



# FISCAL YEAR 2000 WIC Special Project Grants Abstracts of Final Reports

August 2006

Each year the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) awards WIC Special Project Grants, on a competitive basis, to State WIC Programs. These grants are awarded to fund innovative projects that have the potential to improve and enhance the WIC Program. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2000 WIC Special Project Grants were awarded to support Revitalizing Quality Nutrition Services (RQNS) in WIC. RQNS is an evolving process of continuous program improvement. The purpose of the RQNS WIC Special Project grants is to improve and strengthen the effectiveness of WIC nutrition services. The three grants awarded in FY 2000 were:

New Mexico WIC State Agency: *Promoting Healthy Feeding Relationships and Nurturing Parenting Practices.* Through this project New Mexico WIC staff were trained to promote and improve parent's knowledge and skills in forming healthy feeding relationships. In addition, parenting classes were provided to WIC participants using an evidence-based parenting program.

Tennessee WIC State Agency: *Reinvesting in Staff in Tennessee.* This project focused on staff development and training. WIC staff in Tennessee received: the Franklin Covey self development course; training on a client-oriented, behavioral approach to nutrition education using the stages of change model; and intensive, one-on-one guidance for nutrition staff (via mentors) to help develop facilitator and counseling skills.

Washington WIC State Agency: *Healthy Habits.* Staff training modules were developed that focused on client oriented, behavioral approaches to nutrition education that promoted family meals and physical activity. In addition, the Washington WIC State agency awarded local agency mini-grants for projects to increase local capacity to apply public health approaches to develop and sustain community-based nutrition services and chronic disease risk reduction.

The FY 2000 WIC Special Project Grant final reports provide detailed information about the theoretical basis, implementation, impact, lessons learned and resources necessary for implementation for each project. The final reports in their entirety can be downloaded at: [http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Sharing\\_Center/special\\_grants.html](http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Sharing_Center/special_grants.html).

The following are the project abstracts.



### **Some "Lessons Learned" from the three projects:**

- *When implementing new initiatives, it is important to realize that every staff member is in a different stage of change.*
- *Sometimes what appears at first to a staff member to be an increase in duties can actually be an enriching experience.*
- *Changes in attitudes and methods cannot be accomplished overnight!*
- *Even with training, staff may hold onto outdated practices.*
- *Staff training is not a one-time endeavor. Follow-up training and encouragement are needed to sustain the initiative.*
- *Focus staff training on the essentials: what, why and how.*
- *Clear, specific communication between the State WIC office and local agency staff is essential.*
- *Staff who model healthy behaviors find it easier to work with participants to promote these behaviors*

## New Mexico WIC Program

### *Promoting Healthy Feeding Relationships and Nurturing Parenting Practices*

#### Abstract

New Mexico has been identified as one of the worst States in the nation to raise a child, due to high rates of poverty, single parent families, and youth problem-behaviors. According to a WIC survey, 85% of WIC parents in New Mexico want more guidance in raising their children. One aspect of parenting, developing a positive feeding relationship, is especially relevant for WIC Programs.

To address some aspects of parenting pertinent to WIC's mission, the Revitalizing Quality Nutrition Services project team in New Mexico developed *Promoting Healthy Feeding Relationships and Nurturing Parenting Practices*. The goals of the project were to: (1) Improve parents' feeding relationship knowledge and skills through education and (2) Decrease negative parenting beliefs and practices, and increase the use of effective discipline techniques among high-risk WIC participants. Specific objectives addressed in the two program components were to: (1) Train WIC nutrition educators and clerks about feeding relationships; (2) Reach 75% of the WIC participants in the State with facilitated discussion on feeding relationships; (3) Improve WIC parents' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to the feeding relationship; (4) Reduce negative parenting practices; and (5) Increase positive parenting practices of WIC participants.

The first project component focused primarily on improving feeding relationships within the family. WIC staff members were trained in Elyn Satter's approach to feeding relationships, and were provided with materials to use in a new curriculum that included facilitated group discussions (FGD). The curriculum was integrated into nutrition education in all 55 primary WIC clinics in New Mexico, with each clinic developing unique approaches. Every WIC educator discussed feeding relationships during the certification process. Because the intent was to infuse feeding relationships into all participant contacts, there was no specific measurement of the dosage each clinic provided or each participant received.

To evaluate the impact of the intervention, participants were surveyed at baseline and four and eight months later. At four months, there was a slight decline in scores from baseline. However, there was a small but significant improvement in the "Lack of Structure" factor. From four to eight months, there were significant improvements in the factor called "Positive Feeding Behaviors" and the "Negative Feeding Behaviors" factors: "Lack of Structure" and "Over Control." The intervention was deemed successful, since WIC participants showed changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior over the eight-month implementation period.

A second component of the program focused on improving overall parenting skills of WIC parents. Families in one county with high rates of poverty and teen pregnancy were offered intensive parenting classes. After completing the classes, participants demonstrated greater empathy, were less likely to use corporal punishment, had fewer inappropriate expectations of children, decreased reversal of parent-child roles, and had greater knowledge of positive discipline techniques.

Four objectives of the New Mexico project were met. Over 90% of WIC nutrition educators and clerks received training in feeding relationships. About 80% of the clinics reported conducting facilitated discussion on feeding relationships with their participants, but it is not known if 75% of all WIC participants were reached with the intervention. Based on the final survey of WIC participants, there were positive improvements in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to the feeding relationship. WIC parents who participated in the parenting classes also showed significant increases in other positive parenting practices. The project demonstrated ways in which WIC nutrition educators can address the needs of parents by discussing not only food selection, but also family feeding dynamics with their participants.

