



# WIC watch

## California WIC Shines a Light In Darker Times

Usually, this time of year is an intense confluence of scrambling to close out the year's commitments, often followed by past reflections while looking ahead to a fresh start. There is an air of excitement and expectation for many celebrations and traditions. This year, we find ourselves trying to be part of what we know and value while adapting to the pandemic, mourning those who are not here this holiday season, and bracing for more dire times. Renewed activism to address racism and implicit bias is calling us to take meaningful steps to eliminate the causes of pain and fear in many of our friends' and families' daily lives. The election finally happened, and the people spoke, but we will need time to recover and reestablish trust that our leadership is kind and inclusive. Along the West coast, we also need time to recover from the most devastating fire season yet.

In the WIC sphere, we thought the big event of the year would be the rollout of the WIC card, WIC WISE, and WIC app, with some celebration to follow – not a global pandemic. Rollout was still big, and a huge success, even with all these other unexpected and significant challenges. WIC agencies in some regions had to complete rollout during the first wave of COVID as shutdowns were ordered. WIC staff have nimbly used new ways to work, adapted technologies, managed operations and business processes differently, and kept all local agencies open for business. Throughout, outstanding teamwork between state and local staff, state departments and business partners clearly showed how "all for one and one for all" really pays off. In October 2020, California WIC served 140,582 more participants than in December 2019, a 17% increase in participation.

All this is so much to process, and with so much emotion. With many examples of divisiveness circulating in the news and social media, it is reassuring to know one must only look to California WIC to see a light shining through the dark.

We hope you enjoy the stories and information in this edition of the WIC Watch, reflecting the events of this past year. As the association for California WIC agencies, we are grateful for the opportunities to support your success and applaud your stellar contributions to the health of families in every community.

*Your friends at CWA*

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California WIC: Integration, Collaboration, and Coalition Building

CWA Fall Virtual Education Days/CDPH WIC Local Directors Meeting



Health care reform, and more recently, a pandemic, wildfires, and renewed anti-racist activism, have exposed the need for accessibility of safety net programs such as WIC. Additionally, broad collaborative working relationships at local and state levels



Rita Sever will discuss the 5 C's of remote supervision.

are needed to ensure we are addressing social determinants of health with a focus on equity, justice, and prosperity.

Despite an increase in participation since the pandemic, sagging enrollment is problematic as we work to implement the proven population health outcomes of WIC engagement. How can we integrate new programs and practices, continue to collaborate with community partners, and build helpful

and lasting coalitions to improve the lives of our participants, when we aren't doing business as usual? We aim to tackle some of these topics and more during the 2020 Fall Management Meetings.

We will learn more about program linkages with Zoë Neuberger, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Jessica

Maneely, Benefits Data Trust to ensure eligible participants can access programs. CWA will share the results of a survey of WIC local agencies on their linkages for outreach and referrals. California has a housing crisis and Luke Villalobos, with Housing California, Francisco Dueñas, Housing Now! California and Jenn Fleming, Mercy Housing, will share policy priorities and how WIC local agencies can engage in housing advocacy. California has greatly expanded home visiting. We will take this opportunity to



Debra Silverman, First 5 California, will participate on a panel discussing collaboration with home visiting programs.

bring together the home visiting and WIC programs to share strategies for best serving participants, including during the pandemic.

WIC staff are largely working remotely to maintain safety, and this manner of working could be more permanently used. New skills and tools will be shared for how to manage a remote workforce.

CDPH WIC staff have some excellent and timely sessions planned. Chris Nelson and Susan Sabatier will share how WRAD resources can support the development of retention, re-engagement, and recruitment strategies.

The Myfamily website only gets better and Jen Goldbronn, Elizabeth Crum, Fariha Chowdbury and Sharlene Richardson will share nutrition education materials and future goals.

California WIC has a long history of outstanding accomplishments by committees made up of state and local staff to address education, training, outreach, eWIC and more. Chris Nelson will be joined by state managers to work with the local agencies on plans for the needs ahead. Historic changes are occurring for the requirements of becoming a Registered Dietitian and building the capacity of the state WIC RD workforce is critical. Catherine Lopez and Stephanie Kwong will provide an overview of the CDPH WIC RD Internship Program and ideas for workforce development.



Francisco Dueñas will provide expert input on housing policy.



Zoë Neuberger will share findings from work on data sharing and program linkages.

## Federal Policy Updates

### USDA WIC Waivers

Due to the massive job losses we've seen with the COVID-19 pandemic, WIC services are needed even more than ever before, but it's also critically important to keep families and WIC staff safe. Through hard work and advocacy by National WIC Association and WIC Ambassadors at local agencies, and WIC champions like Congressman Josh Harder and Senator Bob Casey in the legislature, Congress granted USDA waiver authority in a Continuing Resolution through September 30, 2021, and in September USDA extended waivers allowing WIC to serve families remotely through the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Big thanks to NWA, local agency WIC staff and the policymakers who helped lead this effort. To learn how you can help advocate for these kinds of WIC issues, you can email Sarah to be part of local legislative visits - [sdiaz@calwic.org](mailto:sdiaz@calwic.org), and check out the National WIC Association's advocacy page: <https://www.nwica.org/advocacy>.



### Continuing Resolution

At the end of September, President Trump signed a continuing resolution. In addition to granting WIC waiver authority to USDA, the continuing resolution included some important provisions for child nutrition. The Continuing Resolution makes a number of improvements to SNAP pandemic, P-EBT including: providing benefits to children who have a reduction in the number of days or hours they are physically in school or child care; allowing Puerto Rico and other territories to implement P-EBT; and providing funding to cover states' administrative costs. The Continuing Resolution also provided state SNAP agencies with needed flexibilities to adjust operations during COVID-19 by using waivers on deadlines for SNAP interviews, participant reporting, and eligibility recertifications. More broadly, the Continuing Resolution continued government operations and gives Congress until December 11th to pass an appropriations bill and avoid a government shutdown.

### Census Count Ended Early

In mid-October, the Supreme Court granted the White House approval to end the census early, which had been extended until the end of October due to the pandemic. This decision came after a lower court ruling in California that required the continuation of the census count through October 31. An accurate census count is critical for assessing state and local needs and factors into funding formulas for various programs, including WIC. At press time, the Supreme Court is in the process of considering whether the White House can exclude

undocumented immigrants in the census count, specifically for the process of apportionment which determines the allocation of Congressional seats. This move has been perceived as unconstitutional, as Article 1 of the US Constitution makes no distinction based on citizenship.

### The COVID-19 WIC Safety and Modernization Act

Congressman Andy Levin (D-MI) and Congresswoman Elise Stefanik (R-NY) introduced legislation at the end of August that would address WIC accessibility issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 WIC Safety and Modernization Act ([H.R. 7933](#)) would establish a taskforce made up of relevant stakeholders, officials, and program participants to recommend updates to WIC programs that promote convenience, safety, and equitable access to supplemental foods. The taskforce will recommend much-needed streamlining procedures for WIC programs that promote parent and child safety

during the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Online and telephone ordering;
- Online purchasing;
- Curbside pickup
- Self-check-out; and
- Home delivery.

Reps. Levin and Stefanik will work together to garner support for this bipartisan effort as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. In May, Rep. Levin led a letter signed by 95 House Members to the USDA urging the agency to wave certain restrictions on the use of WIC funds during the COVID-19 crisis.

### Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

On September 17th, the House passed the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act by a 329-73 vote.

Rep. Jerry Nadler (D-NY) has introduced five versions of the bill ([H.R. 2694](#)) since May 2012. The act is intended to close loopholes and provide reasonable accommodations for employees whose ability to perform the functions of a job are limited by pregnancy, childbirth or a related medical condition. Examples of reasonable accommodations include an extra bathroom break, a stool, limiting contact with certain chemicals or a reduction in lifting requirements. The bill still faces likely opposition in the Senate before it can be signed into law.

