

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR
WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC PROGRAM)

WIC STATE ADVISORY BOARD

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BEFORE: CINDY FINDLEY, Member Designee
Sally Zubairu-Cofield, Member
Britney Zwergel, Vice Chair, Member
Cathy Moffitt, Member
Miriam Seidel, Member
Katja Pigur, Member
Gerria Coffee, Member
Essence Cohen-Fields, Member
Raeni Yock, Member
Michael Howells, Member
Theodore Deitman, Member
Dr. Amaka Nnamani, Member
Lisa Sanchez, Member

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1 HEARING: Tuesday, September 10, 2024

2 1:01 p.m.

3 LOCATION: Videoconference

4 WITNESSES: None

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7 Reporter: Bernadette M. Black

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ATTENDEES: EDWARD DIIENNO, NICHOLAS KIGER (BOARD
COUNSEL), DANIELLE STIMELY, TIFFANY HECKARD,
CHRISTINA LEISE, TRISHA EMERICK, JOE MCLAUGHLIN,
EMILY IEM, MARK SHIRK, ROBERT SPOSITO, SUE MAHOKEY,
TOAN NYUGEN, MARIE MILLER, DANIEL MYERS, CARLY HESS,
PATRICK O'ROURKE, CHRISTINE CORDARIO

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DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: I'm

officially calling this meeting to order. This is the Women's, Infants and Children's State Advisory Board meeting, being held at 1:00 p.m. on September 10th, 2024. My name is Cindy Findley, and I'm the Deputy Secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of Health. I oversee health promotion and disease prevention. I'm also the designee of the Secretary of Health for today's meeting and ex officio of the Board.

So a few preliminary matters.

One, this meeting is being recorded, so by staying on, you're consenting to being recorded.

And two, this meeting is also being transcribed by a stenographer. So there are a few procedural matters that we all need to go through next.

First is the attendance via roll call. So after I read your name and role, please acknowledge that you are present.

Dr. Kelly Cain, medical professional.

Lisa Sanchez, medical professional?

1 MS. SANCHEZ: Present.

2 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Miriam
3 Seidel, food and security advocate.

4 MS. SEIDEL: Here.

5 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Britney
6 Zwergel, food and security advocate.

7 MS. ZWERGEL: Here.

8 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Katja
9 Pigur, maternal health child health advocate.

10 Gerria Coffee, maternal child health advocate.

11 MS. COFFEE: Hello, here.

12 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Essence
13 Cohen Fields, current or former WIC participant.

14 Raeni Yock, current or former WIC participant?

15 MS. YOCK: Here.

16 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Bobbie
17 Johnson, current or former WIC participant.

18 Charlotte Dorsey, WIC local agency rep.

19 MS. HESS: She's on her honeymoon.

20 I'm here in her place. Carly Hess.

21 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Okay,

22 Carly, thanks for that. Cathy Moffit, WIC local
23 agency.

24 MS. MOFFIT: Present.

25 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Thank you.

1 Theodore Deitman, WIC local agency rep.

2 MR. DEITMAN: Here.

3 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Michael
4 Howells, WIC authorized vendor food merchant.

5 MR. HOWELLS: Here. Good afternoon.

6 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Thank you.

7 Alex Baloga, WIC authorized vendor food merchant.

8 AUDIENCE MEMBER:

9 Alex is in Lithuania right now with
10 the Department of Agriculture. He will join if he
11 can.

12 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Okay.

13 And Dr. Amaka Nnamani, designated
14 breastfeeding expert. I heard a couple beeps, so
15 I'm just going to go back through to see if anyone
16 else has joined.

17 Dr. Kelly Cain, medical professional.
18 Essence Cohen Fields, current or former WIC
19 participant. Bobbie Johnson, current or former WIC
20 participant.

21 Okay, we're going to go with that.

22 Mr. DiIenno, could you please confirm
23 that we have a quorum for today's meeting?

24 MR. DIENNO: Sure, I'm just
25 tabulating right now.

1 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: And Essence
2 just arrived for the meeting. Just a heads up.

3 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Oh, that's
4 helpful.

5 MR. DIIENNO: Who did?

6 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Essence
7 Cohen Fields.

8 Essence, could you confirm that
9 you're on?

10 MS. COHEN FIELDS: Hi, I'm here.
11 Good afternoon.

12 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Thank you.

13 MR. DIIENNO: We have a quorum. We
14 have ten Board members, so you may proceed, Cindy.

15 DEPUTY SECRETARY FINDLEY: Thank you.
16 And just to remind everyone, a quorum for this Board
17 is 10 of the 15 voting members. So everyone's
18 presence, whether they're virtual or in person, each
19 meeting is very important. And there must be a
20 quorum for the Board to conduct any of our business.

21 Okay. Thank you for that. I will
22 now turn things over to Sally Zubairu-Cofield, our
23 WIC Director, to walk through the remaining matters
24 on the agenda.

