

Boise State University

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2019 Graduate Student Showcase

Graduate Student Showcases

April 2019

Idaho WICSmart: Process and Implementation Evaluation

Alexis Pickering

Boise State University

Idaho WICSmart: Process and Implementation Evaluation

Abstract

The goal of this study was to conduct a process evaluation using the RE-AIM Implementation framework to determine if: eligible WIC participants found WICSmart to be an appealing option for their nutrition education, and assess the implementation of the WICSmart program in participating health districts.

The study was conducted from June 4-July 31, 2018. Information for this study was collected from 38 members of the WIC staff in three Idaho health districts using a survey, personnel response sheet, and a tracking form. The results show that WIC clients were interested in WICSmart because it is more convenient than in-person education.



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Alexis Pickering
Master of Health Science

Background

From 2013 to 2017, Idaho has seen a 15.6% decrease in WIC participation even as the number of eligible participants has increased (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2018). Established in 1974, WIC, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children serves to protect the health of low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five who are nutritionally at risk (USDA, 2018).

WICSmart is an online nutrition education platform created for WIC programs to provide convenient lessons to eligible WIC participants. Traditionally, WIC clients receive nutrition education and counseling in-person at WIC clinics (USDA, 2018).

Traditionally, WIC clients receive nutrition education and counseling in-person at WIC clinics (USDA, 2018). This study was conducted to explore WIC client interest in a web-based platform and to assess the implementation of the WICSmart program in participating public health districts (PHDs). PHDs 1, 4, and 7 volunteered to participate in this pilot study.

Findings from this study may inform future utilization of WICSmart throughout Idaho, which may help to close the participation gap. With an expanded implementation of WICSmart, there is an opportunity to attract and engage more clients.

Objectives

1. Evaluate WICSmart Pilot Implementation in three public health districts in Idaho
2. Assess interest and perceptions of WICSmart among eligible, low-risk WIC clients who may choose to use WICSmart
3. Identify barriers and/or challenges for clients who may use WICSmart

Methods

The study was conducted from June 4 – July 31, 2018 in PHD 1, 4, and 7. The data was collected using tools designed by the researcher and included:

1. WIC staff survey (10 questions)
2. WIC personnel Response Sheet
3. WIC client participation patterns during pilot

The survey was designed and administered using RE-AIM principles. Applying the RE-AIM framework to the staff survey asses the implementation for different components of the WICSmart program across diverse WIC staff.

The WICSmart Response Sheet was designed for use by WIC staff to capture initial client feedback when asked if they would be interested in participating in WICSmart.

WIC participation rates included total participation rates for PHDs 1, 4, and 7 for low, medium, and high risk clients. The number of modules completed by eligible WIC participants were also collected.

Results

- WIC Staff Survey**
- Completed by 38 participants
 - Majority of clients wanted to try WICSmart
- Of those that tried WICSmart and experienced problems reported:**
- Occasional technical glitches
 - Internet/phone difficulties
 - Spanish-speakers generally had more challenges

Table 1

<i>How receptive were eligible WIC clients to WICSmart?</i>			
	<u>Not Receptive</u>	<u>Somewhat Receptive</u>	<u>Very Receptive</u> <u>Over 75% Opted to Participate</u>
Total	1	16	21
<i>In general, how satisfied are you with WICSmart providing online nutrition education to your WIC clients?</i>			
	<u>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Extremely Satisfied</u>
Total	7	18	13

WICSmart Response Sheet

- 335 responses
- 86 responses were not interested in WICSmart
- 291 responses wanted to try WICSmart
- Convenience was identified as the primary reason for WICSmart interest
- Preferring in-person appointments was the primary reason for disinterest in WICSmart

Table 2

Is the participant interested in WICSmart?				
Participant Response	YES		NO	
		Convenience		Lack of internet access
		Prefer technology		Barrier related to phone
		Other, please describe		Barrier related to access to computer
				Distrust of web-based program
				Other, please describe

WICSmart Modules

During in-person appointments that occurred during the pilot, eligible WIC clients were offered WICSmart for their next education appointment. Some clients completed the assigned WICSmart module(s) during the pilot, meanwhile other scheduled them in August or September.

Table 3

WICSmart Modules Completed per PHD				
	WICSmart Modules	PHD1	PHD4	PHD7
June 2018	Completed	18	1	24
July 2018	Completed	12	2	42

Conclusion

Convenience Value

The majority of eligible WIC clients wanted to try WICSmart because it would be more convenient than in-person education. This convenience value could lead to being highly utilized by clients. It addresses and alleviates some barriers to WIC participation such as driving long distances, providing flexibility for busy parents, and providing customized lessons that are also standardized.

WIC staff considered WICSmart to be a welcomed platform for online education for their clients and the pilot was relatively cohesive.

The literature review presented other research demonstrating the effectiveness of online education for other similar participants.

Accommodations for non-English Speakers

The WIC staff survey and literature review showed that non-English speakers have different expectations of online education and may need more assistance to increase WICSmart acceptability and use.

Pilot Strengths

- Provided a diverse snapshot of WIC participation from north, central, and eastern regions of Idaho
- Showed client preferences to WICSmart for various reasons

Limitations

- Short study period, which also limited the ability to measure WICSmart impact

Recommendations

Non-English Speakers

- Create videos on how to log-in to WICSmart in various languages
- WIC staff guide clients at in-person appointments on how to log on, review which lesson category they are assigned, and how to complete a lesson.
- Provide group classes where clients can teach each other

Other Recommendations:

- Partner with libraries to improve internet access among WIC clients
- More research needs to be conducted
- Continue to add online education and other forms of education

References

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