

7-2 Required Referrals

Which referrals are required?

WIC is required to make certain referrals because they impact the health of many participants.

- Screen and refer for immunizations needed by children between the ages of 3 and 24 months;
- Screen all participants for Oregon Health Plan (Medicaid) participation and refer participants to OHP if not currently active;
- Screen and refer all caregivers, pregnant and postpartum women for alcohol, tobacco, or drug use;
- WIC staff are mandatory reporters of child abuse. (This is not a referral but is required of all WIC staff.)

Learning activity

Required referrals can be made by any WIC staff member. Find out who is responsible for screening and making the required referrals in your agency.



- Immunizations:
- Oregon Health Plan:
- Alcohol, tobacco, or drug use:

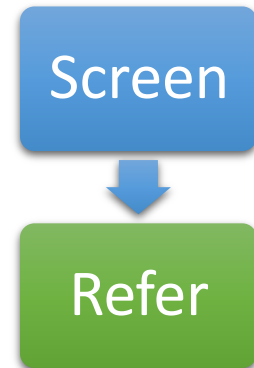
Immunizations

We screen for immunization status because immunizations are a good indicator of whether a child is being seen regularly by their health care provider. If they are not up-to-date, this gives you a chance to refer them to their health care provider for immunizations and other health services. This screening allows WIC to support good health care.



Step 1 – Screen immunization status:

- Screen every child between the ages of 3 and 24 months at certifications and mid-certification health assessment appointments.
- Screen immunization status by using a documented record. This could be a hand-held paper immunization record or an electronic record.
- Screen by counting DTaP vaccines. DTaP vaccines are the best indicator of overall vaccine status. The number of DTaP's they should have depends on their age.
 - By three months of age, at least one dose of DTaP
 - By five months of age, at least two doses of DTaP
 - By seven months of age, at least three doses of DTaP
 - By 19 months of age, at least four doses of DTaP



Step 2 – Refer for immunizations if not up-to-date:

- Refer them to their health care provider if they have one;
- If they don't have a health care provider, try to help them find one;
- If no health care provider is available, refer them to a free immunization provider.

WIC staff are not responsible for:

- Assessing immunization records beyond counting DTaP doses by age;
- Answering technical questions about immunizations;
- Entering immunization data into the computer;
- Convincing caregivers who refuse to immunize their infants or children why they should be immunized.

If the caregiver has chosen not to immunize their infant or child:

- Make sure the caregiver knows that immunization status does not affect their infant or child's eligibility for WIC;
- Refer them to their child's health care provider for more information on immunizations; and,
- Explain WIC's role in supporting immunization screening and let them know WIC is required to screen their immunization record at each certification and mid-certification health assessment.

Learning activity



1. Find out where you would refer someone for immunizations in your area.
2. Observe another certifier screening and referring for immunizations.
 - What do they do if the caregiver has chosen not to immunize their child?
 - How did they document the referral?

Oregon Health Plan (OHP)

Having access to health care has a huge impact on a participant's overall health and their ability to stay healthy. WIC always screens for access to health care and having a primary health care provider. This is one of the reasons we screen for participation in the Oregon Health Plan (OHP). Having health insurance that covers the cost of health care is an important part of access to health care.



Most participants are screened for participation in OHP during the intake part of certification appointments. If they are not currently participating in OHP we must refer them and provide written OHP information and referral. Even when this is done during intake by WIC staff other than the certifier, the certifier will want to use the information about OHP to provide targeted nutrition-focused counseling. You can't refer them to their health care provider to talk about a nutrition issue like low iron if they don't have a health care provider!



Considerations:

- You don't have to be an expert in how to apply for OHP, but the more you know the easier it will be to make a great referral.
- Use the information about OHP enrollment to start a conversation about the participant's access to health care.
- Women who are pregnant for the first time or have their first baby may need help finding an obstetrician or pediatrician.

- Families new to the area may come to WIC before they even have a health care provider. You can help make that referral.
- Documenting the referral to OHP makes follow-up easier.

Learning activity



1. Find out who screens for OHP participation in your agency and who makes the referral.
 - a. What written information about OHP does your agency provide?
2. Find out if you have OHP assisters in your agency that can help participants enroll.
3. Find out who the health care providers are in your area that will accept OHP participants, including obstetricians and pediatricians.
 - a. How are referrals made to these providers?

Alcohol, tobacco, and drug use

Alcohol, tobacco, and drug use impacts more than just the health of the person using – it impacts the whole family. As you counsel participants you may find that substance abuse impacts a caregiver’s ability to make healthy choices or provide nutrition for their family. You are not expected to be a drug or alcohol counselor and screening for use can be difficult, but it is an important part of your assessment. At each certification, you will screen for use, refer if needed and inform caregivers of the concerns.



Step 1 – Screen:

- When doing an assessment, you will do a brief screening for potential alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use by prenatal and postpartum participants.
 - Spend the minimum amount of time doing the screening to enable you to decide about the need for a referral.
- The questions in the data system will help you find out if a participant or caregiver may be using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs that could harm the mother or baby.
- It is not in the scope of WIC to provide a full drug, alcohol or tobacco assessment or counseling. You are not trying to decide whether the person needs further treatment or not. A full drug assessment can only be completed by someone who has specific training in that process.

Step 2 – Refer:

- If you identify alcohol, tobacco or drug use during your screening, refer the participant to a provider who can do a full drug and alcohol assessment.
- Offer the participant a list of local resources for drug and other harmful substance abuse counseling and treatment. This list must be made available to all WIC participants: pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women and caregivers of infants and children.



Step 3 – Inform:

- During counseling at certification appointments, you are required to provide information about the dangers of using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs to all pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women and to caregivers of infants and children.
 - Provide the ***What You Eat Makes a Difference (57-701)*** to warn pregnant WIC participants about dangers from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
 - The pamphlet includes a statement that reads, “Don't smoke, drink alcohol or take drugs. They can harm you. They can harm your baby. If you want to stop smoking, drinking, or taking drugs, ask your WIC counselor. You can call Oregon Partnership, Alcohol and Drug Help Line for free help at 1-800-621-1646.”
 - For participants who do not speak English, have the interpreter read the statement.

Learning activity

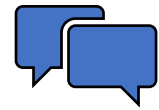


1. Find out what referral resources are available in your area:
 - a. Alcohol
 - b. Drugs
 - c. Tobacco
2. Find out what written list of local resources is used in your agency.
3. Review a copy of ***What You Eat Makes a Difference (57-701)***
4. Observe a certifier screen for alcohol, tobacco and drug use.
 - a. What went well?
 - b. What would you do differently?

Mandatory reporting

You can find information about mandatory reporting in ***Lesson 4-4 Assessment Variables***. While reporting child abuse is not the same as making a referral, it is something that you are required to do.

Talk It Over



Discuss any questions or concerns you have about making required referrals related to immunizations, OHP, or substance use with your training supervisor.

References

[Policy 481 – Immunization Screening and Referral Protocol](#)
[Policy 880 – Referrals: Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use](#)
[Policy 885 – Other Referrals: Required and Recommended](#)

