



BACKGROUND

- Healthy Families NY (HFNY) is a home visiting program administered by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). The program serves expectant and new parents at risk for child maltreatment.
• HFNY matches parents with home visitors who provide information and support during pregnancy and early childhood. Services include educating families on parenting and child development, connecting families with medical providers, assessing children for developmental delays, and helping families access community resources and services.
• HFNY program enrollment relies on referrals from community organizations, one of the more fruitful sources historically being the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program administered by the New York State Department of Health (DOH).
• HFNY programs reported WIC referrals had declined in recent years. This study explores their perception of the strengths and challenges in obtaining referrals from local WIC programs.

METHODS

MIS Data

- A review of referrals from WIC to HFNY during SFY 2013 to SFY 2017 from the HFNY Management Information System (MIS).

HFNY Program Leaders Focus Groups

- HFNY Programs leaders were grouped by WIC region (WIC Capital District, WIC Central, WIC Western, WIC Metro 1, and WIC Metro 2) and asked the following questions:
> What is working in your relationship with your local WIC provider?
> What concerns do you have about your relationship with your local WIC offices?
> What are your hopes for your relationship with your local WIC provider?

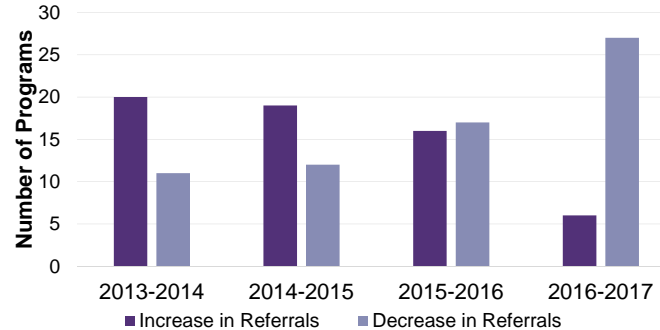
HFNY Program Manager Survey

- A survey on perception of WIC referrals and relationships was given to program managers. The survey collected data on:
> Administrative Information
> WIC Relationship Information
> HFNY/WIC Program and Referral Information

RESULTS

MIS Data

Change in WIC Referrals by Year



HFNY Program Leader Focus Groups

What's Working?

- HFNY having a presence at WIC offices
• MOU with specific information
• HFNY staff doing in-person outreach at WIC offices
• WIC representative on HFNY advisory board

What's Concerning?

- [WIC Offices] Lack of knowledge about HFNY program services
• WIC enrollment is down
• E-WIC rollout

Hopes for the Future?

- Increased rapport between HFNY and WIC staff
• Show how HFNY can help WIC reach their goals
• Seamlessness between HFNY and WIC
• Overall increased collaboration

HFNY Program Manager Survey

- 34 programs completed a survey on 53 WIC relationships

Good or Better
WIC member on advisory board
Combined activities
Frequent, positive communication

Less than Good
Competition
Lack of communication
Staff turnover

HFNY/WIC Program and Referral Information

- Referrals from WIC most commonly come from WIC Nutritionists and Breastfeeding Counselors.
• 37% of HFNY programs reported that no one made referrals from local WIC offices.
• Most referrals are coming from using a screening form at the WIC office or HFNY having a presence at the local WIC office.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

Strengths

- All data were derived from HFNY programs. This bottom-up approach best reflects the actuality of what programs are experiencing.
• Information from this project was able to inform next steps for actionable items to improve the HFNY/WIC relationships.

Limitations

- Possible errors with data collection and reporting (i.e. recording referrals from WIC to HFNY).
• Missing Program Manager Survey data from 25% of programs.
• This study looked at data from the HFNY perspective and did not incorporate any information from local WIC programs about their perceptions.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

- HFNY programs have experienced decreases in referrals from WIC over time, with the greatest number of programs experiencing decreases between 2016 and 2017.
• The decrease in referrals was not experienced statewide. Local programs were affected differently.
• Focus group and survey data identified challenges in obtaining referrals (e.g., lack of knowledge, E-WIC, lack of communication, staff turnover).
• Increasing referrals will require greater collaboration with local WIC programs and NYS DOH (e.g., MOUs, participation on advisory boards, frequent communication).

Implications

- This study provided an opportunity to discuss HFNY programs' concerns about decreasing WIC referrals with DOH.
• Efforts to facilitate greater communication and collaboration at the local, regional, and state level are suggested to improve referrals and enrollment for both programs.

STUDY AUTHORS

Sarah Whitehouse, School of Public Health, University at Albany SUNY

Claudia Miranda-Julian, Ph.D., NYS OCFS

Kristen Kirkland, Ph.D., NYS OCFS