25 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: Good afternoon

1 and thank you, Deputy Secretary.

2 Our second order of business is the
3 distribution of your appointment letters. As the
4 Secretary mentioned at our last meeting on
5 August 21st, the Department is going to be sending
6 out appointment letters via mail and email. You
7 should have all received your appointment letters
8 via email as of today. The welcome letter
9 memorializes your appointment and your term to the
10 Board.

11 You also have received, via email two
12 attachments. One attachment is the appointment
13 notice. You also got a copy of Act 22. These
14 attachments contain important information. It's
15 very critical to your role and your position on the
16 Board that you make sure that you read the
17 information. It has information on there about your
18 duties and responsibilities as a voting member.

19 You should be expecting a hard copy
20 of your welcome letter, appointment notice, and a
21 copy of Act 22 in the mail within the next few days.

22 In reference to the emails that you
23 all received, I'm going to take a moment right now
24 to ask all of the voting members whether there are
25 any questions, comments or concerns to any of the

1 documents that you received pertaining to your
2 appointment?

3 MR. DEITMAN: I just want to let you
4 know I did not receive my email at this time frame.

5 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: Thank you.

6 COURT REPORTER: Can you tell me who
7 said that? This is the court reporter.

8 MR. DEITMAN: Theodore Deitman.

9 COURT REPORTER: Thank you.

10 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: All right.

11 So I'm going to take that as no
12 questions, no comments or no concerns.

13 And Mr. Deitman, we will make sure
14 that we follow up with that.

15 I would also like to take this
16 opportunity to remind the Board that shortly
17 following each meeting, a call for agenda items will
18 be sent to the entire Board. No later than one week
19 before the meeting we would like you to please
20 provide any agenda items to the Department that
21 you're interested in discussing before the next
22 Board meeting. so that we can add these to the
23 agenda item.

24 The Department is going to post the
25 Board meeting agenda on the Pennsylvania WIC website

1 and distribute the agenda via email.

2 We'll be doing this no later than 24
3 hours before the meeting. The agenda will also be
4 attached to the meeting invite. Any item that's not
5 added to the agenda ahead of the meeting will be
6 tabled until the next meeting. And this is just to
7 ensure that the Board is in compliance with the
8 Commonwealth Sunshine Act.

9 I'm now going to turn things over to
10 Mr. Ed DiIenno, our legal counsel, to walk through
11 the third order of business.

12 MR. DIENNO: Thank you. Just wanted
13 to take a few moments to talk about the meeting
14 minutes.

15 If you'll recall, last meeting I had
16 said that the meeting minutes would be a transcript
17 of the meeting and would be distributed shortly
18 after the meeting ended. What I did not realize at
19 that time, and I apologize, is that it takes our
20 stenographer about two to three weeks to prepare the
21 transcript.

22 So in terms of distribution, it's not
23 going to be one or two days, it's going to be the
24 two or three weeks, like I said. What I plan to is
25 once I get an initial draft of the minutes, I'll

1 circulate to the Board to review and then share what
2 will be a tentative final copy ahead of the next
3 meeting.

4 And one of the first orders of
5 business will just be the Board formally adopting
6 those minutes, and everyone will have had
7 opportunity before to review them. It's just
8 helpful that because the meetings are being
9 distributed and posted publicly, that everyone has a
10 chance to review any of their own statements to make
11 sure that what someone said is captured accurately.

12 Does anyone have any questions about
13 the meeting minutes?

14 Okay, not hearing any questions.

15 The second thing I just wanted to
16 touch upon is, so I guess, Theodore, and for anyone
17 else who still is waiting to read or receive their
18 appointment letter, if you do have any questions
19 that come up after today's meeting, feel free to
20 email the Department with those questions so we can
21 answer them. So don't feel like if you didn't have
22 a question now, you don't have a future opportunity
23 to ask.

24 So just let us know. I'm going to
25 turn things over now to Britney. Thank you.

1 MS. ZWERGEL: Thanks, Ed. I'm
2 speaking on behalf of myself and Charlotte, who, as
3 you might have seen, has just got married. So we
4 wish her well on her honeymoon that she's on.

5 So we just wanted to share kind of
6 the vision for the Advisory Board. So at the heart
7 of our vision is the unwavering commitment to foster
8 a healthier, more supportive community for WIC
9 families.

10 We envision a Board that is not only
11 a guiding force, but also a compassionate ally
12 dedicated to understanding and addressing the unique
13 needs of each family that we serve. Our goal is to
14 ensure that every mother, child and caregiver feels
15 heard, valued and empowered to make informed choices
16 about their health and well-being. To achieve this,
17 we aim to create an inclusive space where diverse
18 voices and experiences are not only welcomed, but
19 celebrated.

20 Our Advisory Board consists of
21 experts in nutrition, healthcare, food security, WIC
22 participants, food retail and community advocates.
23 By bringing together this diverse group of
24 individuals, we hope to foster a collaborative
25 environment where innovative solutions and practical

1 strategies can be developed to address the
2 challenges faced by our families today.

