

WIC Local Agency Conference Call

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2026, 8:30-9:30 AM

Agenda and summary notes

Agenda items:

- Welcome/Updates (5 min) - Kate
 - ARPA Waivers
 - Cornell WIC Workforce Study
- Breastfeeding Survey (15 min) - Rosie
- Help Me Connect (20 min) - Shawn Holmes
- MN Paid Leave (10 min) – Betsy Ohrn

General program updates- Kate

Welcome/Updates

ARPA Waivers

- Minnesota WIC is currently leveraging regulatory waivers available to WIC through the American Rescue Plan Act or ARPA. These waivers allow for waiving the physical presence requirement for certification in WIC if health measurements can be obtained from another provider to meet the WIC requirements. The waiver also allows for remote benefit issuance. These waivers are set to end September 30, 2026, or when USDA completes their evaluation of these waivers.
- USDA FNS has shared with state agencies that the waivers are being extended through September 30, 2027, due to ongoing evaluation efforts that are still underway.
- With the 90-day notice requirement, any changes or expiration of these waivers will come with notice to WIC agencies.
- Local agencies should continue operations under these waivers and MDH WIC will provide more updates as the new end-date nears.

Cornell WIC Workforce Study

- WIC provides critical health and wellbeing support to families across the U.S. However, some WIC local agencies report that it is hard to find, hire, and/or retain staff with nutrition credentials, limiting WIC service provision or placing a burden on the existing workforce. To help close this gap, Cornell University is working with USDA through a Cooperative Agreement that is part of the USDA's WIC Workforce Development Initiative.
- The study seeks perspectives from WIC local agency leaders via a short anonymous survey.
- A link to the survey was sent out to WIC Coordinators through their State WIC Consultant to complete this survey.
- They are asking that the leader of each WIC local agency respond to the survey, ideally the person in charge of hiring and staffing the WIC Program.

Other program updates

Breastfeeding Survey – Rosie

Statewide Lactation Workforce Survey – Mn was awarded a bonus award 2022-2023. MN WIC was 4th largest in nation. Part of the award was given to the local agencies. Invest in breastfeeding supplies or

support, conducted a statewide survey to learn about the lactation workforce. Strengthening the network of breastfeeding support and building better community networks is a main goal. Reach out to Rosie.Pierce-Martin@state.mn.us for more information about the survey and if you'd like to know more about the findings from your area.

Help Me Connect – Shawn Holmes, DCYF [Help Me Connect](#)

Help Me Connect is an early childhood “one-stop shop” that connects families to local resources. It is a joint initiative between the Minnesota Departments of Children, Youth & Families; Education; Health; Human Services and Government Centers. The directory is celebrating its 5th anniversary as an interactive resource directory that connects users to local programs that support healthy child development and family well-being. Efforts to connect families to existing state and local services where they learn about service gaps and access barriers and inform leaders and policymakers. It is an interactive database of 15,000 plus programs and services chunked into 11 categories. WIC is found under ‘pregnant and expecting family needs’, one can also use the Table of contents to find WIC. Information is available in English, Spanish, Somali and Hmong. The site is mobile friendly and will sort programs/resources closest to a family’s home address, do key word searches with pop up suggestions and a sort and filter providing 20 other features. On average there are 25,000 users each month. Top keyword searches include mental health, paying for basic needs, kinship navigator, transportation, and diapers.

Help Me Connect evolved from Help Me Grow. Help Me Grow focuses on early childhood development and typical development milestones. Help Me Connect focuses on community and family resources. “Find a community resource navigator” will go live on 6/18. A connect feature will be made available where a user can fill out a form and that form will go directly to the program/organization.

For more information or if you have questions contact shawn.holmes@state.mn.us. You can also reach out to helpmeconnect@state.mn.us with any site suggestions.

MN Paid Leave – Betsy Ohrn, from MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), came to share more information on MN paid leave. Betsy defined two types of covered leave, Family and Medical. Medical leave is 1 to 12 weeks to care for an individual’s own serious health condition. Family leave is 1 to 12 weeks and includes Bonding, Military Family, Caring and Safety. There is a maximum of 20 weeks combined in one year if someone qualifies for both medical and family leave. Qualifying conditions must last at least seven days and be certified by a healthcare or other service provider. Medical leave is third party sick pay and part of this is considered income with the assumption 50% is considered income. Family leave (bonding, safety, caring, military) is considered 100% income.

