

# Santa Cruz Multi-Partner Linkage Supports WIC Referrals and Enrollment

## Summary

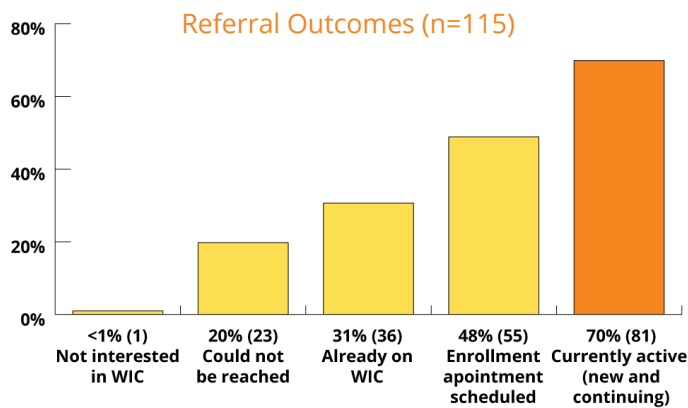
Community Bridges WIC in Santa Cruz County is partnering with the Serving Communities Health Information Organization (SCHIO) and Unite Us, a platform that connects individuals to community services, to make it easier for healthcare providers and community organizations to refer patients to WIC and for their patients to enroll in the program. Providers send referrals directly to WIC through Unite Us, and WIC staff follow-up to schedule enrollment appointments for referred patients that are not already receiving WIC and to re-engage inactive participants. WIC staff can access information needed for enrollment from SCHIO. They can also use information from SCHIO to recertify participants, making it easier for them to continue receiving WIC for as long as they are eligible.

## Process

Over a five month period, the Health Improvement Partners of Santa Cruz County\* assisted by facilitating meetings for WIC and SCHIO to discuss WIC referral and certification processes and SCHIO exchange capabilities and operations. The partners developed a use case model for healthcare providers to place electronic WIC referrals and for WIC staff to access patient information for program enrollment. Unite Us was identified as an additional partner because Federally Qualified Health Centers in the county are using it to make referrals for community services. SCHIO created a WIC view with information needed to complete enrollment and recertification, including weight and height measurements, lab values and patient demographic information. This unique approach combines referrals and social and clinical data into one workflow. Community Bridges entered into agreements with SCHIO and Unite Us, and WIC staff were trained to use the two platforms.

\*With funding from Nourish California

## Outcomes



WIC is receiving an average of 15 referrals per month through Unite Us. Most of the referred patients are new to WIC, and many are prenatal individuals, a high priority for WIC services. To date, half of referred patients have scheduled a WIC enrollment appointment, and 70% of referred patients are active in WIC – either newly enrolled or recertified to continue. WIC staff can view information in the SCHIO exchange for many of the referred patients, but WIC policy pertaining to the timeliness of health information and the functionality of the WIC information system limit use of the information for program enrollment and recertification.

## Looking Forward

While Unite Us is a useful tool for WIC referrals, it is underutilized by healthcare and other organizations in Santa Cruz County. Engaging more healthcare and community service providers in making referrals through Unite Us and greater integration between Unite Us and SCHIO would be beneficial for connecting more individuals and families to WIC. Modifications to permit entry of information available from SCHIO into the WIC information system prior to a WIC appointment would maximize use of the information for enrollment and certification.

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