### Helping MOMS Act

At the end of September the House of Representatives passed the bipartisan Helping MOMS Act ([HR 4996](#)), legislation aimed at reducing and ending America's growing mater-

nal mortality crisis. The bill provides states with the option to extend Medicaid coverage through the entire postpartum period of one year, a proven strategy for reducing unnecessary maternal deaths. Currently, most states only provide Medicaid coverage for 60-days immediately following childbirth. In order to increase the coverage window, the state must apply and be approved for a waiver by the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. Many new moms experience one or more health complications within a year of giving birth. With more than half of new moms covered by Medicaid, the Helping MOMS Act could significantly improve these health outcomes. In recent years, the U.S. has made headlines for its disturbing and growing rate of maternal mortality, with Black women two and a half times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than their white counterparts.

### Not Invisible Act and Savanna's Act

President Trump signed Savanna's Act and Not Invisible Act into law Oct. 10 to help address the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women crisis. Indigenous women face a murder rate 10 times higher than the national average, with 84 percent experiencing some form of violence in their lifetime. Among other provisions, the Savanna's Act creates new guidelines for responding to cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and creates incentives for its implementation. The Not Invisible Act creates an advisory committee on violent crime, which will consist of tribal leaders, law enforcement, federal partners, service providers and survivors who will be tasked with issuing recommendations to the U.S. Department of the Interior and Department of Justice. The legislation empowers tribal governments with the resources and information necessary to respond to cases of missing or murdered Native Americans and increase their data collection, and also increases coordination and communication among federal, state, and tribal officials. Savanna's Act authorizes best practices in conducting searches for missing persons on and off tribal land, establishes standards on the collection, reporting, and analysis of data and information on missing persons and unidentified human remains and requires the culturally appropriate identification and handling of human remains identified as belonging to American Indians. It also provides guidance on which law enforcement agency is responsible for inputting information into databases, how agencies can improve response rates and provide culturally appropriate victim services.

Lastly, Savanna's Act adds two new purpose areas to two existing grant programs administered by the Justice Department, specifically, allowing grantees to use funds to implement policies, protocols, and training for law enforcement regarding cases of missing or murdered Native Americans, and to compile and report data to the Attorney General. It is unknown how many Native women go missing each year due to the lack of

adequate data systems and coordination within law enforcement agencies. In 2018, the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) completed a landmark survey, reporting 5,712 missing Alaska Native and American Indian women and girls, only 116 of whom were registered in the Department of Justice database.

## Public Charge

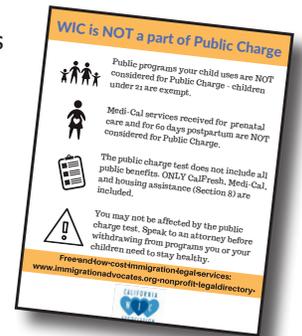
The Trump Administration's expanded public charge rule, initially published in August 2019, was finalized in February 2020. On July 29, 2020 the US District Court of New York blocked enforcement of the rule during the COVID-19 pandemic, but on August 4, USCIS announced it will use the 1999 public charge guidance while the injunction is in effect. On Nov. 2, the Northern District of Illinois [struck down](#) the Administration's public charge rule for violating the Administrative Procedures Act. On Nov. 3, the Seventh Circuit Court of appeals stayed that decision pending its appeal. The public charge rule is, at press time, in full effect.

The rule expanded the list of public programs considered in making a public charge determination from cash assistance—Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), state, local or tribal cash assistance and long-term institutional medical care—to include these additional programs:

- Medicaid, with exceptions for emergency services, pregnant women and children;
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
- Federal Public Housing, Section 8 housing vouchers, and Section 8 project-based rental assistance.

The final rule exempts disaster relief; emergency medical assistance; services provided in connection with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; school lunch and school breakfast; Children's Health Improvement Program; WIC; and Medicaid benefits received by pregnant women and children under the age of 21.

The [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) found the expansions to the public charge rule could lead to decreased Medicaid participation for legal immigrant families. Nationwide, more than 19 million, or 1 in 4 (25 percent), children live in a family with an immigrant parent, and nearly 9 in 10 (86 percent) of these children are citizens. You can find information and resources on public charge at <https://www.calwic.org/what-we-do/engage-wic-families/protect-immigrant-families/>.



# CNC & Leadership

## Apply for WIC Leadership Academy 2021!

Kudos to WIC staff for your dedication and perseverance during these crazy times! Due to the pandemic, we pushed back the start of our next Leadership Academy Class to 2021. Looking optimistically toward the near future, we are currently planning for next year and are excited to give you the opportunity to apply for this year-long journey of personal and professional growth! For the next class, we welcome Dr. Melissa Franklin, who will incorporate leadership to address racism and bias, along with Rita Sever, management consultant, professional coach. Applications are available now and due in January 2021. Applicants who applied for 2020 do not need to reapply! Check out our website for details and application! <https://www.calwic.org/local-agency-support/leadership-academy/>

## California Nutrition Corps Scholarships: Applications available!

Supporting our community is fundamental to our mission, so we are thrilled to announce the return of CNC scholarships for the 2020-2021 term! As a reminder, applicants may apply once per category, must be currently employed in a WIC program with at least 6 months of continuous employment at the time of application, and currently enrolled in a dietetic internship, undergraduate, or graduate program. Applications are available now on our website for the 19th year of the CNC scholarships! <https://www.calwic.org/local-agency-support/cnc-scholarships/>

### Important Dates:

- **November 16, 2020** – Applications available on our website [www.calwic.org](http://www.calwic.org)
- **5:00pm, January 15, 2021** – Applications due in our office via mail or email to [lworkman@calwic.org](mailto:lworkman@calwic.org) (New this year!)
- **March 12, 2021** – Applicants notified via mail/email



## Connect with CWA

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(Search for California WIC Association or calwic.)



# Plan Now for Spring Conference 2021



You can save the dates now, **May 3-7, 2021** for CWA's next annual virtual conference.

We just wrapped up our first virtual conference and trade

show in August, focusing on the timely theme **Empowered Young Families Unite, Inspire, Uplift**. It was a delight to host 1500 attendees, with many of you able to attend for the first time with no travel costs and the conveniences of a virtual event. We especially heard that you did feel connected to your statewide colleagues and friends and were able to communicate with more people. We have listened to your feedback and will incorporate what you appreciated about the conference into next year's presentations and trade show engagements. The workshops will address your broad interests in breastfeeding, nutrition, leadership, management, and wellness. You can expect to learn about foundational strategies to address racism and ensure equitable practices, for even better WIC outcomes. Anytime is a good time to let us know you have a great speaker or topic to offer or want to provide other suggestions. Here at CWA, we love to provide you with an outstanding conference and trade show.





# The Phyllis A. Bramson Advocacy Award



**Community Resource Project  
WIC Program**

Samantha Slaughter, IBCLC, First 5 & Peer Counselor Program Coordinator/Regional Breastfeeding Liaison; Jennifer Pettus, IBCLC, formerly Regional Breastfeeding Liaison; Maureen Clark, MS, RD, Health Division Director; Jeannette Newman-Velez, formerly CRP WIC Breastfeeding Promotion Coordinator



**Sacramento County  
Department of Health Services  
WIC Program**

Amelia Schendel, RD, IBCLC, WIC Program Director; Lisa Mathews, MS, RD, IBCLC, Breastfeeding Program Coordinator; Sandy Damiano, PhD, Deputy Director of Sacramento County Primary Health Division (not pictured)

Presented to  
Sacramento County WIC Program  
&  
Community Resource Project WIC Program

August 24, 2020  
California WIC Association  
Annual Conference

**P**hyllis Bramson was a unique and feisty administrator and advocate, and California's State Director from 1992 to 2002. She ushered California WIC out of crisis into an era of unprecedented growth and modernization. Using a generous bequest from Phyllis herself, CWA



established the Phyllis A. Bramson award to honor the memory of an inspiring and effective champion for the WIC Program. The Bramson Award recognizes outstanding WIC employees whose advocacy efforts on behalf of the California WIC Program achieved a demonstrated impact at the local, state, or national level. Bramson

Award recipients are honored at our annual conference and receive a cash scholarship to help cover the costs of participating in national and state WIC legislative conferences in Washington, DC, and Sacramento.

