
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 967 Session of
2021

INTRODUCED BY SCHWANK, BROOKS, HUGHES, MENSCH, FONTANA, COSTA,
KEARNEY, SANTARSIERO, COMITTA, STREET, BAKER AND CAPPELLETTI,
DECEMBER 10, 2021

REFERRED TO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, DECEMBER 10, 2021

AN ACT

1 Establishing the Women, Infants and Children State Advisory
2 Board.

3 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

4 (1) The Commonwealth intends to maximize the Federal
5 funding available for the Pennsylvania Special Supplemental
6 Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children by
7 maximizing enrollment in the program in order to support
8 healthier pregnancies and births and improved health in
9 children in our Commonwealth and coordinate other programs
10 that support women, infants and children.

11 (2) Immediate action is needed to halt the steady
12 decline in WIC enrollment and the resultant decrease in
13 Federal funding and nutritional assistance for Pennsylvania's
14 lower-income women, infants and children, by increased use of
15 technology, administrative organization, greater transparency
16 in operation and use of Federal funding.

17 (3) It is necessary to steadily increase enrollment in

1 programs that support women, infants and children, eliminate
2 enrollment barriers, coordinate and connect with related
3 programs and maximize technology to improve maternal and
4 infant birth outcomes and the health of children eligible for
5 participation in the program.

6 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
7 hereby enacts as follows:

8 Section 1. Short title.

9 This act shall be known and may be cited as the WIC State
10 Advisory Board Act.

11 Section 2. Definitions.

12 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
13 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
14 context clearly indicates otherwise:

15 "Board." The Women, Infants and Children State Advisory
16 Board established in section 3.

17 "Department." The Department of Health of the Commonwealth.

18 "SNAP." Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

19 "WIC." The Pennsylvania Special Supplemental Nutrition
20 Program for Women, Infants and Children.

21 Section 3. Establishment.

22 The Women, Infants and Children State Advisory Board is
23 established in the department.

24 Section 4. Duties.

25 (a) Advising.--The board shall advise the department and
26 other agencies providing nutrition services in health care to
27 lower-income and other eligible women and children in this
28 Commonwealth on the following topics:

29 (1) On the operation of the programs, to:

30 (i) Increase enrollment and utilization of the

1 programs, including:

2 (A) A study on the feasibility to implement a
3 memorandum of understanding with the Department of
4 Human Services to streamline the enrollment process
5 for eligible participants who are applying for SNAP
6 or medical assistance.

7 (B) Utilizing the COMPASS app to apply for
8 health and human services programs and manage benefit
9 information.

10 (ii) Improve the quality of services to support
11 connections between WIC and comprehensive services to
12 address the social, health, educational and other needs
13 of pregnant individuals, mothers, infants and toddlers.

14 (2) To develop an annual plan for outreach, including
15 targeted outreach to immigrants and other underserved
16 populations, and to increase enrollment by promoting outreach
17 and enrollment in each region through public-private
18 partnerships.

19 (3) To advise on technology improvements and
20 enhancements to be made using the American Rescue Plan Act of
21 2021 (Public Law 117-2, 135 Stat. 4) funds, including:

22 (i) Using a smart card that allows remote loading
23 and increased capacity for additional benefits.

24 (ii) Developing online appointment scheduling.

25 (iii) Maximizing innovations in telehealth to reduce
26 the need for in-person office visits.

27 (iv) Easing the ability to do online purchasing of
28 WIC benefits.

29 (v) Providing seamless enrollment and data sharing
30 between the department and the Department of Human

1 Services.

2 (vi) Developing the ability to obtain weight and
3 height measurements from a primary care physician through
4 telehealth.

5 (vii) Maximizing the use of text messaging to
6 participants on an individual and group basis.

7 (viii) Other technology and data improvements to
8 provide a more consumer-centered administration of the
9 Pennsylvania Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for
10 Women, Infants and Children.

11 (ix) Streamlining eligibility by using technology to
12 verify income and other requirements.

13 (4) On coordination and collation of services, to
14 improve efficiency and effectiveness of those services.

15 (5) On planned policy, administrative changes and budget
16 requests, to obtain input from the board prior to
17 implementation.

18 (b) Duties.--The board shall have the following duties:

19 (1) Review current aggregate data on WIC eligibility and
20 enrollment at the regional level from the department and the
21 Department of Human Services.

22 (2) Set outcome goals for enrollment and retention to
23 collectively take action through public-private partnerships
24 to address improvement opportunities.

25 (3) Develop an annual action plan for the department and
26 the Department of Human Services.

27 (4) Become familiar with the WIC Policy Manual and WIC
28 State plan to ensure all members are aware of the current
29 efforts.

30 (5) Research best practices that are used in other

1 states.

2 (6) Consult with agencies on what stakeholders could do
3 to promote outreach, enrollment and connection to
4 comprehensive services.

5 (7) Develop or disseminate outreach and educational
6 materials to reduce the stigma around WIC.

7 (8) Coordinate a cohesive group across this Commonwealth
8 to promote WIC across many channels and organizations that
9 work with potential WIC participants to create a unified
10 message.

11 (9) Serve as a leverage point for ongoing initiatives
12 benefiting women, infants and children.

13 Section 5. Membership and meetings.

14 (a) Membership.--The board shall consist of the following
15 members:

16 (1) Ex officio members.--The following individuals shall
17 be ex officio members of the board:

18 (i) The Secretary of Health or a designee.

19 (ii) The Secretary of Human Services or a designee.

20 (iii) The Director of WIC or a designee.

21 (2) Members of the board shall include one
22 representative from each of the following:

23 (i) A regional health care provider serving women,
24 infants and children.

25 (ii) An obstetrician.

26 (iii) A pediatrician.

27 (iv) A licensed dietician.

28 (v) A representative of a retail grocery store chain
29 contracted with the Commonwealth to provide online sales.

30 (vi) A WIC program provider agency representative

1 from each of the six regions as designated by the
2 Commonwealth or national association of WIC agency
3 providers.

4 (vii) A consumer advocate with expertise in
5 federally funded nutritional programs.

6 (b) Additional members.--The board may at any time make
7 additional appointments to the board that may be necessary to
8 carry out its duties.

9 (c) Terms.--Members of the board shall be appointed on an
10 annual basis by the secretary of the department for a term not
11 to exceed three consecutive years.

12 (d) Vacancies.--Vacancies in the membership of the board
13 shall be filled in the same manner as provided for the original
14 appointments.

15 (e) Staffing.--The board shall be staffed in collaboration
16 with individuals from:

17 (1) The department.

18 (2) The Department of Human Services.

19 (3) SNAP.

20 (f) Subcommittees.--The board may at any time create
21 subcommittees of the board members to carry out specific tasks
22 or research. Subcommittees are to be created on an ad hoc basis
23 and are not to replace or interfere with the efforts of the
24 board.

25 (g) Meetings.--The board shall meet in accordance with the
26 following:

27 (1) Members shall meet no less than 10 times per year.

28 (2) The agenda for each meeting and all meeting minutes
29 shall be posted to the department's publicly accessible
30 Internet website.

1 (3) Meetings shall comply with the following:
2 (i) The act of February 14, 2008 (P.L.6, No.3),
3 known as the Right-to-Know Law.
4 (ii) 65 Pa.C.S. Ch. 7 (relating to open meetings).
5 Section 6. Effective date.
6 This act shall take effect in 60 days.