



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
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**WIC Advisory Council Meeting**  
**March 11, 2024**  
**11:00 am – 12:00 pm**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Council Members Present:** Cynthia Smith, Kathryn Warren-Barnes, Khara Shearrion, Rebecca Davidson, Kevin Reed, Mary Feuer, Kinnari Chitalia, Rachel Burgun, Rachel Roccanti, Meagan Diaz, Katherine Truscott, Hannah Phipps

**WIC Staff:** Rachel Colchamiro, Diana Hoek, Tina Andrade, Shannon Silvestri

**Members of the Public:** Linda Nara

**Projected Funding:**

Massachusetts WIC receives both State and Federal funding. While Congress averted a Federal government shutdown and passed a budget for WIC, the amount of Federal funding for Fiscal Year 2024 that Massachusetts WIC will receive is still unknown. Congress funded the WIC Program with the additional \$1 billion dollars needed to support the increased national caseload and maintain the higher levels of the Cash Value Benefit (fruit and vegetable benefit). There had been calls to cut the Cash Value Benefit and to provide insufficient funding to support the current caseload potentially creating wait lists for program participants.

**Program Participation**

WIC Program Director Rachel Colchamiro explained the program caseload graph. The dip in the graph reflected the start of the pandemic. Caseload steadily increased until last summer and then plateaued. Since September, there has been a small decrease because of the sunset of the pandemic waivers and the implementation of ARPA waivers, which involve more in-person services. Current caseload remains flat at about 125,000 program participants.

The program is seeing an increased gap between participation and active caseload. People are active in the program but may not have benefits. If participants miss their appointments, they may still be active in the system, but they will not have any benefits on their eWIC cards until they reschedule and complete their appointments.

Online applications remain strong. The program's marketing drives people to the online application page on the [mass.gov/wic](http://mass.gov/wic) website. The WIC program also does a match between

MassHealth members and WIC participants and SNAP and WIC participants. A text message with a link to the online application is sent to people who do not match.

Program food costs continue to trend higher in 2024 than in 2023. The daily cost is averaging around \$320,000 per day. This will be monitored carefully, and it is hoped that USDA will provide the program with sufficient funds to cover costs. The increased amounts of fruits and vegetables continue to be well redeemed.

During the pandemic, there were many USDA waivers which allowed for providing remote services and remote benefit issuance. While those waivers expired, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provides some continued flexibility with appointments. If participants can provide blood work results that are less than 90 days old and anthropometric measurements that are less than 60 days old, there is the option of having a phone or video appointment. WIC programs are encouraged to bring in new families to the office for their appointments since it's easier to explain how to use program benefits in person.

The Council discussed how some families, who never had to come to the office before, find it is hard to change. Many families prefer the option of a phone appointment.

### **WIC Modernization Projects**

Online shopping – Massachusetts WIC is partnered with Washington State WIC and Walmart. Walmart's online portal was tailored to include WIC. Starting later this summer, participants will be able to order their WIC foods through the portal and select whether they are going to pick up or have their foods delivered. Massachusetts is utilizing a waiver to get additional Walmart stores authorized, that may not always carry all required WIC food items (mostly fresh produce), to simplify the launch of the online ordering project. There will be 48 authorized Walmart stores throughout Massachusetts.

OnBase – This is a secure system to upload files such as paystubs or medical forms. It is a cloud-based application that uses a subscription model. Participants can upload documents needed for WIC services through the WICShopper app. Local WIC Programs have a limited number of licenses to use the application, and all have been trained.

### **WIC 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration**

The Massachusetts WIC Program will celebrate 50 years of providing WIC services in Massachusetts on August 27, 2024. The plan is to hold a State House event on August 27<sup>th</sup> and to have smaller events throughout the year at local WIC programs.