**The Sacramento County WIC Program and the Community Resource Project (CRP) WIC Program were this year's recipients of the Phyllis Bramson Award. These WIC programs have been strong proponents of breastfeeding support services within the health care setting.** The journey started when the Sacramento County WIC Program received funding from First 5 Sacramento to expand its lactation support services in 2002. The funding for this project expanded Sacramento County WIC's breastfeeding support services from basic breastfeeding promotion and education to include advanced lactation care and breastfeeding assistance at the WIC Sites. In 2004, Sacramento County WIC subcontracted with CRP WIC so that both WIC agencies could administer these lactation services to all WIC participants in Sacramento County.

Continuing their advocacy for better breastfeeding support services in the health care setting, **both agencies engaged with the local hospital systems to adopt breastfeeding friendly practices and policies.** From 2007 – 2011, the Sacramento County WIC Program assisted First 5 Sacramento with their Baby-Friendly®

Initiative, which coordinated and funded the trainings and fees required for hospitals to pursue the Baby-Friendly® designation. The Sacramento County WIC Program was instrumental in coordinating with the local hospital systems to provide the SOFT Approach training (mother baby skin-to-skin care) to hospital staff and in removing barriers to participation in the Baby-Friendly Initiative. The SOFT training was pivotal in initiating the changes needed to implementing better breastfeeding support policies and protocols within the hospitals. The effort to support the local hospital systems continued through the collaboration of the Sacramento County WIC Program and the Regional Breastfeeding Liaison Program (RBL) hosted by the CRP WIC Program. The RBLs have provided technical support for hospitals pursuing Baby-Friendly® designation and infant feeding trainings to nursing staff through hospital skills labs. In addition to their advocacy work within the local hospital systems, both WIC agencies have broadened their work under the First 5 Sacramento and RBL funding to include the reinforcement of evidence-based breastfeeding education and training among healthcare providers, community partners, and educational institutions.

In recent years, both agencies have shifted their attention to program sustainability, as First 5 funding continues to decrease statewide. Their current advocacy efforts are multifaceted. To begin with, the Sacramento County WIC Program and CRP WIC Program have collaborated throughout the years to champion and secure First 5 Sacramento funding for breastfeeding support services. Securing continued lactation funding was accomplished through their combined efforts to coordinate public testimony at First 5 Sacramento Strategic Planning Meetings and First 5 Sacramento Commission Meetings. Furthermore, both agencies utilized these meetings as a platform to **educate the First 5 Sacramento Commission and key stakeholders about WIC services, the importance of providing advanced breastfeeding support services in WIC clinics, and the need for additional health reform for lactation support services to be reimbursable at WIC clinic sites.**

Another facet of their advocacy work comes from both of their participation in First 5 Sacramento 18-month sustainability training program to become Certified Sustainable. During this training program, each agency developed a sustainability plan for their lactation assistance program and became Certified Sustainable. These sustainability plans focused on the development of partnerships with health care providers, Federally Qualified Health Centers, and medical groups in order to imple-

ment lactation reimbursement models. For the Sacramento County WIC Program, their partnership with the River City Medical Group has led to the development and implementation of a Lactation Support Service Reimbursement Pilot, where their lactation consultants are billing the medical group for lactation support services provided to their members. Additionally, the Sacramento County WIC Program has been networking with key stakeholders from the Sacramento County Medi-Cal Managed Care Advisory Committee; as well as negotiating new ways to collaborate with

local Independent Physician Associations for lactation program sustainability. With the assistance of the Regional Breastfeeding Liaisons from CRP WIC and the guidance of the Sacramento County's Deputy Director of Primary Health Division, the Sacramento County WIC Program continues to navigate the development and implementation of lactation support services reimbursement models at WIC.

Lastly, the efforts of both agencies to advocate for WIC breastfeeding support services to exist within the healthcare setting has led to staff from First 5 Sacramento and CWA to engage in conversations with Assemblyman Cooper's office and the Department of Health Care Services. These conversations target changes needed to the current Medi-Cal reimbursement regulations. **The goal of these changes would allow Lactation Consultants to receive reimbursement for providing lactation support services without having to work in a clinic directly under a licensed healthcare provider. These efforts have the greatest potential of bringing reimbursable lactation care into the WIC clinics, not only in Sacramento County, but also across the state of California.**



# WIC Lifetime Achievement Award ROBIN EVANS AND NANCY NESA

**C**DPH WIC has been a state program leader in supporting a culturally competent and diverse workforce of Registered Dietitians through internships and career development since 1997. Some of the leaders of this work are now retiring.

During the Fall Management meeting the California WIC community will recognize Nancy Nesa and Robin Evans for their contributions in creating and expanding the California WIC Dietetic Internship Program. Nancy and Robin recently



Robin Evans

retired from WIC but their contributions to this vibrant program will continue to make a difference in the future of employees and diversity of Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN)s. Nancy broke ground being the first California WIC Program Statewide Career Development Coordinator. At PHFE WIC, Robin developed the first [WIC Dietetic Internship](#) program. They shared the goal of supporting a

culturally diverse workforce by [helping employees become RDNs](#) through the WIC DIs. The program grew to include now five WIC Dietetic Internships across the state in the WIC programs at SDSU, PHFE, United Health Centers of San Joaquin, Clinica Sierra Vista and Northeast Valley Health Care. Since 1997, 414 dietetic interns have graduated to become RDNs and another 28 are currently participating in the DIs.

Providing a dietetic internship is a huge undertaking, requiring accreditation with the national Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics. The WIC DIs emphasize community nutrition management, however other requirements include training in areas such as food and nutrition management, medical nutrition therapy and research. Interns are supported not only throughout the

internship but following completion, they receive assistance to prepare and pass the national registration exam to become a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist.

Additional challenges are ahead with the requirement to have a master's degree as an entry level RD starting in 2024. The California WIC DI Programs have been preparing for this and remain committed to supporting diversity and the RD workforce. To carry on this important work, we welcome Stephanie Kwong, as the new California WIC Program Statewide Career Development Coordinator, and Beth Cordova, Dietetic Internship Director at PHFE WIC.



Nancy Nesa

Thank you, Nancy and Robin, for your lasting contributions to California WIC, and we wish you only the best in your retirement.

The *WIC Watch* featured Robin Evans in the recent [Summer Edition](#). Enjoy her story online.









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## Nancy Nesa, MA, RDN

WIC celebrates Nancy Nesa, who retired on September 30, 2020 after 17 years with WIC as the California Department of Public Health-WIC Program Statewide Career Development Coordinator. Nancy Nesa joined WIC in 2003 as the statewide lead to improve recruitment, retention and education of WIC's ethnically diverse workforce.

At WIC, Nancy oversaw the five WIC-based Dietetic Internships designed to help diverse Degreed Nutritionists overcome barriers to becoming Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDN). She has been a counselor, coach and mentor to hundreds of WIC employees. Nancy worked tirelessly to provide WIC employees—many of whom face educational and financial barriers found in traditional dietetic internships—with the opportunity and experiences needed to take the next step in their careers. Says Nancy, "I remembered my own struggles to go to college and become a registered dietitian and how one person changed my life. At 24, I was introduced to a nutrition professor at California State University, Los Angeles. She encouraged me to enroll in the dietetics program and supported me to qualify for the coordinated dietetic internship program. Once in the internship, I struggled personally, emotionally, and financially, but through her belief that I could be successful I began to believe in myself."

To support internship graduates, Nancy established the [e-RD-2B Study program](#), a comprehensive and interactive program of individualized guidance to help students pass the RDN exam. More recently, Nancy worked to create awareness and support the WIC Dietetic Internships to meet the January 1, 2024 change in entry-level registration eligibility education requirements, where candidates will have to have a master's degree to take the RDN exam.