Betsy provided the following guidance when looking at income in the portal:

The screenshot shows the 'Payment details' page on the Minnesota Paid Leave portal. It includes a navigation menu on the left, a 'Back' button, and a date field. The main content area displays the payment amount as '\$x,xxx.xx' and lists deductions and distributions. Three callout boxes provide additional context:

- Start with this number- Payment after deductions (GROSS payment)**: An arrow points to the 'Total' row in the Deductions table.
- Medical leave: 50% of Payment after deductions is income**
- Family leave: 100% of Payment after deductions is income**

Item	Amount
Pay from another job	\$x,xxx.xx
Partial Week / Intermittent Leave	\$x,xxx.xx
Workers' compensation benefits	\$x,xxx.xx
PTO / Sick / Vacation	\$x,xxx.xx
Total	\$x,xxx.xx

Item	Amount
Federal taxes	\$x,xxx.xx
State taxes	\$x,xxx.xx
Medicare Withholding	\$x,xxx.xx
OASDI Withholding	\$x,xxx.xx
Child support	\$x,xxx.xx
Total	\$x,xxx.xx

More WIC specific information will be shared with Local Agency WIC Coordinators through email in the next week.

Medical Formula – Rebecca

We ran out of time for this item. It will be addressed on the next Local Agency call. In the meantime, please review information that went out in last week’s Weekly Update [Medical Formulary Updates \(June 2026\)](#) and **review the ‘action items’ listed on page 3 of the document.** It is posted on the [Medical Formula Changes October 2026](#) webpage with additional information.

Questions & Answers

Does the ARPA waivers extension mean they will end (this is their 90+ day notice) on 9/30/27, or is there a possibility that they could be extended beyond 9/30/27 if need be?

Kate shares “USDA will still need to notify state agencies 90 days before the waivers expire. I think there is a possibility that the waivers could be extended beyond 9/30/27 if USDA is still engaged in the evaluation efforts.”

Rosie, are you looking for continuing education events to draw in or offer to those within health care systems? If so, is there funding or support for those?

If agencies are interested in hosting a training or have ideas of what they would like to do, reach out to Rosie.Pierce-Martin@state.mn.us to discuss and see how the state can support.

How can we access the prenatal breastfeeding class template?

The breastfeeding class template is currently posted in the Local Agency portal>> Peer breastfeeding>> Peer Document Libraries>> Peer program resources. If you aren’t able to access this, please email Rosie.Pierce-Martin@state.mn.us for an emailed copy of the PowerPoint template.

For WIC - will the connect feature take them to the State application or something else?

Yes.

For the delivery of a child, does every mom get 20 weeks (8 medical and 12 weeks bonding) or could it be less?

No, a person could receive less depending on the medical provider's certification, typically we see 6-8 weeks of medical leave.

If the employee used paid sick time through their employer instead of the state plan, are those dollars 100% income?

Yes, that will show on the paystub from the employer.

Do people know exactly which type they are getting for leave or not?

Yes, it will show in their Paid Leave account and on the determination. There are two big types: medical leave and family leave, which includes bonding, military, safety and caring leave.

How soon should a person apply for the paid leave program - even if they don't have the certification form completed by the doctor, should they be applying ahead of time? If there are delays in getting information, some families may not have disposable incomes to help them get through a gap between when they go on leave and when their payments would start.

With pregnancy, a good time to start applying is generally in the last trimester. You can apply up to 60 days before you plan to start your leave. You can start the bonding leave application 60 days in advance as well, but you need certification the baby was born to finish the application. Processing times should go down over time.

Does anyone know if this applies to people who work for Tribal Governments. A lot of our participants here work for Tribal Government. From my understanding, typically, Tribal Government is exempt from programs like this.

Tribal governments are not covered by the program but there is an opportunity to opt in. This requires an inter-governmental agreement.

For bringing income "proof" of the types of leave - do they get a paper copy or will they need to bring it up on their phones?

Bringing information up on their phone through the portal likely will be the easiest.

Are there working people going on maternity leave that would not qualify for PFML? Does anyone know?

Most MN workers are covered for large and small employers. Those that are self-employed, individual contractors, Tribal entities and some Federal groups (i.e., Red Cross and Railroad employees) are not covered with this benefit.

How long is it taking for clients to get payments? How long will it take for their website/account to reflect the payments?

Once they receive approval it can take between 2-3 days. Intermittent leave takes longer as they need to accumulate 7 days of leave before they can be paid.

Determination notice would be pretty accurate, since we do gross income and not net, correct?

Yes, but the amount on the determination notice is before deductions- which include partial weeks and PTO offsets. The payment tab and the amount after deductions is the gross income.

WIC assesses income as gross amount-what I am hearing is that for MNPL we would use after deductions/taxes. Is this correct?

You should use the amount after deductions and before taxes. That is the gross amount. You can see that in the payment tab as directed.

- 50% of the medical gross payment is income
- 100% of the family gross payment is income

References – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[Help Me Connect](https://www.helpmeconnectmn.org/) (<https://www.helpmeconnectmn.org/>)

[Medical Formulary Updates \(June 2026\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/formula/medformupdates.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/formula/medformupdates.pdf>)

[Medical Formula Changes October 2026](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/medformchngs.html)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/medformchngs.html>)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 625 Robert St N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.