Tools and forms developed through this project are listed in the *Resources* section of the final report and can be accessed at: [http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Sharing\\_Center/special\\_grants.html](http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Sharing_Center/special_grants.html).

Tennessee WIC Program  
*Reinvesting in Staff in Tennessee*  
Abstract

Many factors contribute to the success of nutrition education delivered through the WIC Program. Two of the most important factors are a positive clinic environment that supports learning, and a client-based approach to education in which educators act as facilitators of change. The *Reinvesting in Staff in Tennessee* project was designed to promote a positive clinic environment and to help nutrition staff members become facilitators of change.

The goals of *Reinvesting in Staff in Tennessee* were to: (1) Enhance the learning environment in WIC that supports the development of healthy habits and healthy feeding relationships for individuals and families; (2) Introduce a more client-oriented, behavioral approach to nutrition counseling by training nutrition staff members to identify *Stages of Change*<sup>1</sup> for their clients and to act as facilitators of dietary change; and (3) Provide intensive, one-on-one guidance for nutrition staff members to reinforce concepts learned in training. Each of the three goals was addressed in a separate component of this project, one in each of the three successive years of project funding. Each component included evaluations to measure process and/or impact.

In the first component, implemented during the first year, self-development training was offered to all staff members who worked with WIC participants. Staff members from nutrition, nursing, clerical, and health education services attended a training workshop structured to increase job satisfaction, thereby positively influencing the clinic environment. The training was based on a three day, Franklin Covey course entitled, “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People®”<sup>2</sup>. Tennessee staff used a “train-the-trainer” approach. Representatives from six of the 14 Tennessee health regions were trained to provide the course for other locally based staff members.

The focus of the project’s second component was on nutrition staff only. It was designed to help nutrition staff members act as facilitators of change rather than simply conveyors of nutrition information. Nutrition staff attended a newly developed workshop, entitled “Facilitators of Change, Nutrition/Behavior Counseling”. Nutritionists learned to recognize the five *Stages of Change*<sup>1</sup> that are essential to long-lasting personal behavior change and developed a better understanding of the science of behavioral counseling.

In the final component, implemented during the third year of the project, two WIC staff members from each of the state’s 14 regions were trained as mentors for their fellow nutritionists in a workshop entitled “Facilitators of Change, Mentoring Workshop”. The mentors continued to work on-site with other staff members to reinforce the client-based concept of behavioral change learned during the Facilitators of Change training and to provide “real-world” guidance.

The major goals of *Reinvesting in Staff in Tennessee*, to increase job satisfaction and staff retention, were accomplished. Eighty-nine percent of WIC staff members perceived benefits of the self-development training, and 6 months after their training, 74% of the nutrition staff members reported using the *Stages of Change*<sup>1</sup> model with participants. Almost 70% the state’s nutrition staff members were visited by a mentor in the last 6 months of the project. Staff retention increased after one year of *Reinvesting in Staff in Tennessee*, and stayed elevated compared to the year prior to project implementation. Overall job satisfaction was markedly increased after the last year of the project compared to the year before project implementation.

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<sup>1</sup>Prochaska, JO, Velicer, WF. The transtheoretical model of health behavior change. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 1997; 12(1), 38-48.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.franklincovey.com/the7habits/index.html> (accessed May 19, 2005).

# Washington WIC Program

## *Healthy Habits*

### Abstract

*Healthy Habits* is a participant-centered, community-wide approach in which nutrition education methods and materials are tailored to both participant needs and staff capabilities and time constraints. The educational materials can be used in the WIC setting, to support the development of a more participant-centered program and in partnering agencies and programs, to support community-wide initiatives.

WIC offers a unique mechanism to respond to the increasing prevalence of lifestyle-related diseases in low-income families. The *Healthy Habits* project was developed to augment the tools available to WIC in its efforts to promote healthy life-styles. The purpose of *Healthy Habits* was to provide training, materials and support to local WIC staff so that staff could more effectively promote healthy behaviors in WIC families and in their communities.

The goals of *Healthy Habits* were to: (1) Increase local WIC staff expertise and ability to provide effective participant-centered, behavioral approaches to nutrition services and (2) Increase local WIC capacity to apply public health approaches to develop and sustain community-based nutrition services and chronic disease risk reduction.

*Healthy Habits* had two components: (1) Newly developed nutrition education modules for use by local agencies and community partners to promote family meals or family physical activity and (2) A program of mini-grants awarded to local agencies to support integration of the newly developed modules and other innovative approaches into their programs. The project incorporated theoretical approaches from social-ecological models, social marketing, and *Stages of Change*, and included a strong focus on evaluation. Surveys and focus groups of WIC participants and staff also provided valuable information used in component design.

The use of the *Healthy Habits* modules was associated with participant and staff behavior change. A significantly greater percentage of participants who received the family meals intervention reported always or usually enjoying eating meals with their children, always or usually sitting with children while they eat and not watching television during meals. Messages about reducing the amount of time spent watching television were included in both the family meals and physical activity modules and there was a statistically significant reduction in reported TV viewing by children. WIC families learned new ways to be physically active together and how to incorporate family meals into their lives. *Healthy Habits* was also associated with increased physical activity in WIC staff. The number of days per week that staff members were physically active increased significantly. The modules were well received and most local agencies found them to be useful to staff and participants. In addition, agencies that received mini-grants reported that their staff had improved skills in grant writing and program evaluation and most all agencies that participated reported new community partnerships.

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