Nancy was instrumental in shaping the WIC Dietetic Internships into the successful programs they are today, ensuring sustainability and extending career advancement opportunities to WIC employees all over the state. **More than 400 interns have graduated from the WIC Dietetic Internships and have become RDNs, and many have achieved WIC leadership positions and continue to work and thrive at WIC.**

Looking back on her long career, Nancy says, "After 41 years as a dietitian, the most rewarding and greatest learning experience has been as the WIC Career Development Coordinator. I'm grateful for the California WIC program and all the dedicated staff across the state, and to the dietetic interns for the opportunity to 'pay it forward.' I am proud of the success of WIC employees who, like me, overcame barriers to achieve their dream to be RDNs. They bring important skills that can't be taught in the classroom: language skills, cultural sensitivity, compassion and dedication. They are making a significant contribution to WIC and to the dietetics profession."

## Stephanie Kwong

Welcome to your new position, Stephanie Kwong. Stephanie started her journey in public health nutrition as a student assistant for the CA Department of Education working on the National School Lunch Program while a dietetic student at UC Davis. She was immediately drawn to the idea of many individuals working together to provide accessible and sustainable programs for the prevention of nutrition related diseases. She went on to complete her dietetic internship and obtain her Masters of Science in Public Health Nutrition at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio to further pursue her passion for public service.

Prior to joining CPDH/WIC, Stephanie was an RD and Nutrition Education Coordinator for the Southern Maryland WIC Program and a Nutrition Consultant with the Department of Education in both California and Maryland monitoring the National School Lunch Program and Child and Adult Care Food Program. She was the Clinical Nutrition Manager and Patient Services Manager for Aramark/Dignity Health Hospitals, Dietitian for the Charles County Health Department AIDS/HIV Program in Maryland, and a Diabetes Educator for Caswell County Health Department developing a mobile diabetes education program and diabetes health network in rural North Carolina.

Stephanie has worked for CDPH/WIC for almost 4.5 years as a Public Health Nutrition Consultant with local agencies in the Northern and Southern Region. During that time, she has been involved with the WIC Dietetic Internships and serves as a State WIC Preceptor to dietetic interns from CSUS and other distance internships. In this new position as the Career Development and WIC Dietetic Internships Coordinator, she hopes to contribute to WIC and the overall nutrition community that has provided so much opportunity, growth, and support for her in her career as a dietitian.

Stephanie looks forward utilizing her experiences to support WIC employees and interns and is excited to work with the California WIC Dietetic Internships. If you want to connect with Stephanie about becoming a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and career development with WIC, please feel free to reach out to her at [Stephanie.Kwong@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Kwong@cdph.ca.gov) and check out the resources: <https://wiccarecorner.com/>.



## City of Long Beach WIC

Throughout the current pandemic, City of Long Beach WIC has maintained enthusiasm for worksite wellness across its five sites. The Worksite Wellness Committee hosts a new event or challenge each month, highlighting either nutrition, hydration, fitness, or mental health. Here, we share a variety of simple activities.

### May: Weekly Wellness Challenge

At this point in the pandemic, everyone’s fitness routines were thoroughly off kilter between gym closures, stay-at-home orders, and compulsive snack grazing on snacks more than usual. To reinvigorate our focus on wellness, our Wellness Committee emailed out a weekly calendar with a unique health goal each day. May 1st was “Fruity Friday: incorporate fresh fruit in one of your meals/water.” May 4th was “Mental Monday: write down 5 things you are grateful for.” Staff really enjoyed it and shared pictures of their healthy meals and physical activities. Staff were also given a Gratitude Journal because studies have shown that the more grateful you are, the less stress you feel.



City of Long Beach WIC staff shared pictures of how they met their “Fruity Friday” goal.

## Staying Fun & Fit in Orange County!

Who says staying fit in a pandemic can’t be done? During this unprecedented time, the Nutrition Services staff at the Orange County Health Care Agency has transitioned their worksite wellness activities from in-person to online.

Twice a month, the Orange County Health Care Agency Fun & Fit Committee sends out a Fun & Fit newsletter to engage their co-workers and help them stay connected. Everyone is invited to join a fun challenge such as participating in a team exercise activity, wearing their favorite hat or sports jersey to work or sharing delicious, healthy recipes. The staff are always eager to participate in the monthly challenge and look forward to seeing how their co-workers met that challenge. Each newsletter is chock-full of healthy tips, games, links and resources for the staff to stay fun and fit!



Orange County Health Care Agency staff know how to stay healthy during the pandemic.



## Is Wellness a Priority?

**W**e certainly hope so. This year has been hard on everyone. From rollouts of new technologies, to shifting priorities around issues of equity and how to better serve our diverse families, to the pandemic and statewide wildfires. It hasn't been easy! Whether you are currently incorporating wellness into your worksite culture or you are needing to take the steps necessary to center wellness in your work, 2021 is the year to REINVIGORATE.

We at CWA will be working to promote wellness throughout 2021 as a way to reinvigorate the WWW program, and support agencies in embracing worksite wellness as a practice such that wellness becomes the norm for WIC employees (and their families) across the state. We have done the preliminary work to get agencies recertified as Well WIC Worksites, and are reengaging agencies that have not been certified, since the inception of this program in 2009. If your Wellness Coordinator or Contact has not received communications about certification or re-certification, please email Jodi at [jmulliganpfile@calwic.org](mailto:jmulliganpfile@calwic.org).

We are currently developing a monthly eBlast that will focus on topics ranging from physical exercises and weight management, to mental health and compassion fatigue. We will be partnering with local agencies to start weekly Wellness Wednesday Breaks, where agencies will host a weekly exercise that partner agencies can join virtually. If you are interested in facilitating a Wellness Wednesday, please email Jodi at [jmulliganpfile@calwic.org](mailto:jmulliganpfile@calwic.org). Additionally, we will be creating some original content and sharing partner content about worksite wellness via webinars and virtual meet-ups, and hosting contests quarterly to engage all of you competitive types.

We are so proud of the resilience and support WIC staff have shown to one another across the state. We can continue that momentum into 2021 by prioritizing wellness as a way to be prepared for any challenge and to remain #WICStrong. For more information, visit <https://www.calwic.org/local-agency-support/wic-worksite-wellness/>.

## WIC Tech: A Matter of Equity

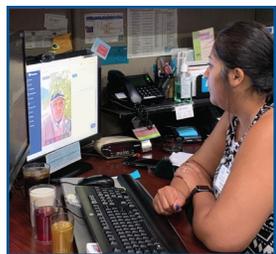
**C**alifornia WIC has a lot to celebrate this year, successfully rolling out three technologies. WIC services and business operations are looking ahead to adopting more technology.

Text messaging, videoconferencing, online ordering, purchasing and curbside pickup have recently gained attention in response to the pandemic as ways to protect participants and grocery staff.

Government programs must adapt modern business practices to remain relevant and valuable. This is especially true for the WIC program, whose participants who grew up using technology and expect that when conducting business. One of the positive outcomes of the pandemic should be permanent adoption of technologies in the WIC program.

While using technology for personal business opens opportunities for some of us, it exposes barriers for others. Policies and practices must be vetted for implicit bias to ensure racial equity is to ensure racial equity in electronic access.

To help push forward technology opportunities for WIC's success and ultimately those of participants, CWA has published **WIC Tech: A Matter of Equity**. Check it out here with our other reports on Modernizing WIC <https://www.calwic.org/what-we-do/modernize-wic/>.



## Horizontal Integration

**T**he term "horizontal integration" (HI) does not exactly roll off the tongue. So, what does it mean? In the simplest terms, it is linking programs so data can be shared to streamline the processes for individuals to learn about their eligibility, apply and enroll. Human-centered designed, electronic linkages could be the most streamlined, far-reaching, and highly effective for young adults engaged with technology every day, which describes most WIC participants.

