



The Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger Promising Practices Interview Project to Increase Medicaid Members' Participation in SNAP and WIC

The Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger's goal to increase the participation of eligible Medicaid members in SNAP and WIC. Strong evidence links SNAP/WIC participation with (1) improved economic and nutrition security, (2) improved health and educational outcomes, and (3) reduced health care costs. Despite this positive research, the majority of eligible Medicaid members in Colorado are not enrolled in SNAP and WIC. To highlight promising practices that result in increased participation in SNAP and WIC, the Blueprint conducted 45 interviews of stakeholders from 16 Colorado counties. Mesa County was the focus of multiple interviews due to the county's high rate of enrollment of Medicaid members in SNAP and WIC.

The following promising practices result in increased enrollment and participation in SNAP and WIC:

- 1 Strong, responsive, and collaboratively focused leadership**
Upstream and collaboratively focused leaders not only connect each component of the food security system, but also support the system as a whole.
Mesa County Human Service and WIC directors engage with key stakeholders at Mesa County Hunger Alliance meetings. During coalition meetings, stakeholders share information, discuss coordination of resources, respond to immediate and longer-term needs, and problem-solve issues together.
- 2 Improved awareness of the SNAP and WIC programs and their associated benefits**
Current and accurate knowledge of the SNAP and WIC programs is essential for effective promotion. The Mesa County Ambassador program meets with medical practices and early child educators to increase awareness of the SNAP and WIC and other benefit programs. They also address eligibility and negative misperceptions related to SNAP and WIC.
- 3 Health-based and destigmatized messaging for SNAP and WIC**
SNAP and WIC participation increases when promoted as health opportunities. Clients who feel empowered with information about program resources and health benefits, are more likely to enroll in SNAP/WIC as screening for food insecurity is associated with stigma, fear and shame.
Messaging such as: "All families need support raising children, SNAP and WIC can help you provide nourishing food for your family" or "SNAP benefits will help you afford the nutritious food needed to manage your diabetes" improves participation in SNAP/WIC.



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4 Accessible and supportive SNAP and WIC enrollment assistance for all who need it

Some Medicaid members are able to successfully navigate the SNAP and WIC enrollment processes by utilizing PEAK, 211, Hunger Free Colorado Nutrition Resource Line, or WIC on-line referral; however, others need help and support to navigate these complex systems until enrollment is completed.

Organizations that have implemented supportive SNAP and WIC navigation include: (a) Mesa County's Hilltop Family Resource Center enrolls clients in Medicaid, SNAP and WIC and connects clients with services (some healthcare practices refer patients to the center), (b) the Mesa County Catholic Outreach program assists individuals experiencing homelessness with SNAP enrollment, (c) Hunger Free Colorado's bilingual mobile outreach worker completes SNAP applications in the Denver Health clinic lobby and provides a direct contact number to call if further assistance is needed, (d) Children's Hospital and Denver Health navigators directly refer families to a Human Service eligibility technician to assist with enrollment in multiple benefit programs, and (e) Rocky Mountain Health Plan Outreach Coordinators and Nurse Family Practice RNs from all counties schedule patients for WIC appointments rather than submitting an on-line referral, which results in enrollment only 45% of the time).

5 Accessible WIC appointments and improved coordination with healthcare

Remote WIC visits and combined WIC/healthcare visits increase WIC appointment accessibility and family satisfaction.

Children's Hospital allows WIC representatives to access Epic healthcare medical record systems to improve care coordination between healthcare and WIC and reduce duplication of services. This information access allows WIC educators to conduct remote visits. Prior to the pandemic, the Stride clinic provided WIC services in health clinics.

6 Multi-program synergy

Data-sharing and enrollment assistance between programs (e.g., Medicaid, WIC, SNAP) can strengthen enrollment in all programs.

Benefits Data Trust (BDT) and Kaiser Permanente use data to outreach Medicaid members not currently enrolled in SNAP and then facilitate enrollment. The Accountable Care Organizations use data matching to identify their patients with diabetes, allowing for outreach and assistance for those who are eligible for SNAP but not enrolled. Medical sites who enroll patients in Medicaid with the Medical only application opt use the SNAP checkbox, which begins a SNAP application. Rocky Mountain Health Plan and WIC sites complete SNAP applications using the PEAKPro application with the support of Hunger Free Colorado.

References

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