



WIC GOES PLATINUM!

Introducing the Academy for Participant-Centered Leadership (APL)

Going From Gold – to Platinum!

Last year, the California WIC community made public health history with the rollout of our new food packages. The healthy new WIC foods, which we coordinated with clear Healthy Habits messages, are already having a positive impact on millions of California families.

This achievement sets the stage for our next big step: **WIC Goes Platinum!** In the next few years, we will work together and support each other to bring California WIC up to a whole new level of excellence. Our goal will be to integrate our Gold Standard foods, our growing staff wellness culture, and our participant-centered nutrition education and breastfeeding support --**into the overall WIC clinic experience**. Going Platinum means creating and implementing a truly 21st Century WIC: stellar customer service, integrated staff wellness, widespread community collaboration, and innovative WIC leadership.

To help all local WIC agencies achieve Platinum-quality staffing and service, CWA, in close partnership with the California WIC Division, is launching a new initiative: **The Academy for Participant-Centered Leadership, or APL** (“apple”). The **APL** process will recruit enthusiastic and talented employees directly from the frontlines of WIC, and support them in creating practical cultural and organizational changes, within the site and among their colleagues, that will palpably improve the WIC setting and experience for participants and staff alike.

APL will build upon successful models and tools for WIC site transformation that have already been created and tested in other WIC programs across the country by a group of seasoned WIC experts from the **Altarum** Consulting Group. Our efforts will be led by two trusted California WIC veterans: **Anne Patterson**, a former local WIC Director with decades of frontline experience, and **Helene Dublisky**, a leadership coach and trainer who is well known in WIC circles. With input from a state and local agency **Advisory Committee**, the APL process will be developed and piloted by a small and representative group of local agencies in 2010, and then expanded to a wider group in 2011-12.

APL Builds on Our History of Positive Change

California WIC is a truly dynamic organization. We have proven repeatedly that we have the capacity to achieve rapid, comprehensive and measurable systems change, because we have built a remarkable level of trust and cooperation between and among all levels of state, local, and individual WIC work. It probably began in the mid-1990’s with the transition to **ISIS**, a multiyear undertaking that completely transformed the WIC experience.

Then, we tackled WIC nutrition education, starting in 2000 with **FitWIC** and **Family-Centered Education**, and moving to the more profound changes that came with **Learner-Centered Education**

(LCE) in 2001, catalyzed by the incredible *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach* trainings that have revolutionized our nutrition education by putting the participant in the driver's seat. In 2002, further improvements in WIC education reinforced LCE: **Finding the Teacher Within** training for frontline staff, followed by **Motivational Interviewing** and **Pearls of Change**.

Early in our LCE journey we rolled out a customer service campaign – remember **FISH?**—that helped frontline staff lighten up and have fun while they worked. Then, when faced with a huge funding windfall, we launched the popular and successful **Go For the Gold** campaign, which engaged all staff in an all-out effort to reach and enroll close to 65,000 new participants in less than a year.

This low-budget, high-energy effort showed us that campaigns truly work, so we set off on **WICconnect**, an ambitious quest to harness the incredible power of the WIC food package changes with a carefully planned and well-resourced campaign to engage all staff and participants in healthy choices: **Healthy Habits Every Day** was born. For the first time in our history, we shared the same well-crafted messages at the same time with millions of WIC families. And it really worked!

Along the way, we kicked off **WIC Worksite Wellness** accreditation, supported the WIC Division as it rolled out complex vendor changes with **AAV**, trained and deployed hundreds of **Local Vendor Liaisons**, and, last but not least, implemented the new food packages and helped participants Go Shopping With Their New WIC Checks!

More Than a Campaign, More than Leadership Training

With all this under our belts, it is time to get back to basics, and confront some core WIC service issues. We know that LCE skills have enabled us to create a warm and supportive environment for participants in our WIC classrooms, lactation lounges, and counseling cubicles. Now it is time to carry that same positive energy out into WIC reception, waiting rooms, break rooms – and beyond! **WIC Goes Platinum** is all about putting the participant at the center of everything we do at WIC, and the **Academy for Participant-Centered Leadership** will help get us there.

WIC Goes Platinum is not a quick campaign to grow caseload or roll out something new. Instead, it is a permanent journey of transformation that will be different for every agency and which will require honest reflection, clear assessment, and innovative implementation. **WIC Goes Platinum** is not about policy changes or new resources. It's about changing what we do with what we have. **WIC Goes Platinum** can't be handed down from the State, CWA or the WIC Director – although support and mentoring from all of these are important. Instead, this process will be led by frontline WIC site staff – that person with the special passion for improving anything and everything that could make the difference between “just WIC” and “WOW!” for participants who walk in the door every day.

By the same token, the **Academy for Participant-Centered Leadership** will differ from the leadership training that CWA has offered to WIC directors and managers in past years. Instead, APL will reach further down the management chain, especially in large agencies. We seek frontline employees—site managers, WNAs, phone staff, clerks and educators. We're looking for any staff with that special spark, that extra energy to create and sustain changes in organizational culture that will result in permanent improvements to the level of care we show for ourselves and the families we serve.

Led by Helene Dublisky, the APL process will create a learning and empowerment community for these WIC change agents for a one-year period. During APL, we will provide mentoring and leadership training, coaching and support for this cohort, as they work in their sites and with their WIC colleagues to create the many small, but important, improvements to their own WIC environments and work processes. APL will start with these change agents, who will engage with all staff to begin the transform the WIC experience for participants and staff alike – from **Gold to Platinum!**

At the same time, Anne Patterson and a faculty of retired WIC managers with many decades of frontline experience will offer technical assistance and site assessment services to the local agencies participating in **WIC Goes Platinum**. Anne and her team will visit sites, assess service and operational challenges, and provide feedback and ongoing telephone mentoring and troubleshooting during the year. She will also link Platinum sites with each other so that local agency staff can network and support each other in seeking change.

Timeline for WIC Goes Platinum and APL Training

Planning Phase: Current to May 2010

APL Team Assembled- -Formative Research, Consultants Recruited

Consulting Retired WIC Directors (“Golden Eagles”) recruited and trained

Advisory Board Convenes- -Providers input to APL Team

Formal Kick-Off at CWA Annual Meeting- -Recruit Platinum Pilot Agencies and APL Candidates

Pilot Phase: May to October 2010

Commitment Forms Finalized with Pilot Platinum WIC Sites (2 sites per WIC region)

Site Visits and Assessments by “Golden Eagles”

Recruitment, Application and Enrollment of APL Class of 2011

APL Class of 2011 Holds Summer Retreat, Regional Breakouts, and Follow-up Webinars

Advisory Board continues to meet

Implementation Phase: November 2010 to October 2011

APL Class of 2011 Continues to Meet and Graduates in May 2011

“Golden Eagle” Telephone and Electronic Mentoring to Platinum sites

Advisory Board Approves Finalized Curriculum and Support Process for Platinum WIC Site Designation

APL Class of 2012 Recruited at CWA Annual Meeting – Open Enrollment

Platinum WIC Cycle Begins Again With Larger Cohort of Sites and APL Trainee

From Gold to Platinum – We invite you to begin the journey with us!