

Local Collaboration:

INTER-AGENCY REFERRALS



Inter-agency referrals are an effective way to increase initial and continued participation in both WIC and Head Start. The collaborative inter-agency referral process is an active process and goes above and beyond simply giving a family an informational program flyer. The action steps involved in the inter-agency referral process are outlined below.



REVIEW POLICIES FOR SHARING PARTICIPANT-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Sharing participant specific information (i.e. names, DOB, contact information, and anthropometric data) between agencies is central to the collaborative inter-agency referral process. It is important to have a thorough understanding of your agency's policies for sharing participant information to ensure you are in compliance with your agency's regulations.

Please review the Data Sharing Tip Sheet before beginning to develop your inter-agency referral process.

DRAFT AN INTER-AGENCY REFERRALS POLICY

- » Once you have ensured that participant confidentiality is protected, outline the steps each agency will take when making an interagency referral.
- » The steps should include:
 - How to identify families not co-enrolled
 - How to complete and send the inter-agency referral form
 - How to follow-up referrals
- » It is important to specify who is responsible for each step when writing these procedures to ensure each staff member knows what they are responsible for.
- » Include deadlines for how quickly referrals should be sent to the collaborating agency and when follow-up should be conducted.

"Building roles into the referral process from the beginning – understanding who is responsible for follow up, for getting up-to-date contact information, for listing anthropometric data – is critical. The more we systematize this, the easier it gets."

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CREATE AN INTERAGENCY REFERRAL FORM

Create a form to exchange information between agencies when making referrals. The form should include:

- Participant-specific information so the agency can contact families directly to schedule a certification or enrollment appointment.
- Anthropometric data needed for both programs.

Please see the WIC and Head Start Better Together Toolkit for a sample referral form.

IDENTIFY THE FAMILIES AT YOUR AGENCY WHO ARE NOT CO-ENROLLED

Before your agency can begin making referrals, it is necessary to identify the families at your agency that are not enrolled at the collaborating agency.

IDENTIFYING HEAD START FAMILIES NOT ENROLLED IN WIC

There are a variety of ways to identify which families attending Head Start are not enrolled in WIC:

- 1** Ask about WIC participation at Enrollment: The Head Start enrollment staff can ask families if they are participating in WIC when they apply for Head Start and then refer families that are not currently enrolled.
- 2** Share enrollment list with WIC: WIC staff can compare the Head Start enrollment list with their participant list and identify which families are not actively participating in WIC or are not enrolled in WIC.
- 3** Parent Survey: Administer a survey to Head Start parents about their WIC participation. The WIC and Head Start Better Together toolkit includes a survey template for Head Start sites to use.

IDENTIFYING WIC FAMILIES IN NEED OF CHILDCARE

To identify WIC families to refer to Head Start, WIC staff can ask a family if they are in need of childcare during their appointment. When beginning to collaborate with Head Start it is important for WIC to build this into the annual certification appointment.





MAKE AND TRACK REFERRALS

Now that you've identified the families that are not enrolled in the collaborating agency's program, it is time to make referrals. Use the form your agencies have developed to refer families to WIC and Head Start by sending the referral form to the collaborating agency.

TRACKING REFERRALS IS CRITICAL TO TIMELY FOLLOW-UP AND SUCCESS OF THE COLLABORATION.

The WIC and Head Start Better Together toolkit provides a tracking form for recording inter-agency referrals. This form can be used to track what referrals were made and to record the outcome of each referral. This sheet is particularly useful when meeting with your collaborating agency so you can follow up and determine if families were enrolled in the program to which they were referred, and if not, to follow-up.



PROVIDE REFERRAL FOLLOW-UP

Stay in close communication with your collaborating agency to discuss the outcome of the referrals made between the agencies. This communication will ensure that both parties know the outcome of each referral and an opportunity to provide up-to-date contact information for families that cannot be reached.

After exchanging this information, both agencies can provide the necessary follow-up for participants.



For more information and resources visit the Better Together Toolkit at www.WICHeadStartBetterTogether.org