3 Our goal will be to discuss items
4 that are clearly outlined in the Bill under Section
5 4(a), including increasing enrollment, outreach
6 efforts, technology improvements, increased
7 awareness of breastfeeding services, and more.

8 But we can't do this alone. So I'm
9 going to pause here and take a moment to ask if
10 anyone has any suggestions for future agenda items,
11 if you would go ahead and share those now.

12 MR. HOWELLS: Hey, Britney, this is
13 Mike. I know we previously kind of had some folks
14 from retail walk through how the store experience
15 is. I'd be happy to work on getting some folks back
16 before the Board as it stands now, as a formalized
17 body, just to go through that again. I think that
18 was a useful endeavor for everyone.

19 I'd also suggest, I think learning
20 more about the products that are on offer, why they
21 are on offer, would be useful, too. And maybe that
22 would be something from the Department to share.
23 Those would be my suggestions right off the top.
24 Thanks.

25 MS. ZWERGEL: Thanks, Mike. I do

1 think that that experience from the vendors was
2 really helpful to all the Board members to learn a
3 little bit more. So I think that'd be a great
4 opportunity.

5 Anyone else? Don't be shy.

6 MR. DEITMAN: Hey, Britney, it's
7 Theo. I would actually suggest maybe like a
8 refresher on the actual WIC experience itself,
9 complete rundown, kind of like what we did with the
10 stores before, but what actually happens inside the
11 office. I think it's a good idea to kind of show
12 individuals of the Board exactly what a WIC
13 appointment is like.

14 Also maybe to discuss a little bit
15 about the education referral system that we end up
16 working with and how WIC is interlinked with many
17 other agencies and how of how we can spider out and
18 help our clients support it. So maybe some more
19 in-depth discussion and review on that, too.

20 MS. ZWERGEL: Thanks, Theo.

21 Anyone else from the advisory have
22 thoughts on future agenda items?

23 MS. PIGUR: Hi, Britney, this is
24 Katja. I also would like to just suggest, as we are
25 talking about the WIC experience, also when a WIC

1 client decides to breastfeed, how that process works
2 and how the package - food package looks like. And
3 also in terms of breastfeeding support and to, you
4 know, breastfeeding promotion, how this all plays
5 out with this process.

6 MS. ZWERGEL: Absolutely. Thanks,
7 Katja.

8 All right, last call.

9 Any agenda items?

10 MS. YOCK: I have one thing. Can you
11 maybe think about putting on something about like
12 the food packages that they get for fruit and
13 vegetables, like the farmers' market, explain how
14 that goes and what they can get?

15 And then the other thing I was
16 thinking is like recent changes to - things have
17 changed recently. Maybe we can go over what it used
18 to have and what it has now, not only the farmers'
19 market, but like the regular benefits.

20 MS. ZWERGEL: Sure.

21 I think that's - that's imperative to
22 be able to share any changes to the food package, so
23 that we're able to help support the community at
24 large.

25 COURT REPORTER: And can you tell me

1 who said that?

2 MS. YOCK: That was Raeni.

3 COURT REPORTER: Thank you.

4 You need to say your name when you
5 are going to talk, please. Thank you.

6 MS. COFFEE: Hi, Britney. This is
7 Gerria Coffee. I wanted to share that the lactation
8 room has opened at SCI-Muncy for families to be able
9 to pump and express milk. Now, I know in the past
10 we've discussed the impact of WIC enrollment for
11 caregivers of the infants born to incarcerated
12 mothers or parents. And so we may need to explore
13 if and how babies receiving expressed milk will
14 impact their WIC enrollment in their packages.

15 MS. ZWERGEL: Thanks, Gerria.

16 All right.

17 And with that, I'm going to pass it
18 back on over to someone at the State to talk about
19 the WICShopper app.

20 MS. EMERICK: Good afternoon,
21 everyone. Danielle, if it's okay with you, I'll
22 share my screen.

23 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: I'll actually
24 start here. Thank you, Vice Chair.

25 So as Britney just mentioned, we're

1 going to be starting our fifth order of business,
2 and we're going to go over the WICShopper app. And
3 that's the part of Pennsylvania WIC where now the
4 participants can actually see, via their phones,
5 while they're in the grocery store live time, what
6 benefits are on their card. They can actually scan
7 a benefit in the grocery store to see that if it
8 says - see if it's WIC-eligible or not.

9 So I will now turn this over to Ms.
10 Tricia. Thank you.

11 MS. EMERICK: Thank you.

12 So my name is Trisha Emerick, and I
13 work for the Training Unit at the State agency. And
14 as Sally mentioned, I was asked to provide you with
15 an overview of the WICShopper app today. So the
16 WICShopper is an app for participants to help make
17 shopping easier for them.

