



Targeted Text Message Outreach Can Increase WIC Enrollment

Over **40 percent of eligible individuals** — or more than **5 million people nationwide** — have missed out on Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits in recent years, despite the program’s well-documented benefits for the health and well-being of low-income families.¹

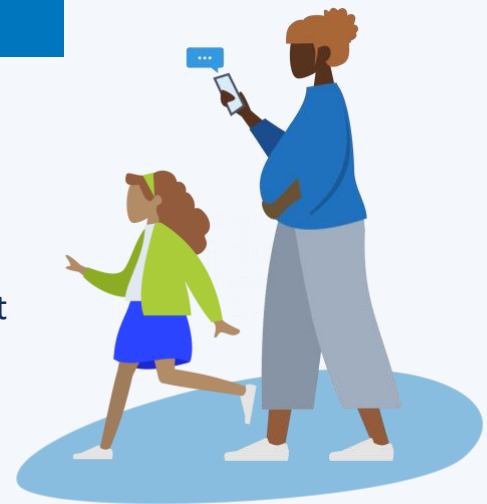
Many of those missing out are enrolled in Medicaid or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps), which makes them automatically income-eligible for WIC through a policy known as *adjunctive eligibility*. **Targeted text messaging to people adjunctively eligible is one promising strategy to begin addressing WIC enrollment gaps.**

In partnership with **Benefits Data Trust (BDT)** and the **Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)**, four states — Colorado, Massachusetts, Montana, and Virginia — piloted data matching and text outreach to connect adjunctively eligible families to WIC and found that this approach can increase WIC enrollment. This brief, which describes some of the pilots’ key findings on targeted text message outreach, is one in a three-part series summarizing the findings and best practices from the pilots. The other two briefs focus on evaluation outcomes and cross-program data matching.²

Targeted text message outreach is a promising strategy to increase awareness about and enrollment in WIC.

Benefits include:

- **WIC-eligible families** identified through cross-program data matches are largely reachable by text.
- **Roughly 1 in 5** recipients engaged with text outreach, and about one-third of those individuals requested a WIC appointment.
- **Texting is a cost-effective and low maintenance** approach to modernizing WIC outreach.

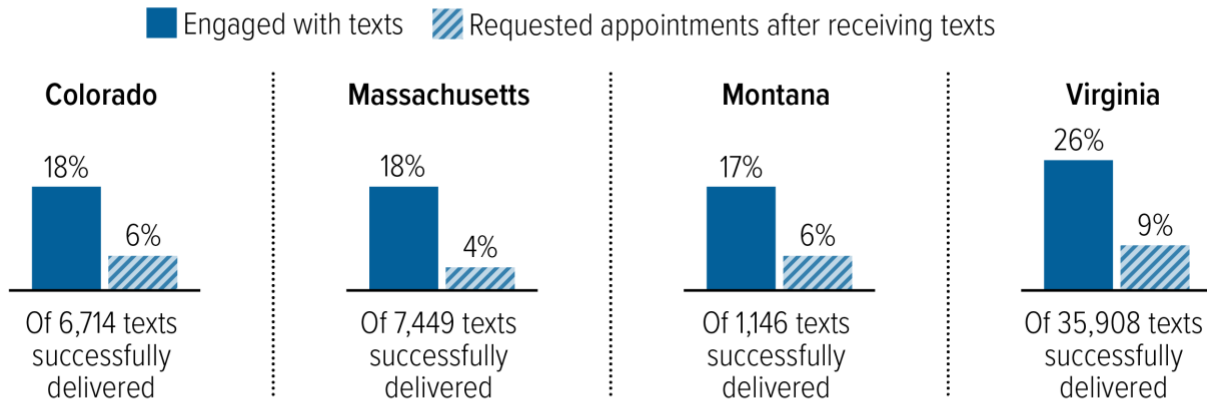


¹ For more information about the research evidence on WIC’s effectiveness, see Steven Carlson and Zoë Neuberger, “WIC Works: Addressing the Nutrition and Health Needs of Low-Income Families for More Than Four Decades,” CBPP, updated January 27, 2021, www.cbpp.org/wicworks; U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, “National and State Level Estimates of WIC Eligibility and Program Reach in 2019,” February 2022, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/national-state-level-estimates-eligibility-program-reach-2019>.

² Benefits Data Trust (BDT) and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), “Using Data Matching and Targeted Outreach to Boost WIC Enrollment: Lessons Learned From State Pilots,” March 31, 2022, www.cbpp.org/wicpilotbrief; BDT and CBPP, “Matching Data Across Benefit Programs Can Increase WIC Enrollment,” March 31, 2022, www.cbpp.org/wicdatamatchingbrief.

Texting Is a Viable Way of Engaging WIC-Eligible Families

Rates of engagement among WIC-eligible text recipients



Note: CBPP and Benefits Data Trust conducted pilots with four states in 2018-2019 to identify and address underenrollment, through data matching and text outreach, in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) among those who qualify because they're "adjunctively eligible" – that is, they're automatically considered income-eligible based on their participation in other means-tested programs such as Medicaid or SNAP.

Source: Benefits Data Trust analysis of state data

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WIC-Eligible Families Identified Through Data Matches Are Largely Reachable by Text

In the four states that tested this strategy, the vast majority of WIC-eligible families already enrolled in other programs had mobile phones that could receive text messages. Close to 80 percent of the outreach texts sent to mobile numbers were successfully delivered across the four states.



1 in 5 Recipients Engaged With Texts, of Whom One-Third Requested a WIC Appointment

Although the first attempt at outreach consistently produced the highest response, we found that subsequent text outreach attempts increased the overall response rate. In the context of these pilots, we considered any response — other than opting out of further messages — engagement with the texts.



Texting Is a Cost-Effective, Low-Maintenance Way to Modernize WIC Outreach

Compared to other outreach methods such as telephone and mail, texting is a cost-effective strategy that is relatively easy for states to maintain once established. Text outreach processes require an initial commitment of staff time to implement but are neither costly nor burdensome once agencies incorporate them into their procedures. As a result, WIC agencies could adopt text outreach as a complement to existing outreach strategies.

To learn more about considerations for launching text-based outreach and how texting compares to mail and telephone outreach, see the full report: [Targeted Text Message Outreach Can Increase WIC Enrollments, Pilots Show](#)