Electronic HI already exists among some and is being established among other safety net programs. The [CalSAWS](#) (California Statewide Automated Welfare System) program integration will eventually [bridge the three benefits consortia](#) that serve Californians, to link eligibility and application processes for programs including Medi-Cal and Cal-Fresh, among others. Unfortunately, linking WIC was not part of the original planning processes. CWA surveyed California's 83 WIC local agencies to determine their linkages. Survey results show that WIC local agencies are extremely limited in sharing — and in most cases not sharing any — data with other programs for targeted outreach to ENP individuals.

To shine a light on this concern, CWA published **Linking WIC with Health and Social Safety Net Programs, Expanding Access to WIC Through Horizontal Integration**. You'll find it here with our Engage WIC Families papers. <https://www.calwic.org/what-we-do/engage-wic-families/>.

# County of Sonoma's Farmers' Market

County of Sonoma WIC hosts a farmers' market every summer. The market normally happens in the Santa Rosa WIC Clinic's parking lot on Thursdays between 9:00 am and 12:00 pm during the months of July and August. It is a fun occasion for both staff and participants. This year, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we decided to cancel the event.

Like most WIC agencies, our doors closed in March and all appointments have been done over the phone. Half of the staff work in the office and the other half work from home. We were all saddened at the idea that there would be no farmers' market. Eventually, after much consideration, we decided we would try to go ahead with it. The market manager was on board and said the vendors had also been saddened by the news that we would be cancelling this year. They come out specifically to support our community and participants.

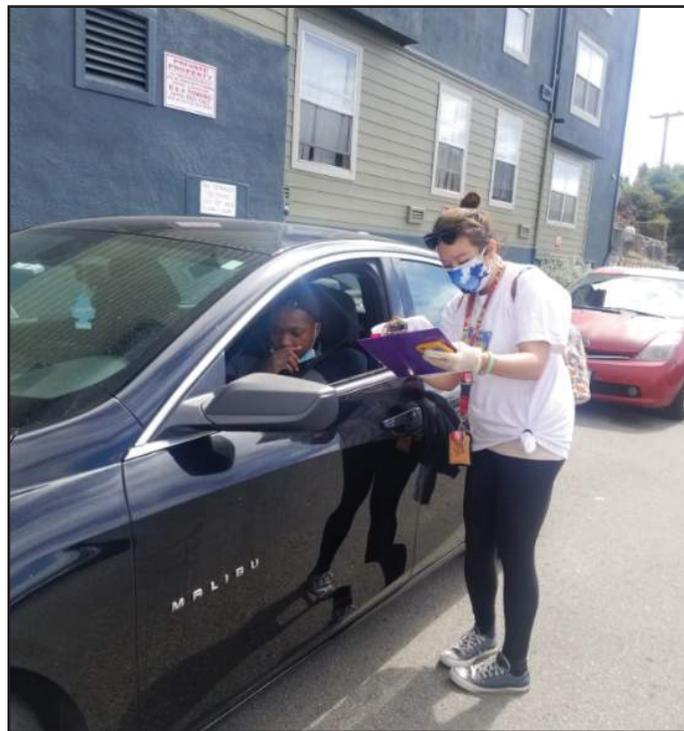
County Risk Management and the labor unions required us to create a lengthy written procedure that would ensure the safety of staff and participants. It included asking every visiting participant COVID-19 symptoms questions when they arrived and creating a distribution booth that would ensure six feet of distancing. We used plexiglass sneeze guards and found that the cord from the WIC card readers extended far enough to identify participants without getting too close. With everyone's help and patience, it turned out to be a very successful farmers' market. We decided to do it only in August—four weeks instead of the normal eight. We had a huge turn out, and distributed more than 500 vouchers in total. **It was wonderful seeing participants in person after so long!** Everyone was happy to experience a bit of normal life again.



## San Francisco WIC Farmers' Markets Partner to Stand Up to COVID

This summer due to the COVID-19 pandemic related shelter in place orders, the SF WIC program faced challenges with distribution of Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) vouchers. To connect families with critical food resources, SF WIC partnered with local farmers' markets Care.org and DoorDash to deliver organic produce boxes to families. Instead of distributing the vouchers, they were redeemed on behalf of the families who signed up to receive a produce box. The farmers market utilized the Soda tax funding to match the FMNP voucher amount to provide \$56 worth of produce to 1500 families. Due to the program's success, the city funded to an additional 1500 families. The project infused \$124k into the local economy (\$84k went directly to farmers). It also helped connect hundreds of gig economy workers to work. Most boxes were delivered to Latinx families who report the worst food insecurity rates and to communities most impacted by the pandemic. A survey of over 500 families indicated improved access to fruits and vegetables during the pandemic and an increased demand to continue the service.

You can learn more about this project in this [recorded webinar](#) from May. If you would like more information, please reach out to Grethel Pallavicini, [grethel.pallavicini@sfdph.org](mailto:grethel.pallavicini@sfdph.org)



# Tulare County HHS WIC Program

Change is hard, but our Tulare County HHS WIC Team is strong, and we are indeed growing every day. During this COVID-19 pandemic, we have been very grateful for the full support and numerous resources from CWA, NWA, and CDPH/WIC. Our parent organization has also been supportive of our WIC Program and assuring staff safety while continuing services.

**COVID-19 Pandemic:** Since March, we've had 15 staff working from home, thanks to the waivers! A few sites are currently open for those working on-site. All of our offices are stocked with hand sanitizing stations, disinfecting sprays and wipes, gloves, masks, face shields, and sneeze guards for intake counters and all WNA desks. Floor decals are placed outside clinics and inside lobby areas for social distancing. Operations and nutrition services continue like a well-oiled machine. We have new processes to ensure the on-site staff and telecommuting staff can still work together and maximize our services to clients. Great job to our Tulare County staff!

**Technology is our reality:** Our staff's skill sets are growing with the use of new technology. We have overcome barriers and now rely on tools that many of us were unfamiliar with before this transition. We have created several video tutorials for staff to reference as needed for new technologies and processes. We frequently utilize 2-way texting, Google Sheets, Google Forms (for absence requests), SurveyMonkey, GoToMeeting and Zoom platforms, Cisco Jabber for instant messaging, VDI and VPN network connectivity tools, Adobe Echo-Sign documents, KudoBoard as a virtual shout-out board for staff, and more!

**Breastfeeding Week and Month:** To celebrate WBW and National Breastfeeding Month, we congratulated and

celebrated our breastfeeding mothers by sending a virtual "Thank you" e-card to all of our breastfeeding participants, and expressed how proud we are that they continue to breast-feed. We then sent a text message to our exclusively breastfed mothers with a link to enter our NBFM Raffle using Google Forms.

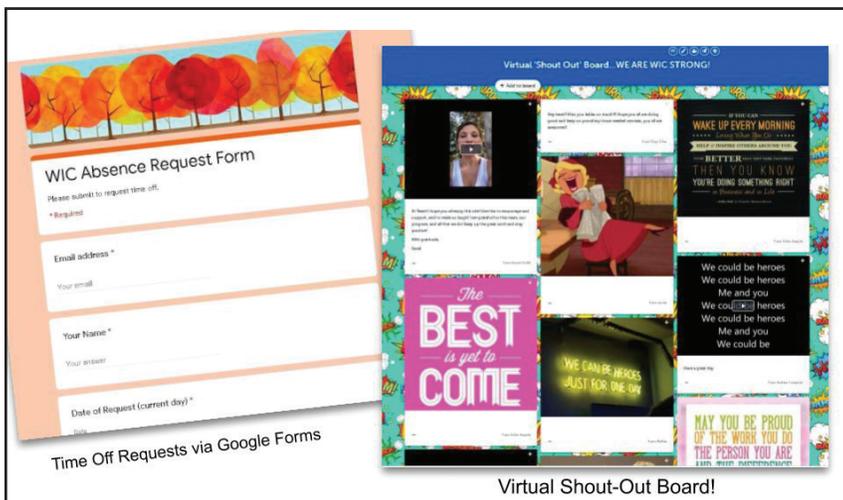
Our winners received goodie bags with Breastfeeding and infant feeding supplies, and reading material. We had ~100 entries! Several also indicated they wished to receive BF support.