18 Participants can download the
19 WICShopper app on their phone. It is a free app
20 that anyone can download. So if you're interested
21 in doing that, you can do that and download it
22 yourself. You'll just go to your app store or to
23 Google Play, whichever type of phone you have, and
24 you'll search WICShopper app.

25 And then once you download the app,

1 you would select Pennsylvania as the state.

2 Participants can select from
3 currently 21 different languages. However, it's
4 important to note that not all areas of the app are
5 translated, such as, for example, with a PDF. And
6 I'll talk about that in just a minute here.

7 With that being said, there are still
8 a lot of nice features in the app and today I'm
9 going to talk about several of them. One thing that
10 participants can do is they can register their eWIC
11 card on the app so that they're able to view their
12 benefits.

13 Participants can use the app
14 throughout the month to view their current benefits
15 by clicking on the My Benefits icon and you can see
16 that there in the screenshot on the left. And when
17 they open this area it will show them when their
18 benefits are good from, and you can see that on the
19 right there, which is usually the first of the month
20 to the end of the month.

21 There is a 24 to 48-hour delay in the
22 updating of their benefits on the app, as we wait to
23 get transaction files back from the store and then
24 us updating the app. As you can see in the
25 screenshot on the right, the app does tell them the

1 date and time of their remaining balance, and any
2 recent purchases may not be reflected yet.

3 Participants can see each of the
4 different food categories that are in the WIC card,
5 in their eWIC card, and the amounts that are still
6 left.

7 So for example in this screenshot
8 they still have a dozen eggs, 36 ounces of cereal
9 and a jar of peanut butter still on their card to
10 use.

11 Participants can click on the blue
12 arrow to see all of the different UPCs that are in
13 that subcategory. However, this can be a long list,
14 depending on what that subcategory is. So you can
15 see here if they would click on the blue arrow by
16 the one dozen eggs, it would bring up all of the
17 different allowable eggs that they could purchase.

18 One of the nicest features and one
19 that is used a lot by participants is that they can
20 scan items while they are shopping to see if
21 something is WIC-allowable before they get to the
22 register. The only exception is with fresh fruits
23 and vegetables, they do not scan in the app, but all
24 the other foods they would be able to scan in the
25 app.

1 However, participants do need to
2 understand that just because something might be
3 WIC-allowable doesn't mean that they can purchase
4 the item. And that's because it also has to be on
5 their specific benefit balance to be purchased.
6 However, if they have registered their eWIC card,
7 the app will tell them that it is WIC-allowed and
8 whether they have the benefits for it on their card.

9 Again, the app will also tell them if
10 the item is a WIC-allowed - is WIC-allowed but they
11 don't have enough benefits to purchase the item, as
12 you can see in the screenshot on the left. It can
13 also tell them that the item is WIC-approved, but
14 they do not have that particular item on their food
15 benefits, such as with the screenshot that's there
16 on their right.

17 The food list is also available in
18 the app, and it is available currently in 11
19 different languages that participants can select
20 from. And so instead of looking at the paper food
21 list that we provide them with, they can access the
22 food list on the app.

23 On the app, participants can search
24 where the nearest store is that they can redeem
25 their WIC benefits at. They can select to view the

1 eligible stores that are nearest to them, and they
2 can view it either in a list or in a map view, and
3 you can see both of those options here on this
4 slide.

5 They can also search to find the
6 nearest WIC Office by selecting find a WIC Office.
7 And this could really be helpful maybe if they plan
8 on moving and they want to find the closest WIC
9 Office to wherever they're moving, or if they want
10 to see if there's a WIC Office closer to their home.

11 Participants and vendors can also use
12 this app to send in UPCs that they think should on
13 the program. So if like a WIC participant tries to
14 purchase something and they're not able to purchase
15 it because it's coming up as not being WIC-allowed,
16 they can submit it - submit the UPC and
17 notifications come in through an email at the State
18 agency where staff can review the item and then
19 respond back to the sender about whether it is
20 allowed or not.

21 It is important to note though, that
22 is not an immediate add. If the item is approved to
23 be added, it could still take the 24 to 48 hours
24 before the participant is able to purchase the item
25 at the store.

1 Lastly, participants can watch a
2 video explaining how to shop with their eWIC card
3 directly from the app. And this is especially
4 helpful for new WIC participants because the video
5 walks them through the process of shopping with
6 their eWIC card.

7 Also on the app, participants can
8 find yummy recipes, they can search for an
9 ingredient, select a course or they can pick one of
10 the WIC foods to find a recipe.

11 So for example, if they want to know
12 how to utilize the beans that they receive from WIC,
13 they can select beans and it will provide them with
14 some ideas and recipes and new ways that they can
15 use those beans that they get from WIC.

16 Also, lastly, on the app, there are
17 banners that come up at the bottom of the screen and
18 you can see one in this screenshot here. And these
19 screenshots, these banners have additional
20 information for them.

