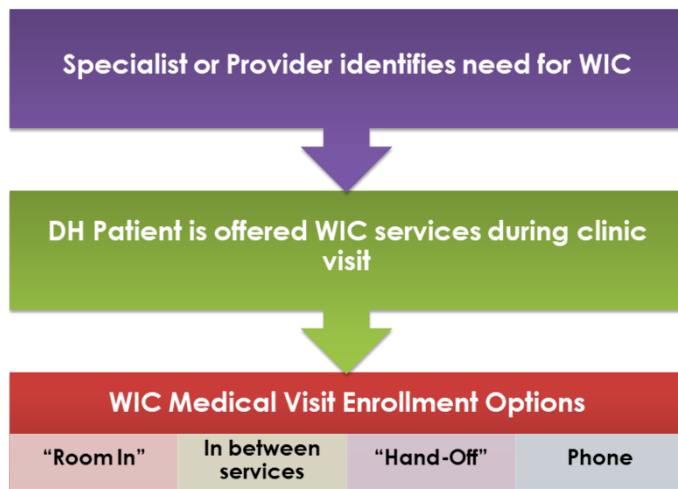


SPECIALIZED CO-ENROLLMENT MODEL



BACKGROUND

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) has been shown to improve food and economic security, advance health outcomes, and reduce healthcare costs. Despite proven benefits, up to 54% of those eligible in Denver and surrounding counties are not enrolled. Barriers such as stigma, physical access, administrative resources, and psychological costs exist to enrolling and maintaining enrollment. These burdens can negatively affect health by blocking access to health-promoting programs like WIC and may have more direct health impacts from the stress of navigating burdensome bureaucracies. To lessen these barriers, Denver Health's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) collaborated with Denver County WIC to target the systems and structures creating inequities and integrated WIC services into pediatric well-child and obstetric visits.



DESIGN

The Specialized Co-Enrollment Program (Co-Enrollment) is an innovative collaboration between Denver Health (DH), the Public Health Institute at Denver Health, and Denver WIC with the goals of streamlining WIC education, enrollment, and benefits for DH patients and families. Through the integration of WIC staff into the medical space and including the enrollment process in the medical visit, we save families time and promote important cooperation with the medical team. We aim to increase the percentage of EBNE (eligible but not currently enrolled) in WIC as well as provide ongoing WIC benefits to those enrolled by sharing medical visits. This program focuses on increasing enrollment in WIC among EBNE pregnant women and children ages 0-5 years who receive care at DH.

RESULTS

Between March 30, 2021, and October 31, 2023, a total of 5,706 families were served by the integrated Co-Enrollment program, resulting in a total of 4,958 individuals served. Co-Enrollment served primarily communities of color (88%) and supported many dietary high-risk individuals (30%). Of the 292 participants surveyed via a bilingual survey, almost all had positive experiences with the shared visit.

- 97% found the program "very useful"; 3% found it "useful"
- 94% said there was nothing about the program they disliked
- 98% would recommend the program to others
- 100% found the doctor's office connection to food and nutrition resources "very helpful"

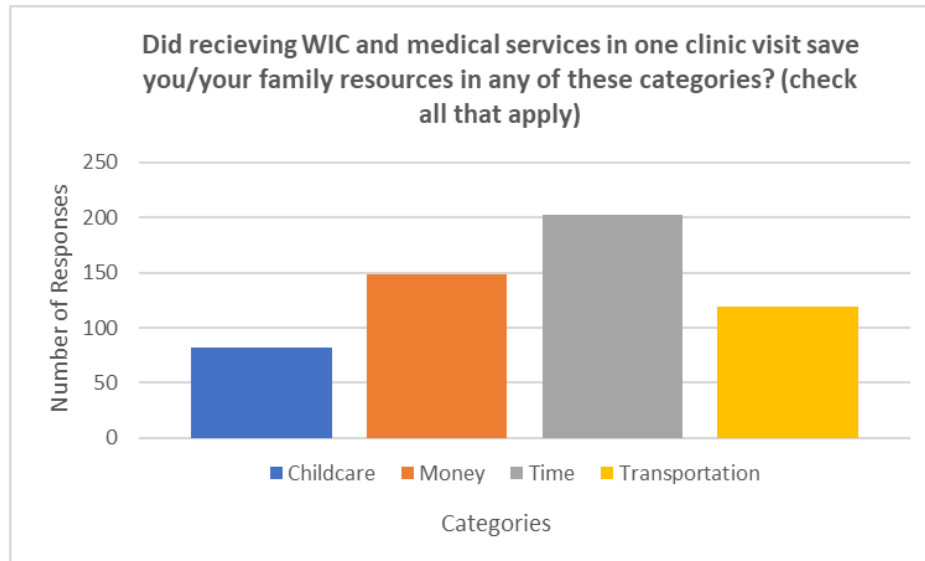
Participants noted the shared model saved time, money, and transportation resources for them and their families, all of which are historical barriers to accessing and continuing WIC. Staff and providers noted convenience for patients and families as well as systemic benefits such as interprofessional collaboration. Denver WIC has also seen an increase in their caseload over this same time, indicating this model has the potential to support program growth.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

Co-Enrollment is widely popular among families, providers, and staff. Our findings suggest that the program enrolls and retains participants in a way that minimizes the administrative burden experienced by patients, minimizes downtime in the clinic setting, and improves interprofessional collaboration in primary care. Integrating WIC in primary care could be beneficial to other communities and could increase participation in this program. Integrating social safety net programs into primary care offers a family-centered model, breaking down barriers to accessing supplemental and entitlement programs. The integrated WIC program has evolved the care delivery model to one that is more collaborative and respectful of families' time and limited resources.



TESTIMONIALS

PATIENTS

- Very convenient I like getting both tasks done at once all staff were friendly knowledgeable and efficient
- We had trouble trying to apply for WIC online for a while but were having issues. It was very helpful to be able to apply and leave with WIC benefits during our visit
- Saved me a call I was going to make after my visit
- Quick and amazing

PROVIDERS

- Since co-enrollment, the WIC and clinical staff know each other by name and face, they often walk over to one another's clinic areas to discuss treatment planning and referrals, and the clinic team is much more familiar with WIC offerings and more frequently giving referrals to WIC
- The integration of WIC services in our clinic has been an amazing resource for children and families. Having integrated WIC services helps to remove barriers to enrollment and also provides a warm hand-off to parents to help them feel more comfortable in interacting with WIC staff and providers. We have had many families who have utilized the in-person services within the office, and our WIC provider is able to quickly come to the patient room and help problem solve an issue and come up with a solution, especially during the formula shortage when many families are scared about what to do to feed their infants. I find tremendous value in having integrated WIC services and the families in our clinic are very grateful as well!
- Co-Enrollment impacts staff providing professional development, being in a position that designs the work and influence the way things are done; this is a systems level change at an anchor institution; implementing a program that is meaningful and improves direct services, meeting patients where they are at; learning new skills and learning new ways to advocate for the WIC program and for our clients; it has also been great to work more closely with medical team