**Social Media:** We continuously promoted the Census and Voting via social media. We also created two videos with the help of our parent org's media team. We plan to make some more videos in the future because these were a hit! One video addresses the Public Charge concern (in English and Spanish), and the other addresses our WIC local agency response to COVID (in English and Spanish).

Here's a link to our website that houses our Public Charge and COVID Updates videos:

(English) <https://tchhsa.org/eng/index.cfm/public-health/women-infants-and-children-wic/>

(Spanish) <https://tchhsa.org/es/index.cfm/salud-publica/mujeres-bebes-y-ninos-wic/>



# USDA Loving Support Awards of Excellence

This year, three local California WIC local agencies have been chosen by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to receive Loving Support Awards of Excellence, a special award developed to recognize local WIC agencies that provide exemplary breastfeeding programs and support services. **Ampla Health, Solano County, and Sonoma County WIC Programs were all awarded the Gold Level Award.**

Showcasing model programs can motivate other local agencies and clinics to strengthen their own breastfeeding promotion and support activities. Ultimately this serves to increase breastfeeding initiation and duration rates among WIC participants.



Ampla Health Breastfeeding Team

Local WIC agencies that have operated a peer counseling program for at least one year and met all of the Breastfeeding Model Components for Peer Counseling requirements of the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) were eligible to apply. Three levels of excellence were possible for award recognition – Gold, Gold Premiere, and Gold Elite. The applications went through two levels of review under the WIC State agency and the FNS Regional Office. Applicants were required to demonstrate they had breastfeeding promotion and support policies and processes in place at their WIC local agencies that enable them to provide praiseworthy breastfeeding services to WIC participants.

The team at Ampla Health WIC has worked very hard during the pandemic this year to relay the importance of breastfeeding for better health. That message has translated into better breastfeeding rates among participants at their agency



Sonoma County Peer Counselors

this year. They also feel that the warmline they operate 365 days a year offers unique support to their nursing parents.

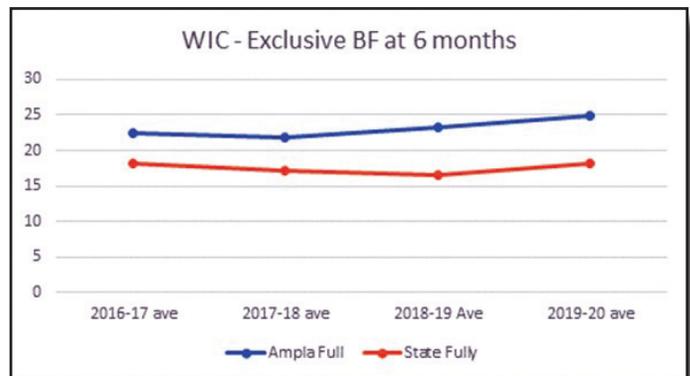
County of Sonoma WIC has had a Breastfeeding Peer Counseling program since 2006. They have seen a significant increase in their breastfeeding rates since implementing this program. They have 3 Breastfeeding Peer Counselors who have all been with the program for more than 10 years: Andrea Barreto, Margarita Vicencio, and Yimmy Esquivel. Susie McCulloch is the BFPC Program Coordinator and IBCLC. This is the second time they have received a USDA Gold award! One of the keys to their program's success is that they collaborate with the rest of the WIC staff, as well as community partners, to provide exceptional breastfeeding support to all participants.



Solano County WIC Breastfeeding Team

The Solano County Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program was initiated in 2010. After 3 years, they were able to create benefitted County positions specifically for Peer Counselors, which allows the PCs to have more flexibility and stability. Our 3 PCs, Leo Valderrama, Monica Parada and Tierra Roberts serve the main WIC sites and do an amazing job working with staff to identify and support breastfeeding moms. As a result, WIC breastfeeding rates increased significantly as well as the quality of care participants receive. The Peer Counselors participate in Breastfeeding Coalition projects, educate staff on breastfeeding topics and help with social media messaging and infographics that help reach WIC moms and keep them engaged in the program. It's a win-win situation for all WIC families.

Congratulations to Ampla Health, Solano County, and Sonoma County WIC Programs!



## August Celebrated Breastfeeding

**W**IC Agencies held some amazing events across California for World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) (August 1-7), Native Breastfeeding Week (NBW) (August 9-15), Black Breastfeeding Week (BBW) (August 25-31), National Breastfeeding Month (NBM) (the month of August).

BBW was created because of racial disparities in breastfeeding rates. This work has evolved to address high Black infant mortality, high rates of diet-related disease, lack of diversity in lactation professions, unique cultural barriers among Black women, first-food deserts in African American communities. BBW celebrated its 8th year of rising with the theme of Revive. Restore. Reclaim!

NBW was started to highlight the Native Breastfeeding experience in all forms through the visibility of personal testimonies, partner experiences, research, articles, barriers, and successes in tribal communities.

WBW started in 1992 and is a global campaign to raise awareness and galvanize action on themes related to breastfeeding. WBW2020 focused on the impact of infant feeding on the environment, climate change, and the imperative to protect, promote and support breastfeeding for the health of the planet and its people. NBM was declared by the United States Breastfeeding Committee to form a united front with other breastfeeding committees, to identify and implement the policy and systems changes needed to ensure that every family that chooses breastfeeding has the support

and resources they need to succeed.

WIC offices across California went above and beyond to celebrate these events with their participants. The following are just a few examples of programs that were shared:

Delivering informational packets to clinics with breastfeeding education materials, breastfeeding Coalition outreach and referral info, and beautiful breastfeeding books for exam rooms/lobbies.

Posting on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter something related to breastfeeding experiences, research, support, and services daily.

- Running WIC site poster/display contests.
- Doing raffles to celebrate exclusive BF moms.
- Mailing out gift packs, certificates, and greeting cards to expecting and breastfeeding mothers.
- Giving hand breast pumps and nursing pads to WIC moms who were expecting between Aug. 1-7.
- Collaborating with counties to put on Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Training.
- Running breastmilk drives.
- Putting out radio breastfeeding information ads the first 2 weeks of August.
- Coordinating socially distanced events like parades and drive thru events.
- Hosting a breastfeeding/chestfeeding support group on Zoom for the first time ever.





Ampla Health WIC's World Breastfeeding Week Banner.



San Bernardino County's colorful artwork for Black Breastfeeding Week.



Planned Parenthood WIC celebrates World Breastfeeding Week at their Santa Ana office.



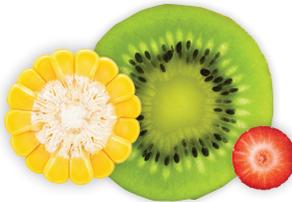
A mom at Northeast Valley Health Corp WIC gets some squats in while breastfeeding.



Orange County Health Care Agency WIC program sent WBW care packages to expecting moms, with hand breast pumps and nursing pads.



World Breastfeeding Week artwork from Planned Parenthood WIC.



# Thank you

**Dear Local Agency Colleagues:**

You have our sincerest admiration for your resilience, your ingenuity, and your dedication to our families during this pandemic.

Your service makes an immeasurable difference to hundreds of thousands of lives across California.

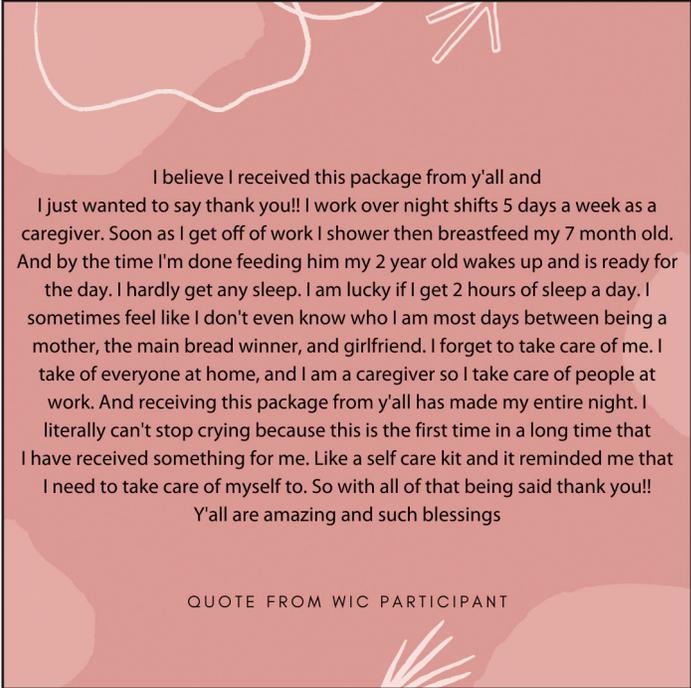
Thank you.