21 So for example, there may be a banner
22 with new updates that are made to the app. Any
23 recalled items. I think right now there's a banner
24 that comes up about packaged cucumbers being
25 recalled. And you can see on the screen here on

1 this slide the banner showing breastfeeding support
2 phone number.

3 So if they click on these banners,
4 many of them will take them to another page where
5 they can get more information about the topic.

6 And I think with that, that ends the
7 overview of the WICShopper app.

8 Does anybody have any questions?

9 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: Michael?

10 MR. HOWELLS: Thanks, Sally. Hey,
11 Trisha. This is Mike from PFMA.

12 Two questions. One on fruit and
13 vegetable not being able to be scanned.

14 Is that a limitation of the program
15 or is that a technical limitation?

16 MS. EMERICK: It's just the fresh
17 fruits and vegetables.

18 MR. HOWELLS: Yeah.

19 MS. EMERICK: They're not able to
20 scan those, but participants can purchase any of the
21 fresh fruits and vegetables at the market or at the
22 grocery store. So it's just because it's a fresh
23 product, yeah.

24 MR. HOWELLS: And also, when a
25 suggestion is submitted through the app to you guys

1 for review, are those typically sort of oversights
2 or aspirational things that people want to see
3 added? What is your typical - what do you see and
4 how do you conduct that review?

5 MS. EMERICK: Yeah, I'm not involved
6 with that process, but I would imagine it's probably
7 a mixture of both, -

8 MR. HOWELLS: Okay.

9 MS. EMERICK: - that either they
10 think it should be on and it, you know, it isn't a
11 WIC-approved item. You know, maybe it's a cereal
12 that has too much sugar or something like that in
13 it, or - or it could just be an oversight, because
14 there's, you know, always new products coming on the
15 shelf, and it just could be something that hadn't
16 been added yet.

17 MR. HOWELLS: Okay.

18 I'd be - I'd be interested to learn
19 more about that process at some point. Thanks.

20 MS. EMERICK: Yeah, absolutely.

21 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: And Mike, we
22 can provide a follow-up to your question at the end
23 of this, and we'll get back to it.

24 Okay, Mim has her hand raised and
25 then Theodore and then Dr. Nnamani.

1 MS. SEIDEL: Yeah. Hi. Thanks for
2 the presentation.

3 And how are the WIC participants
4 getting educated about this?

5 MS. EMERICK: Yeah, absolutely. When
6 they come to their WIC appointments, the WIC staff
7 should be -. There's a flyer that we have that we
8 can give them that provides them with information on
9 the WICShopper app. And on that flyer, there's a QR
10 code that they can scan with their phone, and it'll
11 take them directly to where they can download the
12 app.

13 Also, the paper food list that we
14 provide them with, it has a page in there about the
15 WICShopper app, along with the QR code.

16 MR. DEITMAN: Hi, Trish. Thank you
17 for the presentation. I appreciate that. I do have
18 a question about the individual aspect of it. Is
19 there any looks into setting up individual accounts
20 with clients, so that way whenever they log the card
21 into it, it will only approve items that would be
22 approved that are written to the actual card itself?

23 Is there any looks for that in the
24 future?

25 MS. EMERICK: You know, like I said,

1 I'm not involved with that process, but I can
2 definitely find out from Missy and I can get back to
3 you, because that's a good question.

4 MR. DEITMAN: Thank you.

5 DR. NNAMANI: Thank you for the
6 presentation, Trisha. So I have a
7 breastfeeding-related question. I understand that
8 it's a shopper app, but I'm wondering if there's any
9 other information about like breastfeeding besides
10 the banner that talks about the breastfeeding
11 support?

12 So are there information or
13 resources -? Like if a mom just had a question in
14 the middle of the night that's not necessarily
15 urgent, but just maybe wanted to educate herself,
16 are there other -? Is this on a different app or is
17 it on this one and/or it's the only information
18 that's breastfeeding-related just about the
19 breastfeeding support hotline or Warm Line?

20 MS. EMERICK: Yeah, I mean, there is
21 that breastfeeding support hotline that participants
22 can call if they need additional breastfeeding
23 support. But other than that on the app, no, there
24 isn't anything else breastfeeding-related currently.

25 DR. NNAMANI: Okay. And there's no

1 other app that talks about anything
2 breastfeeding-related. This is it?

3 MS. EMERICK: I mean, local agencies,
4 they may utilize, you know, different - it's up to
5 the local agency maybe how they might go about that.
6 So there might be some local agencies that have
7 something else, but as far as with the State agency,
8 no.

9 DR. NNAMANI: Okay. Thank you.

10 MS. COFFEE: Hi, Trisha. I just want
11 to double-check then when it comes to registering
12 their eWIC card on the app, just to double-check.
13 Is that also, then, a 24 to 48-hour wait before they
14 can do that?

