

State Collaboration:

GETTING STARTED



WHY COLLABORATE? While both WIC and Head Start serve children up to age five, many families drop off WIC when their child reaches age 1 or 2. The Better Together project's core beliefs are:

- Families can benefit from co-enrollment in both WIC and Head Start.
- WIC and Head Start staff can more effectively serve families if they coordinate services and work together.

Follow the steps below to get your collaboration project started.

GET TO KNOW YOUR PARTNERS.

To begin a State level collaboration, it is necessary to find out who your State level counterparts are for WIC and Head Start Programs.

A list of WIC State agency contacts can be found at:

www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-contacts

Head Start Collaboration Offices (HSCO) facilitate partnerships between Head Start agencies and other State entities that provide services to benefit low-income children and their families. The link below lists contact information for States' HSCO contacts.

eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/head-start-collaboration-offices-state

Once you've identified who you will be working with on the State level, schedule a meeting to discuss and develop a plan for what you would like to achieve. It is helpful to set up regular meetings (more frequently in the beginning).

- Set goals
- Disseminate tasks
- Follow-up on progress



TIP

A State-level MOU can streamline the data sharing process for local partners and allows local WIC and Head Start staff to focus on local collaboration efforts with confidence and compliance.



GET IT ON PAPER.

In most cases, it makes sense to develop or update a State-level Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for your collaboration project. At a minimum, the MOU should include how participant/family information will be shared between programs. Look for an example of a State-level MOU under this module's resources in the Better Together toolkit.

Ideally, it would be best practice to have a formal State-level MOU in place before you begin your collaboration efforts. However, it is important to remember that collaboration work can occur without an MOU in place, as long as WIC and Head Start confidentiality regulations are followed for data sharing.

GET PEOPLE TOGETHER.

Once the State-level team is in place, it is time to engage with local WIC and Head Start management staff to listen to their ideas for collaboration.

The meeting should focus on the State-level intentions and provide ample time to hear local management ideas and resources available to implement or enhance collaboration. Sample agendas and topics covered in this type of meeting can be found in the Getting Started section of the toolkit.

GET STAFF INFORMED AND EXCITED ABOUT COLLABORATION!

For the most part, it is local WIC and Head Start staff that will implement the collaboration activities. In order to be successful, they must understand the purpose of the collaboration, have clear expectations, and be on board with the project. A Kick-Off Meeting, where all local staff involved come together to meet, learn about the project and have a chance to ask questions is recommended.

Make sure you build time for team building activities and reflection. This helps to lay the groundwork for an effective and enjoyable partnership.



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