Optimizing Family Health Through WIC Modernization

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The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides nutritional support and education to food-insecure children and families in poverty.

WIC delivers important health benefits for families participating in the program, including lower rates of preterm birth, decreased food insecurity, prevention of childhood obesity and improved nutrition as well as addressing needs for women at risk of maternal mortality. However, utilization of the program is low among families and enrollment continues to decline year to year. Even prior to the pandemic, only about half of all eligible families received WIC benefits due to factors including significant administrative burden when enrolling and accessing and redeeming benefits.

On March 16, PolicyLab and Thriving PA hosted a virtual conversation titled, “Optimizing Family Health Through WIC Modernization,” with health care providers and policy and research experts who shared their perspectives on these issues and more. With a specific focus on how to improve WIC policy in Pennsylvania, they discussed important questions such as: what opportunities exist to increase enrollment in and utilization of these important benefits? And how can we reduce administrative barriers for families and optimize use of WIC?

Panelists included:

- **Brian Dittmeier, JD**, senior director of public policy at the National WIC Association
- **Berry Kelly, MBA**, director of the Bureau of Community Nutrition Services (CNS) and State WIC director at the South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control
- **Laura Stephany, MPPM**, health policy manager at Allies for Children
- **Aditi Vasan, MD, MSHP**, faculty member at PolicyLab and pediatrician and health services researcher at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP)
- **Danielle Cullen, MD, MPH, MSHP**, faculty member at PolicyLab and assistant professor of pediatrics and pediatric emergency medicine at CHOP and the University of Pennsylvania’s Perelman School of Medicine (moderator)

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- Association of Remote vs In-person Benefit Delivery With WIC Participation During the COVID-19 Pandemic
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