15 MS. EMERICK: Yes, it is.

16 MS. COFFEE: Okay.

17 MS. EMERICK: Yeah.

18 MS. COFFEE: Thank you.

19 MS. EMERICK: Yeah, sure. Any other
20 questions?

21 MS. ZWERGEL: This is Britney
22 Zwergel.

23 Trisha, doesn't the app also link you
24 to WICSmart modules, which might help answer the
25 question about breastfeeding topics or other

1 concerns?

2 MS. EMERICK: Yes, there is -.
3 That's true. There is WICSmart modules that have,
4 you know, nutrition education topics, and they,
5 yeah, definitely have some breastfeeding topics as
6 well.

7 So I don't know how many agencies are
8 utilizing those, but yeah, staff can even assign
9 participants to particular modules as well.

10 MS. YOCK: Britney, can you explain a
11 little bit more what that is? WICSmart modules? I
12 haven't heard that before.

13 MS. ZWERGEL: Trish, do you want to
14 take that one?

15 MS. EMERICK: Yeah, sure. They are
16 modules that provide some education on various
17 nutrition, health and breastfeeding topics for the
18 participants, so they can do those as part of the
19 nutrition education that they receive from WIC.

20 MS. YOCK: Thank you.

21 MS. EMERICK: Yeah, sure.

22 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: Thank you.

23 Doesn't look like we have any more questions.

24 And I just wanted to clarify, Dr.
25 Nnamani, I've been trying to jump in here, I'm

1 sorry, but great communication. Love the
2 conversation back and forth. Truly appreciate your
3 participation.

4 And just to clarify, Dr. Nnamani,
5 you're asking of any resources that participants may
6 be directed to in case they have any questions in
7 the middle of the night for pertaining to
8 breastfeeding?

9 DR. NNAMANI: Yes. Either in the
10 middle of the night or just generally. Like, you
11 know, if a mom just had to - wanted to educate
12 herself, like, oh, how much should - I'm exclusively
13 pumping, how much should the baby get? Or just
14 maybe general questions that may not necessarily be
15 urgent and urgent questions, you know, because it's
16 the middle of the night or those times when the mom
17 is struggling that you get all these, you know,
18 formula ads, struggling, you know, those trigger
19 words.

20 So I'm just wondering if there's
21 resources for the - for moms to just educate
22 themselves even before this becomes an issue or when
23 it becomes an issue.

24 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: And I can go
25 ahead and jump in. And anyone from the local

1 agencies, Trisha, you guys can piggyback. But there
2 definitely are resources for these participants that
3 have these issues. Once they come into the WIC
4 Office, we provide them with brochures that they may
5 need. We provide them with the numbers for hotlines
6 and Warm Lines that are pertaining to their
7 agencies.

8 Several local agencies work with
9 different breastfeeding Warm Lines that are outside
10 of the Commonwealth, where they get 24-hour support
11 any time they may need it.

12 We also provide them on the WIC, the
13 Pennsylvania WIC app, there's links and resources
14 for breastfeeding education and breastfeeding
15 support. But thank you. We do also - are currently
16 updating lots of our handouts and materials.

17 There's information for grandparents
18 and fathers and all sorts of resources and
19 information.

20 And we always ask that if you come
21 across something that may be helpful, whether it's
22 in English or another language, we always ask for
23 persons to share those with us, so we can include
24 those resources.

25 DR. NNAMANI: Okay. Thank you. And

1 just another quick question.

2 Do you have to be a WIC participant?
3 Like if I just wanted to see what's on this app, am
4 I able to download it, even though I'm not a WIC
5 participant.

6 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: Absolutely. I
7 personally download the app myself, and I always
8 like look for opportunities when I'm in a grocery
9 store when sometimes you kind of find someone that's
10 having an issue or may have trouble or it could be
11 someone who works at the grocery store. But I have
12 it on both of my phones and you do not have to be a
13 WIC participant to download the app.

14 You do have to be a participant to
15 utilize certain features, like check your benefits
16 and things like that. So if you don't have a card,
17 you can't get that far. But just to scan a food or
18 just to go through and kind of get your - educate
19 yourself, you do not have to be a participant.

20 DR. NNAMANI: Okay. Thank you.

21 MS. EMERICK: Yeah. Some of our
22 local agencies also have breastfeeding peer
23 counselors, and those are moms that have breastfed
24 before that are a great support to our breastfeeding
25 moms.

1 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: Thanks.

2 DR. NNAMANI: Thanks, Trisha.

3 MS. EMERICK: Yeah.

4 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: All right. So
5 I'm going to move down the agenda for our sixth
6 order of business. And the sixth order of business
7 is Pennsylvania WIC participation and online eWIC.

8 For that, I'm going to now turn it
9 over to our WIC State agency information technology
10 team. And the lead, and this team is led by Mr.
11 Joseph McLaughlin, who's the director of the
12 program's Finance and Technology Division. So I'll
13 turn it over to him.

14 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Good afternoon,
15 everyone. Just wanted to provide everyone with a
16 quick update on our participation. I'm going to
17 share my screen.

