

MM/DD/YYYY

Appendix B-3. WIC Clinic Staff Discussion Guide

Thank you for joining today. My name is [name], and I'm a researcher at Westat. I'm joined today by my colleague, [notetaker's name], who will be taking notes during today's discussion.

Westat is conducting the *WIC Tribal Organizations and U.S. Territories* study on behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Through this study, FNS aims to learn more about how WIC is implemented in Tribal Organizations and U.S. territories. The results of the study may inform revisions and enhancements to WIC policies, operations, and services across agencies.

This study aims to include all 32 Tribal Organizations and 5 U.S. territories that operate WIC State agencies, the WIC directors of geographic State agencies that share geography with a Tribal Organization, and the local agency directors of 5 Tribally operated local agencies. The purpose of this interview is to learn how your WIC clinic operates so that you can best serve your participants.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. A restricted-use transcript will be shared with FNS. We will remove your name, the name of your Tribal Organization or U.S. territory, FNS Region, and other direct identifiers from the transcript. Your name will not be used in any direct quotes included in the final report or other dissemination materials. However, the name of your WIC agency may be used in the final report or dissemination materials (for example, to highlight promising practices). Because of the small number of staff operating WIC in these agencies, we cannot guarantee the information you share will be completely anonymous.

Participation in this study involves minimal risk, though you may feel uncomfortable answering some questions. You may refuse to answer any question, choose to make a comment off the record, or stop the interview at any time without penalty to you or your WIC program.

We previously emailed the informed consent form, which included more information about the risks, benefits, and how your data will be used and protected. Do you have any questions about the form or the information I shared today?

[Interviewer note: Answer any questions; provide hardcopy of informed consent form if participant requests it.]

Great! I will keep our conversation to [60 minutes (for clinic manager)/30 minutes (for frontline staff)], until [time]. Does that still work for you?

Finally, we would like to record today's interview to ensure we accurately capture the information you share. The recording will not be shared with FNS or anyone outside the study team. Do we have your consent to record?

[Interviewer note: Pause for consent; start the recording.]

Thank you. Now that I have started the recording, for the record, can I ask you to reconfirm that you consent to participating in this interview and having it audio recorded?

[Interviewer note: Pause for consent.]

[Interviewer reminders:

- › *Allow time for introductions for clinic staff and yourself.*
- › *Give space and time for storytelling.*
- › *Facilitate a conversation that feels natural rather than a checklist of questions.*
- › *Avoid speaking over the person, cutting them off too soon, or interrupting them.*
- › *Allow time for the clinic staff to reflect and process the question after asking.*
- › *Review materials (i.e., clinic policy manual, organizational chart) provided before the onsite visit.]*

Public Burden Statement

This information is being collected to assist the Food and Nutrition Service in learning about variations in WIC operations between Tribal Organizations, U.S. territories, and geographic States. FNS will use the information to inform program or policy changes that may reduce operational barriers and enhance services for WIC participants. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-XXX. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 1 hour (60 minutes).

Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the following address: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Evidence, Analysis, and Regulatory

Affairs Office, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314, ATTN: PRA (0584-XXXX). Do not return the completed form to this address.

Introduction

1. What motivated you to start working with WIC?
2. What are your responsibilities at the clinic?

[Interviewer note: If the clinic manager also works directly with WIC participants, ask all questions in guide (prioritizing the manager questions if short on time). If the clinic manager does not work directly with WIC participants, ask the “clinic manager only” questions.]

Clinic Overview **[Clinic Manager Only]**

Before hearing about the important services you provide to WIC participants, I'd like to ask some high-level questions to better understand the clinic overall.

3. Are there any other services co-located with your clinic in this building?

[Interviewer note: If you noticed upon entering that it's co-located with other services, it's okay to reword to share your observation and ask whether there are any other services/programs co-located that you might not have seen.]

[If yes]

- a. Which other services?
 - b. What benefits do you see with co-located services?
 - c. What are the drawbacks of co-located services?
4. Are there other clinics or satellite sites you operate in your service area?

[If yes]

- a. How many?
 - b. What resources do you share across sites, if any?
5. What does your clinic do really well that you think other clinics could learn from?

Staffing Model **[Clinic Manager Only]**

[Interviewer note: With question 7, we're asking about openings for existing positions on their team (i.e., for which they have funding and approval to hire). With question 10, we are asking about any additional new positions they'd want to create.]

6. Please tell me about the different staff roles at this clinic.
 - a. Which staff perform nutrition assessments?

[Probe: nutritionists, registered dietitians, paraprofessionals]

- b. Which staff provide nutrition education services?
 - c. Do you share any staff with other clinics or programs? If yes, please explain.
7. Are there existing staff openings you are trying to fill? If yes, please explain.
- [Probes: nutritionists, registered dietitians, nurses, lactation counselors, others]*
8. When there is a vacancy on your clinic team, where do you usually look for qualified candidates to fill those positions?
9. In general, which staff positions are the hardest to fill?
- a. Why do you think that is?
- [Probes: salary, labor pool]*
- b. Are there any WIC policy changes that would make it easier to fill those positions? If yes, please explain.
10. If you had the ability and resources to create additional new positions, what other types of staff would you add to your WIC clinic team?

