STATE AND LOCAL WIC COORDINATION

Tips for Collaborating with Community Based Initiatives

In May 2010, the National WIC Association administered a survey developed by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) to identify state and local collaborations with the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). The information below summarizes successes, challenges encountered, and lessons learned from follow-up in depth interviews with a selection of Midwest and Mountain region WIC programs survey respondents.

- **Partner with Community Service Agencies**: WIC programs and health agencies can connect their mutual clients in need of food, clothing, and other social services with various community initiatives, including the local Salvation Army, Goodwill, community churches, pregnancy clinics, and local food pantries. These referrals and associated partnerships keep the WIC and health agency program visible and engaged with the community and reinforce for staff the ways in which they can use other community resources to assist their clients. Communication is important to maintaining these relationships, as is demonstrating respect for each agency’s role and the resources available.

- **Partner with Local Colleges and Universities**: In addition to nutrition programs, WIC programs and health agencies may find it helpful to recruit students from physiology/physical therapy, nursing, or other related programs to support outreach efforts. One WIC program worked with a university to train students on working with children with special healthcare needs within the WIC program. Once the original students completed their training, they coached another group of students.

- **Network with the Community to Build Sustainable Relationships**: Educational outreach events and open houses jointly hosted by WIC and the health agency can begin or maintain relationships between the agencies and the community by creating personal connections with individual community members. For example, one WIC program developed strong partnerships with community agencies because their employees were former WIC clients who understood and respected the program. Other WIC programs have had success connecting with community service providers who share a common mission. However, one participant noted the importance of ensuring that each entity’s mission remains clear when engaging in partnership activities.

- **Strengthen the Workforce to Better Serve the Community**: In addition to self-learning, WIC and health agency staff may find it helpful to engage in professional development opportunities that focus on building and sustaining coalitions. For example, one WIC program works closely with its state’s nutritional and physical fitness coalition to advance their similar missions for healthy eating and wellness.