18 Okay. Hopefully you can all see two
19 little charts here.

20 Can I get an acknowledgement? Can
21 everyone see that?

22 MS. ZWERGEL: Yes.

23 MR. HOWELLS: I can see it.

24 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Okay.

25 Thank you. So for - of course we are

1 in federal fiscal year '24. So on the top here
2 you'll see by month the participation numbers, as
3 well as our enrollment in PA WIC.

4 And I wanted to highlight August. We
5 have our August numbers in. We are showing another
6 increase from the previous month. And our numbers
7 for August come in at 185,317 participants. And our
8 enrollment has also increased to 199,525.

9 And just a quick comparison, below
10 you'll see the federal fiscal year '23 participation
11 that I've included. And for August of that
12 particular federal fiscal year, we were at 178,254
13 individual participants and our enrollment was at
14 194,333. So we are hopeful that we will be
15 exceeding our total participation from the previous
16 federal fiscal year. And you'll see below that the
17 federal fiscal year '23 total participation was just
18 a little bit over two million participants.

19 So we are seeing, as you can tell, a
20 slight increase and uptick in our participation
21 month by month. We do have some months where it
22 goes down a little bit and some months where it will
23 go back up, so -. And I think that's pretty typical
24 with our trending by month.

25 So congratulations. I think some of

1 the efforts that our local agencies are undergoing,
2 as well as a State agency with some of their text
3 messaging, you know, much of that is starting to
4 work in our benefit.

5 So does anyone have any questions?

6 DR. NNAMANI: I do, Joseph. Thank
7 you for that. Pardon the ignorance here, but can
8 you - would you mind explaining the difference
9 between participation and enrollment? Is the
10 enrollment of those new enrollees or what are the
11 numbers based off of?

12 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: The enrollment is
13 anyone - and I may have to have some correction and
14 some help from my team members in nutrition
15 services, but the enrollment number represents those
16 individuals who come into a WIC Office and seek
17 benefits for WIC. The participation is actually the
18 number of individuals who receive the benefit, so
19 they actually get the benefits loaded to their
20 cards.

21 And you'll see there's always a
22 difference, and I'm not sure, you know, why that
23 difference occurs. It could be for a variety of
24 reasons, somebody couldn't make the appointment or
25 they've chosen not to follow up with, you know,

1 receiving a WIC benefit, but that is the primary
2 difference.

3 DR. NNAMANI: Thank you.

4 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yep.

5 MS. ZWERGEL: I just had a quick
6 question on if we know the number eligible and maybe
7 I know you don't have it on top of your head, but in
8 the future, could we see like where we're at with
9 eligibility for how many folks were still needing to
10 get enrolled in the program?

11 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah, I think we
12 could probably work on that.

13 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: Thank you.
14 That was a great question.

15 And I just want to take this quick
16 time to really, really congratulate our local
17 agencies and the teams. They are the boots on the
18 ground, and without them we definitely could not
19 make this happen. There's been lots and lots of
20 footwork behind the scenes at the State agency
21 level, lots of technology improvements, really
22 improvements with our regulations and our policies
23 and procedures.

24 And it's really an honor and I'm
25 really excited to see our participation numbers

1 increase, and I am confident they will continue to
2 increase. With that being said, we do know that
3 nationwide we are only reaching 50 percent of the
4 eligible participants that could be enrolled on the
5 program. So we always, always, always - there's
6 always room for more. There's always more that we
7 can do to capture these participants.

8 So we just encourage you all to
9 continue to support the WIC Program and definitely
10 salute to you all at the local agency level.

11 I'm going to turn it over to Emily
12 Iem with a quick online eWIC update.

13 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Thank you.

14 MS. IEM: Thank you, Sally.

15 Good afternoon, everyone. Sally
16 mentioned my name is Emily. I'm just going to give
17 you a brief update about the online eWIC efforts,
18 and then just a quick sentence or two about the food
19 package changes as well.

20 So our procurement for the online
21 eWIC transition is in progress. Potential bidders
22 right now have the opportunity to ask any questions
23 that they have about the procurement, and those
24 questions are open until September 18. At that
25 point they'll work on their proposals and they're

1 due back to the State agency on November 22nd.

2 We've received several questions.
3 We're excited about the interest and awareness that
4 that demonstrates, and so we're just working through
5 that process right now.

6 Any questions on that before I jump
7 topics?

8 All right. The other topic that I
9 just wanted to briefly touch on were the food
10 package changes.

11 So as many of you may have already
12 heard, or, you know, I'll let you know that there
13 have been a lot of suggested changes to food
14 packages that came out from USDA FNS this year. And
15 we are working - the WIC team and the IT team are
16 working together to look at the benefit system PENN
17 to see what changes need to be made in order to
18 accommodate those food package changes.

