

TALWD NEWS

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TALWD Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Texas Association of Local WIC Directors shall be to act as a vehicle for the expression of ideas on planning, policy, coordination, implementation, and administration of the WIC program on the Local, State, and Federal level; to foster communication between local WIC programs and the Texas Department of Health with the goal of positively affecting the administration of WIC within the state; to bring together administrators of Local Agency WIC Programs, in order to provide peer support, orientation and/or assistance; and to promote professional and public awareness of new and existing Federal and State legislation.

From the Editor: Please contact us, if you have suggestions or story ideas. Hope you enjoy Volume 5, Issue 19.

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LA 31 – Bell County Public Health District



I recall last year close to this time period being at Big Bend with Scott, my husband, and my two girls, Melanie and Kaitlyn. Very few people were talking about this new virus yet way out there in the isolating views, mountains and trails. If you have never been to Big Bend, it is wonderful! You feel very off the grid of fast paced life, sport practices, school projects, meetings, deadlines, and endless to-do lists. It is one of our favorite places to trek and this trip is probably our 5th or 6th time going. I remember the four of us last year taking numerous hikes, bike rides, zip lining, golfing, and water canoeing...awe normalcy! But, by the end of the trip and just as quickly as going down a zip line, the conference calls and emails started to roll in. The virus was starting to spread and headlining the news and all other media sources worldwide. It is so strange to think about a year later. It is especially odd because I feel like I never left Big Bend in a funny way when I look back at where I was a year ago. The rest of the trip back in the RV was consumed with questions and planning. As soon as I returned, as a team, we were all navigating deep and wide waters, facing steep mountains, hiking unknown territories and moving as fast as we could to pivot in a new direction. I have to say this last year feels like zooming down that zip line over Big Bend at 50 mph! I saw the mountains and the valleys, the rivers and the deserts, the wildflowers and the prickly cacti, and with the beating sun all in a quick few seconds it seems. I screamed, shed a tear or two, my heart raced, I was scared, and it was enlivening and made me feel braver all at the same time. It was not my first zip line, but it was definitely the most extreme one I had ever been on before. It is quite ironic that we actually did the zip lines on our last full day there and the day right before things suddenly changed as I knew it then. I recall my husband, Scott, saying to me before I went down the zip line, "Just go loose and don't let go of the rope." I think I have unknowingly remembered those words this last year during times of havoc and uncertainty and it has guided me to keep looking at the landscape around me rather than missing the view. I am looking forward to a few days "off the grid" again next week. Not sure if I will zip line this trip as I like to try new things each time. Maybe this year, I will concentrate a bit more on the spa and stargazing at night. I think we can all agree on a few things from this last year. Light still penetrates the deepest valleys, beauty still grows even in the desert, we can heal after being pricked, and the sun still continues to rise over the highest mountains...if we don't let go of the rope.

By: Nikki Morrow, BS, IBCLC, RLC

WIC Director

Bell County Public Health District

WIC Program, Local Agency 31

LA 54 – Tarrant County Public Health

WHAT’S GOING ON IN LA 54???

LA 54 has been providing curbside and drop box services to issue WIC benefits during COVID response. Initially during this time, there were challenges in our transition to all virtual nutrition education options. In order to deliver our SNAP-ed nutrition education, LA54 had to get creative. Our typical in-person group class and corresponding data collection were not possible. In response, we developed an online self-paced class “Cooking in Color” in SurveyMonkey. Participants are offered this class as an option before their scheduled appointment. If interested, they are texted the link which contains both the class content and the survey for data collection. The lesson, available in English and Spanish, promotes including children in all aspects of food selection and food preparation – in a safe, age-appropriate way. After the lesson is completed, at benefit issuance, participants receive a tote bag with kitchen tools, a children’s book, and tip card for including kids in the kitchen. The bag also has instructions for making homemade pizza as a family. The SurveyMonkey link is easy for staff to send and the class is simple for participants to complete. Over four hundred participants have chosen this option since rollout. Because of its success, we plan to use this platform in the future for more locally produced nutrition education. For other agencies considering this method, if possible, use a paid account to avoid limits on survey completion and the number of survey questions. Paid accounts also offer more options for analyzing survey responses.