— The CDPH/WIC Team —



# Black Breastfeeding Week San Bernardino County WIC

The Corona Virus Pandemic has changed our lives in unimaginable ways. Old ways of doing things quickly became outdated and ineffective. We've all been tested and pushed passed our limits. The San Bernardino County WIC Program met these challenges by holding to this notion – "when you can't run, walk. And if you need to, crawl." For National Breastfeeding Month, site staff created bulletin boards that could be shared on social media. Staff used their talents to portray the beauty of breastfeeding by painting pictures. Staff took turns educating one another on breastfeeding topics at virtual team meetings. The Agency sent educational text messages to pregnant and breastfeeding participants using the Health Messenger system. They also made use of Instagram ([@HealthyWIC](#)) to provide participants with a sense of community and human connection. Participants and community partners were also able to engage with Local Birth Workers during a live [Black Breastfeeding Week Q&A session](#). The live event provided a culturally sensitive environment, and attendees were able to enjoy a live performance by celebrity vocalist Makeda Francisco. Collaborating with other Inland Empire community partners – including the San Bernardino and Riverside County Black Infant Health and WIC Programs– they were able to mail out over 100 empowerment resource boxes and raffle items. Boxes included, but weren't limited to, self-care items, toiletries, clothing, father acknowledgement items, referral information, breastfeeding support aids and gift cards. The feedback from WIC participants and community partners was overwhelmingly positive, inspiring and uplifting. In the words of Malala Yousafzai, these activities remind us that "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world."



**BLACK  
BREASTFEEDING  
WEEK**  
AUGUST 25-31

## Agency Breastfeeding Support Stands Out

This is the picture of Sandra Perez and her son Ethan. She moved from Los Angeles county to Adelanto in July 2020, and enrolled in CAPK WIC at the Adelanto office. She wanted to exclusively breastfeed, and had a lot of breastfeeding questions at the time of enrollment. One of our WNA/Peer Counselors, Marisol Barragan, enrolled her in the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program on July 14th 2020, when Ethan was less than a month old. Sandra told Marisol that the baby had jaundice when he was born and the doctor had advised her to supplement with formula. She did not agree and questioned the reasoning for supplementing with formula. Her physician finally agreed that she could exclusively breastfeed and supplement with pumped breastmilk in between feedings, and soon, Ethan's jaundice had resolved. Marisol helped her with her low milk supply concerns and later with oversupply issues.

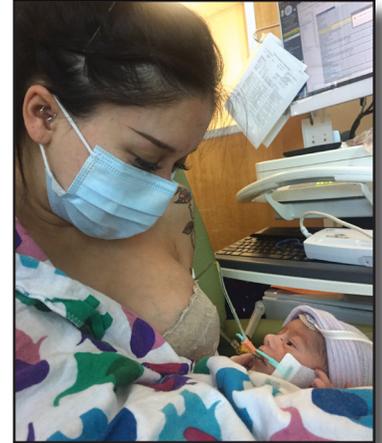


Sandra occasionally worked with a CAPK IBCLC, Priya Khullar, on other issues, such as a nursing strike. She had initially felt that she needed to bring Ethan to urgent care, as he was not feeding long enough on the breast. She was very frustrated as no urgent care in her area would take an infant under 6 months of age, and she was restricted by her health insurance on the number of Dr's visits in a month. She was glad to have her Peer Counselor texting her several times a day and calling her during the week and whenever she needed to address her concerns. She was so thankful and appreciated the Peer Counselor and IBCLC services provided to her over the phone. She communicated that WIC was there for her when she needed breastfeeding support and reassurance. We empowered her when she was losing her confidence in breastfeeding her baby. She had breastfed her other child for four years and worked as Breastfeeding Peer Counselor herself at a WIC Program in Los Angeles. She is a strong mother who is home schooling her other three children and is going through some challenges, but still wants to exclusively breastfeed Ethan. She said she became a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor because the Peer Counselor who helped her with her other child really motivated her. She wants to give back to the community by working at WIC in the future.

*Priya Khullar RD/IBCLC Breastfeeding Education Coordinator, CAPK WIC Program*

## Success Story!

WIC IBCLC received a Pediatric referral for Breastfeeding Support for Baby Kai who was born with Gastroschisis. Baby Kai had surgery at day 3 of life and was in the NICU for some time, he was intubated and not able to directly feed with Mom-Maggie. Breastfeeding was very important to Mom Maggie. Her determination, strength and loving patience proved to be a determining factor in one of the most challenging times any new parent can face. Ana Lopez, one of San Mateo County WIC's Lactation Consultants also working as the agency's RBL, encouraged and guided Maggie through the process on how to start feeding Kai directly at the breast. Ana communicated with Maggie via phone calls and texts to continue offering support as she transitioned to life at home after hospitalization. Through the combined efforts of our established referral system in place thanks to our RBL, and thorough support from WIC, Baby Kai and Mom Maggie are breastfeeding exclusively and recovering successfully.



### In Maggie's Words:

"The WIC program was a huge help for me when I brought Kai home from the NICU because I just started breastfeeding for the first time when I brought him home. I had no idea what I was doing or what to expect. Ana L. guided me through all my questions and even gave me lots of information on why breastfeeding is so important for the baby and mom! She was always a phone call or text away no matter the time of day. Her enthusiasm to help me made me feel really excited to breastfeed. My son has a stomach wound that is healing, he was in the NICU for 3 weeks. I thought it would take so long for him to heal but after I brought him home and began breastfeeding him I've noticed that's it almost, completely healed after just 1 week. Buying all the new baby stuff showed me how it really takes a village to raise a baby but also a lot of money. Which is why the WIC program really helped me out because I was able to get lactation help for free. Without Ana's help, I don't know if I would have continued Breastfeeding because I was so confused about what I was doing. But now my son is getting the nutrients and antibodies he needs to recover and grow stronger!"



# Help get the word out!



Share social media with the hashtag **#CaliforniaWIC** to raise awareness about WIC and its important services.

Contact CDPH/WIC Outreach at **WICOutreach@cdph.ca.gov** for more information.



## Lynne Koch (Frazier)

In October, Lynne Koch retired after dedicating 36 years to the PHFE WIC program. Kiran Saluja, Executive Director, shared these stories of Lynne's career with PHFE staff.

Hired in January 1984, Lynne supervised a site in Echo Park (formerly the Echo Park Rec Center). She then moved to set up WIC at El Monte from where she and the team commuted to Pomona, Monrovia, and San Gabriel Valley Health Centers. In 1985 she promoted to Area Manager and served in that role very effectively for many years. In 1987 she promoted to Senior Nutritionist, managed staff training, served on several state committees and started working closely with Eloise Jenks,

Executive Director. She found time to have a set of twins in 1989, returning to work after 10 weeks.

In 1992 Lynne became Deputy Director of the Operations Department, which she grew over the last 27 years into the well-oiled machine it is today. She worked with Warehouse supervisors and groomed and mentored Maria Avena to grow into a wonderful Warehouse boss! Facilities grew as PHFE needed more sites. Lynne



learned enough about real estate to negotiate leases, HVAC service agreements, and accounting to start managing our ever-growing budget. All throughout she remained empathetic and available to her staff, supporting their skills development and confidence. She was responsible for overseeing our record keeping transition to a computer system and actually supervised our "IT" department. In 2002 Lynne hired Mike Whaley... so we can thank her for all of Mike's contributions to WIC... Raptor! PCDB! OPI!