19 And we started that analysis. We're
20 updating things in PENN now, some of the setup and
21 configurations that we can pass that off to the IT
22 team and they can look at the changes that need to
23 be made in order to accommodate those things. So
24 we're seeing some great progress on that front as
25 well.

1 Those are all the updates I have
2 today.

3 I think - Sally, am I turning it back
4 over to you?

5 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: Thank you. All
6 right.

7 And for those of you that may not be
8 aware, I'm just going to take this opportunity to
9 plug in really quickly that in all of our
10 modernizing efforts and making sure that the program
11 is accessible to participants, we're doing the best
12 that we can to make sure that participants all over
13 can utilize our program and make it easier for them
14 to access their benefits, come into appointments or
15 now do appointments over the phone. Going online is
16 a huge step in that.

17 Our IT team and our online efforts,
18 being led by Mrs. Emily Iem, has been very
19 progressive. And I'm happy to say that we are
20 moving the needle very quickly. And there's - you
21 know, we just truly appreciate the efforts. And the
22 participants will sooner to be able to get these
23 services online.

24 They'll be able to - they won't have
25 to come into the clinic to load their cards. I

1 think that's the biggest and most exciting news
2 about this. So thank you all for those efforts.

3 Britney?

4 MS. ZWERGEL: I just want to
5 piggyback off of that. The difference between
6 enrollment and participation, the changes to have
7 the card be able to be loaded online, we should see
8 less of a barrier between those two numbers. A lot
9 of times I'm thinking as a WIC local agency at this
10 point, we do the work, we get the appointment done,
11 and then maybe they don't come in and get their card
12 loaded. And so as a result, they're not captured on
13 that participation.

14 Whereas as a result, if the benefits
15 are automatically loaded electronically, that
16 barrier of transportation and time to get to the WIC
17 clinic is gone. So we hope that really that change
18 is super positive for so many reasons, but just
19 wanted to share that.

20 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: All right.

21 I don't think that we need -. Okay,
22 so as you all know, 2024, this year, the WIC Program
23 celebrated 50 years of service.

24 Our seventh order of business is a
25 small presentation that we will present to you all,

1 opportunity to thank everyone that's taken the time
2 to attend the event, whether it was their event
3 hosted by their local agency or not. We try our
4 best to share the event so that everyone can attend
5 who's able to. If you can see in some of the
6 pictures, our Secretary of Health, Dr. Bogen, has
7 been in attendance to some of these events. We've
8 also had the United States Department of
9 Agricultural present as well. There have been some
10 events that have had press and media attendance as
11 well.

12 Deputy Secretary Cindy Findley has
13 attended and spoken at some of these events as well.
14 So we appreciate your presence. Appreciate you all
15 that have come out to celebrate with us and continue
16 to come out to celebrate us with us. North,
17 Incorporated will be having an event this Thursday,
18 actually on the 12th at their Woodlawn WIC Office.

19 So great, great things happening, and
20 we're excited to be a part of this.

21 Our final order of business is going
22 to be to provide the public with the opportunity to
23 participate on today's meeting. So I'm now going to
24 open the floor to the public. If there are any
25 questions, comments or concerns from the public,

1 this is the time to ask or comment.

2 And if you're having audio issues or
3 don't want to talk, please feel free to use the chat
4 box as well.

5 MR. O'ROURKE: Hi, this is Patrick
6 O'Rourke. I'm a staffer at the House Health
7 Committee over in the General Assembly. I wanted to
8 reach out, see who I could speak with to get a copy
9 of meeting minutes for these Advisory Board
10 meetings.

11 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: So the Advisory
12 Board meetings, once approved, will be published to
13 the website. But I'm going to - if you can put your
14 information in the chat, we can definitely link you
15 on to be receiving those. We do have a list - we
16 have a distribution list that we use.

17 MR. O'ROURKE: Thank you. Appreciate
18 it.

19 MS. ZUBAIRU-COFIELD: No problem.
20 And thanks for joining.

21 Any other questions, comments,
22 anything from the public? I see something in the
23 chat. Christine Cordario from Thriving PA is here
24 with us, and she said that she's shared in the chat
25 a copy of the PA fact sheet that includes WIC

1 participation data. So thank you, Christine.
2 Thanks for joining.

3 It looks like there's no more
4 comments or questions from the public. I will stay
5 on until two o'clock. Please note that this is the
6 conclusion of the meeting. The next meeting is
7 going to be October 22nd at 1:00 p.m. Just a note,
8 I will not be available for that meeting. We will
9 have someone from the Department represent in my
10 place.

11 All right. This meeting has now been
12 adjourned.

13 * * * * *

14 MEETING CONCLUDED AT 1:46 P.M.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing proceedings, a meeting held before Cindy Findley, was reported by me on September 10, 2024 and that I, Bernadette M. Black, read this transcript, and that I attest that this transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceeding.

Dated the 19th day of September, 2024

Bernadette M. Black

Bernadette M. Black,
Court Reporter