Participant Appointments **[Clinic Manager Only]**

Next, I'd like to understand the general flow of participant appointments.

[Interviewer note: To the extent that respondents answered these questions during site visit planning calls, please summarize what you heard them say on each point so that information is captured in transcripts and confirm that your understanding is correct.]

11. Are appointments at this clinic offered only in person, or are there options for participants to complete phone or video appointments?
- [If offers both in-person and phone/video appointments]**
- a. How do you determine whether a participant will have an appointment in person, by phone, or by video?
- [Probe: varies for appointment type (initial certification, recertification, nutrition education, or breastfeeding support) or varies by participant preference]*
12. How can participants get an appointment at your clinic?
- [Probes: walk-in, online appointment scheduling, online application, calling the clinic, texting, direct referrals from community providers]*
- a. Which options are most used?
 - b. Which options are least used?

13. How long do participants usually wait in the waiting room before being seen for an in-person appointment?
- a. **[If offers phone appointments]** How long do participants wait on hold for a phone appointment to start?
 - b. **[If offers video appointments]** How long do participants wait on hold for a video appointment to start?
 - c. Does the wait time differ by the type of staff participants need to see? If yes, please explain.
[Probe: if they need to be seen by an intake staff, nutrition staff, or breastfeeding staff]
14. What languages are spoken by your WIC participants?
- a. How often do staff need an interpreter to assist during an appointment?
[Interviewer note: Staff can telephone the Language Line for assistance during appointments.]

Breastfeeding Promotion and Support Services **[Clinic Manager Only]**

Next, I'd like to ask a few questions about your clinic's breastfeeding services.

15. How do clinic staff promote breastfeeding to pregnant and early postpartum women?
16. How do clinic staff continue supporting participants who choose to breastfeed after that early postpartum period?
17. Are there any breastfeeding peer counselors working with participants from your clinic?
- a. **[If yes]** Are there enough breastfeeding peer counselors to meet participants' needs? If not, please explain.
 - b. **[If no]** Would your clinic be interested in having a breastfeeding peer counselor available to participants? Why or why not?

Health and Nutrition Services

I'd like to better understand the health and nutrition assessment and education parts of the participant appointments.

[Interviewer note: To the extent that respondents shared information ahead of the visit and/or information was learned by reviewing the case agency's State Plan, summarize your understanding so that information is captured in transcripts and ask these questions to fill in any gaps.]

18. After intake, what is the most common sequence of steps for participants during an in-person initial certification appointment?

[Probes: heights and weights, nutrition assessment, nutrition education, issue benefits, referrals]

- a. **[If applicable]** How does the sequence differ for **[phone/video]** appointments?
- b. Which staff do participants meet with for each of those steps?

[Probe: titles/positions involved at each step]

- c. How does the flow of a visit differ for a recertification?

19. During an in-person appointment, does the participant move from room to room for different services, or do they stay in one room and the staff rotate in?

20. **[If offers phone appointments]** During a phone appointment, how are participants moved from intake to the specific staff they need to meet with?

- a. What works well about conducting phone appointments compared with in-person appointments at the clinic?
- b. What is challenging about conducting phone appointments?
 - i. What strategies have you found to overcome those obstacles?

21. **[If offers video appointments]** During a video appointment, how are participants moved from intake to the specific staff they need to meet with?

- a. What works well about conducting video appointments compared with in-person appointments at the clinic?
- b. What is challenging about conducting video appointments?
 - i. What strategies have you found to overcome those obstacles?

22. What modes of nutrition education does your clinic use?

[Probes: one-on-one in person, group in-person sessions, self-paced online modules, by video with WIC staff, phone, other]

23. To what extent are the clinic's nutrition education materials culturally relevant to your participants?

[Probe: alignment with cultural norms, language read vs. language spoken, topics covered]

- a. If you could make any changes to the materials, how would you improve them?

Food Package Assignment and Issuance

Next, I have a few questions about food package tailoring and issuance.

24. What are the most common food package substitutions that participants request?
25. What additional flexibility would you like to have to better tailor the food packages to your participants' needs and preferences?
26. What are the biggest challenges you hear from participants when shopping for WIC foods?

[Probes: lack of availability/inventory of items, difficulty finding WIC-authorized foods, transportation, stigma, card not working]

Referrals and Data Sharing [Clinic Manager Only]

My next questions are about how your clinic provides and receives referrals.

27. Tell me about any relationships you have with other healthcare providers or programs that directly refer their clients to your WIC clinic.

[Probes: healthcare providers, Head Start, home visiting, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid, food pantry]

- a. Does your clinic have a memorandum of understanding or agreement with those providers or programs to receive patient information through referrals?

- b. How do you receive referrals from those providers?

[Probes: email, fax, phone, information sharing systems]

- c. What is the greatest challenge with getting that information?

28. To which providers or programs do WIC staff typically refer participants?

29. In general, what works well about the process of collaborating with other providers or programs to share referrals?

Closing

I have a few additional questions before we finish.

30. In your opinion, what is the value of WIC for your community?

- a. And what, if anything, do you think gets in the way of eligible women, infants, and children enrolling?

31. [Optional, ask if time allows] If you could make one WIC policy or procedural change to better serve your participants, what would that be and why?

32. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience operating and administering WIC?