Outside of PHFE Lynne supported the larger WIC community. With California WIC Association in its infancy in the early 90s, Lynne stepped up to be among the first Presidents of CWA. Eloise and Lynne helped mold CWA along with a few other WIC Directors. When Eloise courageously was Chair of the National WIC Association Lynne supported her and greatly contributed to Eloise's success.

Staff development, comfort, safety, welfare.... these have been very important to Lynne. Lynne was ready with security guards. She developed a spirit of service amongst her department staff as evidenced in the stellar service of Warehouse staff to fix leaks, mold, broken windows, lost keys, and more.

Lynne supported the Executive Director in so many ways. She knows the WIC contract documents so well she can recite passages!! She worked with the state on contract problems, ensuring we got our payments on time, keeping us in compli-

## Katie Rowe

After a 23-year career with the Ventura County WIC Program, Katie Rowe has retired. In parting she said, "I'm grateful for, and proud to have been part of a superb WIC Administrative team who continue to truly work collaboratively to lead, build and support an organized, responsive, resourceful, nimble, inventive and fun WIC agency that is ready for anything."

Katie's career with Ventura County WIC began in 1996 with a six-week Dietetic Internship Community Nutrition Rotation. The following year she was hired as a part-time WIC nutritionist. That year she obtained a Master's degree in Family Environmental Sciences and passed the RD exam.

In 2001, Katie was promoted to Site Supervisor of the South Oxnard WIC site, and two years later she was promoted to WIC Coordinator. In 2007, Katie became WIC Director when Lynda Young retired. Katie and Lynda are neighbors and remain good friends. Says Katie, "I will always be grateful to Lynda for recognizing my potential for leadership and mentoring me during my career at WIC. Now we get together every Friday evening for lemon drop martinis and to talk, laugh and solve the world's problems."

Katie retired from the program in April 2020, passing the baton to Laura Flores, RD, CLEC.

Not one to be idle, in September 2020 Katie began a one-year appointment as one of 19 volunteers on the Ventura County Civil Grand Jury. She commented, "Participating on the Grand Jury represents the next chapter for me in my lifelong commitment to community service."

Looking back, Katie says, "As WIC Coordinator and then Director, I sought to create among our WIC organization a culture of demonstrating and practicing empathy and kindness with our clients and each other." For that, and so much else, Katie will be missed.



ance and out of trouble! She was Eloise's deputy for over 20 years and has worked as my right hand since 2013. We have enjoyed a deep friendship since I was first hired. We tell folks that we are twins from different parents, definitely kindred souls.

Join me in wishing Lynne nothing but the very best in retirement as she trades a crazy 24/7 WIC job for a wonderful life as a full-time grandma to Luke, who will be 3 years old in February. She will spend her time tending to her roses and garden and may think of us every now and again! We will miss you Lynne.

## Paula Griffin

**P**aula Griffin, Chief, Farmers' Market and Local Vendor Liaison Unit, retired earlier this year. In looking back over her career, she wrote the following piece.

My first experience with WIC was while I was at California State University–Long Beach in the Dietetics Program. For a community field experience, we were sent to the City of Long Beach WIC Program to try our hand at counseling prenatal women and moms. I must have spent an hour reviewing the mom and child's paper charts before I called them in. I was so nervous that I would miss something and send her away without the needed counseling and advice! Needless to say, the mom was not happy having to wait longer than everyone else in the clinic, but it worked out ok.



After grad school, I worked as a clinical dietitian, a Diabetes Nutrition Specialist, and as a renal dietitian in a dialysis unit. But the field of Public Health held a strong interest for me, so I went to work for Riverside County WIC and, after three years, for San Bernardino County DPH for the next eight years.

I moved to Sacramento and worked as a Public Health Nutrition Consultant with California Project Lean, on school and community-based healthy eating initiatives. I promoted over to State WIC in 2004 to help expand the new Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program with RNs Jeanette Panchula and Jackie Kampp. In the next five years there I enjoyed providing technical assistance to local BFPC agencies, conducting community breastfeeding assessments, and planning and facilitating state-wide trainings. I also coordinated the Breastfeeding Education Committee.

In 2009 I entered management at WIC as the Chief over approximately 30 local agencies in the Central Valley, East Bay, and South Bay, plus Farmers Markets. At that time, it was just FMNP. We were soon given the charge to figure out how to get farmers authorized to accept and redeem the new WIC fruit and vegetable checks. Fast forward 10 years and we were working on getting farmers ready for the WIC Card and working around many of the same challenges to offer the additional choice of purchasing farm-fresh produce directly from farmers to WIC families.

It's been a gratifying career in Public Health, working for a program that touches so many lives and produces such positive outcomes. And it's been a lot of fun!

## Shirlee Runnings

**O**ur friend and colleague Shirlee Runnings retired at the end of 2019 from her WIC agency, the Resource Connection (formerly Pioneer West Community Health and then Human Resource Council), first serving Amador County, then expanding to Calaveras County. Many of you know of the extensive and lasting leadership Shirlee has quietly and steadily provided over her career. She can look back and know she made a difference in so many ways.

Rural mountain life can be stressful for families, with few employment opportunities, inadequate community resources, and isolation. For 34 years, Shirlee ensured excellent care for local families. As a director of a small agency, Shirlee wore a lot of hats, including being in clinic, but she also found time to be on state committees and represent local agencies in advocating with the state on important issues. She has been a long-time CWA board member and past president—and can probably recite our bylaws by heart! If you want to remember a significant WIC event, Shirlee can provide the details.



One significant event in which Shirlee played a substantial role was in advocating for the CVV in the food package changes. For four years, starting in 2001, using a small First 5 grant and working with a local grocer, Shirlee collected receipts for fruit and vegetable purchases by local WIC participants. In 2005, when the WIC food package was under revision, Shirlee worked with then-CWA Executive Director Laurie True, NWA, and United Fresh to put this information to good use. Some interest groups opposed creating the CVV because they believed mothers couldn't be trusted to buy healthy produce when the funds could be used for other food items. Armed with her findings, Shirlee testified in Los Angeles and Washington D.C., before the Institute of Medicine (now the National Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine), USDA, three Congressional committees, and at a press conference about the healthy fruit and vegetable purchases made by WIC mothers. Not only was the CVV included, but it became one of the most popular and healthy parts of the food package!

Shirlee left her agency in good hands, with a strong team of staff whom she had mentored and encouraged to develop leadership abilities.

CWA thanks and recognizes Shirlee for her service and leadership, and wishes her the best in her retirement! To honor her, an annual CWA California Nutrition Corps Scholarship in her name will be given to an emerging leader.



**California WIC Association**  
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 Gueidi Beltran, North Coast Region  
 Nayan Patel, Sierra Cascade Region  
 Karen Steppat, Sierra Cascade Region

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Ashley Fasking

### NATIVE AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVE

Nina Ayala

### MEMBERS AT LARGE

Shirlee Runnings, Kiran Saluja

### LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Kanisha Neal, Liliana Prado

### NWA Rep to Leg. Committee:

Samar McGregor



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### BONNIE'S STORY

#### San Joaquin County WIC

*Bonnie Turina, Senior Office Assistant at San Joaquin County WIC, shared this story that is a reminder of how we can be a lifeline for our community.*

*I had a call from a single Mom with 3 small children. I had asked all of the usual questions about how the kids are doing with eating during this pandemic and how shopping was going. Then I asked her how she was doing with so much on her plate. She told me that she doesn't have a car and it's hard to get out of the house with so many kids. I let her talk and she was telling me how lonely she was and how she didn't have any family around. I was encouraging her to take some time for herself, and toward the end of the conversation she started to cry. She told me that she had not spoken to an adult in over 2 weeks. I suggested maybe contacting one of the community groups like Mommy and Me or other groups in her area that might have similar situations. She was going to look into that.*

*It's pretty eye opening when you see how some are getting by, it is humbling to be a small part of their lives.*

