to this project, they were required to return to the WIC clinic to provide the required documentation, which created extra work for both participants and staff.

The two-page nutrition/health assessment form that participants completed as part of the certification process often added time to the overall appointment, especially if multiple family members were being certified.

Goal Reduce the number of temporary certifications by allowing participants to access eligibility documents electronically and show them to WIC staff during the certification appointment; and

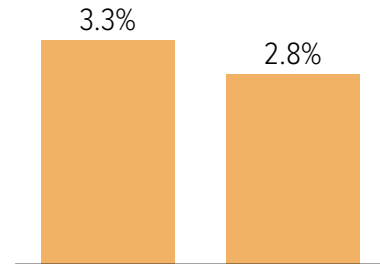
Shorten the nutrition/health assessment form

Strategy Oklahoma WIC established a statewide policy to accept electronic proofs of eligibility and trained staff about the policy.

A team of registered dietitians and policy specialists revised the nutrition/health assessment form and streamlined it to fit on a single page [link?].

Outcome The percentage of temporary certifications issued due to missing documentation fell from 3.3 percent to 2.8 percent, and WIC staff report that the new nutrition/health assessment forms take 50 percent less time for participants to complete.

The share of certifications that are temporary fell



Lessons Learned

Due to the decentralized nature of Head Start, finding answers regarding the program's policies and income guidelines was more challenging than anticipated.

Most staff responded positively to the changes, particularly to the increased collaboration with Head Start. Participants appreciated the option to provide eligibility documents electronically without having to return to the clinic and reacted positively to the shorter nutrition/health assessment form.

Because open enrollment for Head Start is held one time per year, it is important to maximize this short window and plan to provide outreach and referral information to caregivers of children enrolled in Head Start.

Next Steps

Oklahoma WIC will continue to build partnerships with local Head Start programs to increase cross-program referrals through discussions and staff training, the sharing of program materials, posters, and video streams.

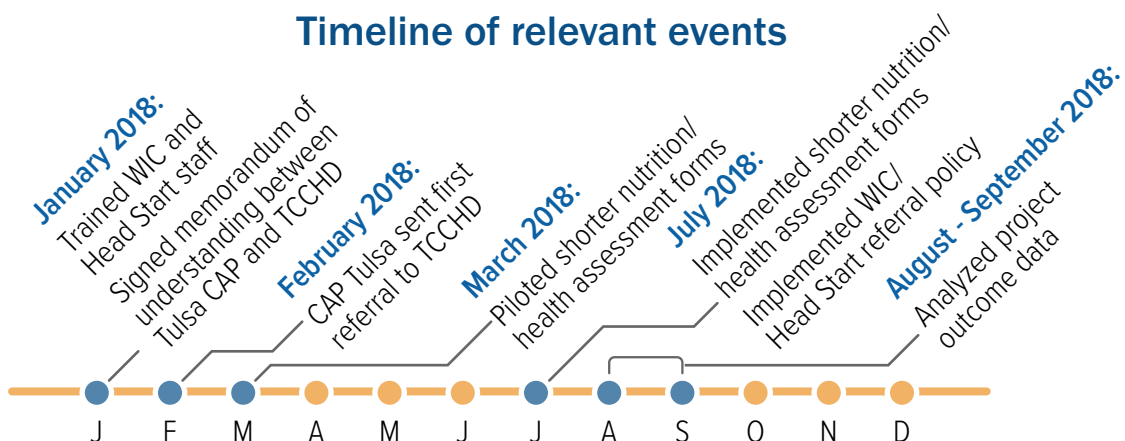
“This project has reduced barriers to services.”

WIC clinic supervisor

“WIC is an agent of change. I like it.”

WIC staff

Timeline of relevant events



Project Team

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