A sample of the class can be reviewed at the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8RLKJTD>.

By: Heather Pacchetti, RD
 WIC Administrative Manager
 Tarrant County Public Health



LA 01 – Austin Public Health

- Austin Public Health’s Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program has launched a new Shopping and Delivery Program to ensure that WIC clients can access their benefits during COVID-19.

- The program allows eligible participants to have their WIC groceries purchased for them and delivered to their home, bringing essential foods to families who have had reduced access to their benefits for months because of the pandemic.

- WIC clients have to qualify based on certain criteria. WIC staff are screening clients by phone to determine eligibility. WIC Shoppers adhere to social distancing and wear face masks.

- WIC has a limited number of shoppers and cannot guarantee these services to all WIC clients who qualify.

A LOT IS HAPPENING IN AUSTIN!!



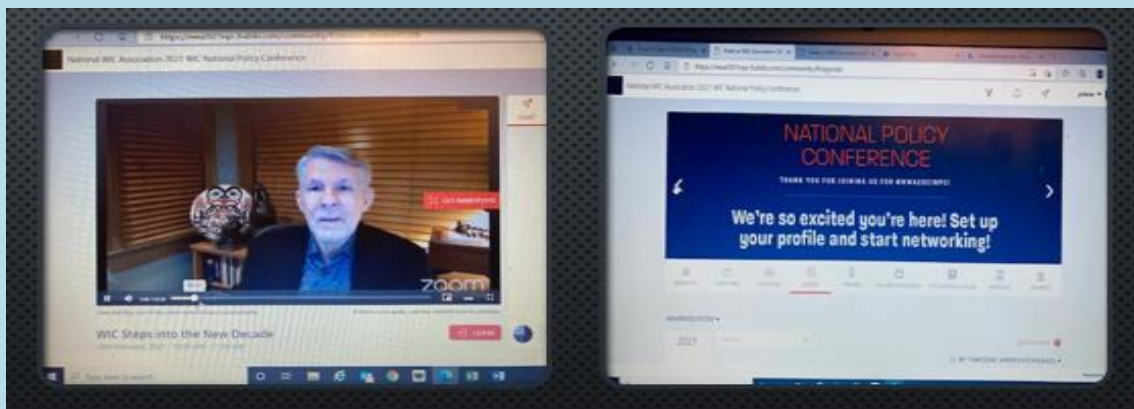
By: Annette Phinney
 WIC Program Director
 Austin Public Health



IN OTHER NEWS.....

Highlights of the National WIC Association: National Policy Conference

The week of February 15th (the week of the Texas Winter Storm) the NWA held a Virtual National Policy Conference, formerly called the Washington Leadership Conference. As you know most of Texas was without power for several days. I was able to listen to some of the conference live, but the rest was later, thankfully due to recorded sessions through the conference portal.



The conference began with the opening session titled, WIC Steps into the New Decade by President/CEO of NWA, Reverend Douglas A. Greenway. Referencing a Harriet Tubman quote about dreams and endurance, Rev. Greenway reminded us that we are a driver of health equity in the nation and have the capacity to make the WIC program even more consequential than it is now. He went on to say that we must break out of the cost neutrality and cost containment box and stick to the science of the WIC Food package by improving choice for WIC families and setting a new vision for WIC. He went on to mention NWA's Four Point Vision for WIC that include 1) permanently doubling the cash value of WIC food package by increasing the dollar amount of fruits and vegetables, adding the foods that the Institute of Medicine (IOM) have recommended and increasing food package flexibilities. 2) Sell WIC like every other consumer product and understand the importance of solid marketing and outreach. Greenway stated that we can't market WIC on a shoestring budget. "We must up our marketing and outreach game, if we are to succeed in telling others about WIC." 3) Ensure a 21st century WIC process for clients that includes online shopping, telehealth services, culturally sensitive engagement and remote certifications. 4) WIC staff resources must be enhanced. Increase of resources, especially as it relates to Administration and Nutrition Services Funding that help bolster staff salaries and cover increases in personnel costs like fringe benefits or health insurance for agencies.

