

Wisconsin CYSHCN-WIC Network Mentoring Project



What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a process for experienced professionals to share their wisdom and experiences with others working in the same field. The mentor provides one-on-one support and guidance for professional development. This is a non-evaluative relationship for the mentor to advise, guide, encourage, and inspire the development of new skills or leadership capabilities. A mentor provides information, support, and feedback needed for them to become confident and competent in their new role

Why mentoring in WIC with Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs?

Birth defects occur in approximately 1 of every 30 babies. In Wisconsin about 2500 babies with birth defects are born every year. Birth defects refer to any abnormal condition that may be inherited genetically, acquired during pregnancy or inflicted during the delivery process. Birth defects are the most common cause of childhood medical and developmental disabilities that are often associated with severe nutritional complications, frequent hospitalizations and death.

Food assistance leads families with CSHCN to WIC clinics. The WIC nutritionists may be the first to identify the need for the following: 1) economic support; 2) further medical coordination, assessment and diagnosis; 3) referral for special medical nutrition therapy, or 4) prescriptions for special formulas.

The Birth Defects funded CYSHCN-WIC three-year pilot study of 9 Wisconsin WIC projects demonstrated an improved ability to identify, refer and document nutrition coordination to families with birth defects. Education, clinic and networking experiences have primed these Registered Dietitians to be mentors to other Wisconsin WIC nutritionists.

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Surveys of Wisconsin WIC agencies continue to show training request for medical and nutrition topics on infants and children with birth defects. To assist in self-learning, a toolkit containing references for CYSHCN is continually updated. Incorporation of birth defects education is being planned into future statewide WIC trainings. A mentoring

program with CYSHCN for county and tribal health WIC agencies can support current online opportunities and help assure a competent and confident workforce.

What are the benefits of mentorship?

The sharing of case experiences and reflective thinking sharpens skills of both the mentor and mentee. It generates new ideas, renews interest and promotes excitement in dietetic careers. Mentoring builds self-esteem for the learner growing in new skills and for the mentor for playing a leadership role. Mentorship blends well with the credentialing professional development learning plans for the recertification process of the Commission on Dietetic Registration

Who will be the mentors?

The mentors for 2009-2010 will be the following Wisconsin WIC nutritionists:

Northeastern Region:

Rachel Bauer, RD Kewaunee Co. Public Health WIC Program

Sherry Stender, RD Marinette Co. Health and Human Services WIC Program

Northern Region:

Vickie Petrashek, RD Price Co. Health Department WIC Program

Southeastern Region

Judy Zunk, RD, Wee Care WIC

Jennifer Vaclav, RD West Allis Health Department WIC Program

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Southern Region

Jennifer Johnson, RD Nutrition & Health Associates, Inc. WIC Program

Joyce Smidl, RD Sauk County Health Department WIC Program

Western Region

Judy Fedie, RD Chippewa Co. Department of Public Health WIC Program

Mary Mahan, RD Northwest WIC Community Services Agency WIC Program

How can I get involved as a CYSHCN Network mentee?

- Read mentoring-mentee materials.
- Complete application questionnaire
- Read the CYSHCN toolkit in ROSIE Help
- Participate in regular meetings (in person, via email, or by telephone) as agreed upon by mentor/mentee
- Participate in monthly CYSHCN teleconferences, a regional CYSHCN-WIC meeting and a statewide CYSHCN-WIC Network Meeting
- Contribute to project evaluation by completion of exit survey on mentoring

Additional Questions:

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Truly educative experiences generate interest, are intrinsically worthwhile, present problems that awaken new curiosity, create a demand for new information and take sufficient time to foster development. [John Dewey]