It was good to hear that NWA understands and acknowledges the fact LAs need more support when it comes to Administrative expenses in order to be able to hire and keep good staff.

House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi was an invited speaker to help kick off the conference. In her recorded message to participants, she acknowledged the great work the WIC Program has done over the years and a reason why the new Administration has included WIC as part of the American Rescue Plan in which the House passed \$880M that would be used to enhance benefits and outreach innovation and program modernization.

During another session that spotlighted Racial Disparities in Maternal Health, Congresswomen Alma Adams and Laura Underwood spoke in support of addressing the Momnibus Act, or H.R. 6142, which was introduced in March 2020. The bill seeks to expand eligibility for certain nutrition programs (WIC) by increasing the postpartum and breastfeeding periods. The bill also directs DHHS and other agencies to address maternal health outcomes minority populations by a number of ways that impact social determinants of health, mental and behavioral health and award agencies who implement innovative maternal mortality review committees.

In addition to providing the background on the Momnibus Act, this WIC session provided good examples of how other LAs in the U.S are trying to make a dent in the maternity mortality rates. Recommendations for WIC LAs include: 1) More diversity in WIC staff like RDs, IBCLCS, and Peer Counselors. 2) Staff training on maternal mortality, implicit bias and anti- racism. 3) include pre and post intra conception care for women. This is due to low rates of women who seek out or attend postpartum appointments.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/6142>



Another session focused on the Next Steps for the WIC Retail Online Experience.

Online Grocery Evolution at Walmart, specifically with the SNAP Online Program. The presenter was a Walmart corporate representative and discussed how they joined the SNAP online system in 2019. By end of February 2021, they anticipated being live in 44 states. He went on to say WIC is one of the most complex transactions than any other program, as there is more data to be communicated. He also mentioned that there is robust training and different food packages involved. He stated uniformity in design of the system would help on their end. The second half of this session included a spotlight on a Local Agency in Tennessee who worked with the University of Tennessee to pilot online WIC ordering. The presenter highlighted Food City a mid-size grocery chain to use professional shoppers to allow customers to use an online and app-based system to order groceries without paying up front. Instead, customers paid at checkout, but inside of the store. The presenter discussed how federal policy guidance and payment via curbside was much needed in order to perfect it.

Lastly, a representative from Custom Data Processing (CDP) discussed how they worked to make it easier for retailers to offer online shopping for eWIC solutions. He highlighted 4 Phases of WIC online shopping. Phase I, a non-intelligent online ordering system that would allow clients to order their WIC items online and pay curbside. Phase II, intelligent online ordering system allows for online ordering of WIC items and allowing clients to pay either curbside, in the store or online. Phase III, also an intelligent system would allow for clients to check their balance before shopping, order online and pay either curbside in the store or online. This method would also allow for clients to shop for non-WIC items as well. Phases I and II are both allowed but Phase III is not allowed at the moment due to federal regulations on this.

I have included a link on NWAs page under vendor related resources that reviews these phases in more details. https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/fy20_nwa_factsheet_pickup-and-delivery-requirements.pdf

Overall, the conference was informative. Much improved from the previous virtual platform that was used last year. The next conference is scheduled for June 15-17th and is the Annual Education and Training Conference.

Lastly, I wanted to re-share the State of WIC Report that Tecora Smith previously shared with LA WIC Directors earlier this year. The document was referred to often during the NWA conference and it has some concrete recommendations for the WIC program overall.

Please check it out. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/state-of-wic-report-march-2021.pdf>

Submitted by: Jolene Norbert-Harrell - LA 48
WIC Director
Harris County Public Health



IF you haven't renewed your
TALWD membership for
2021.....

Please Visit:

<https://talwd.org/renew-membership>

to do so.

A vibrant landscape photograph showing a field of colorful tulips in the foreground, a path leading through them, and a large tree with pink cherry blossoms in the background under a bright blue sky with a sun flare.

SPRING is in the AIR!!!