

## Using the NWA Calendars as Nutrition Education

The 2013 calendars from the National WIC Association (NWA) are provided to Kansas WIC families as part of their ongoing nutrition education. The theme for this year's calendar is "A World of Tastes on MyPlate." It emphasizes that the foods we eat daily originate from a variety of cultures and countries. The calendar celebrates our rich and varied food traditions. Each month, foods from different cultures are highlighted along with weekly tips, physical activity and recipes.

MyPlate is the special focus of each month, using foods from the different cultures. The five food groups: Vegetables, Fruits, Grains, Protein and Dairy remind clients that they can make smart choices every day to build a healthful plate. The calendar illustrates how to do this, using a serving of the recipe for that month and building the rest of the meal using the other food groups.

The State WIC Office is providing additional information which can enhance the use of the calendars. Suggestions for bulletin boards and additional recipes that represent the various cultures are included in this packet of materials. The recipes include nutrition information, but have not been tested by the State staff.

**When the calendars are distributed to clients, they should not just be handed to the client as a "give-away", but should be used as part of the nutrition education offered at that WIC appointment. If the LA wants to use the calendar as a client's low risk secondary nutrition education, then a specific lesson plan will need to be developed. Or if the LA has an existing lesson plan that includes one of the calendar topics, adapt it to include the calendar as a handout. (All WIC lesson plans must include the requirements in Policy NED 03.03.01; see the lesson plan template on the WIC website.)**

Below are several ideas on how the calendars could be used as part of the counseling/nutrition education experience:

1. **Introduce the concept of MyPlate**—Discuss the concept of a meal in which  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the plate should be fruits and vegetables,  $\frac{1}{4}$  protein foods,  $\frac{1}{4}$  grains, and include some source of dairy. Use the calendar, along with other MyPlate materials to illustrate how a meal could be made using the model. The pictures of a meal on the page after each calendar month use the MyPlate principles.
2. **Introduce the concept of Food Groups**—Using MyPlate materials from the Publications Order Form, the KDHE/WIC website or other sources, discuss the concept of 5 food groups—fruits, vegetables, protein, grains and dairy. Illustrate with food models, pictures, or items shown on the calendar, what types of foods are included in each food group.
3. **Trying new foods**—Some caregivers hesitate to try new foods if money is an issue or they are unsure how to use the new items. Discuss that foods from many countries and cultures are available now in our grocery stores. Use the calendar to point out foods which might be new to them. Review a recipe using the new food and make suggestions on how to introduce the food to their children. Encourage the caregiver to review the calendar at home and pick out other

recipes to try. Remind caregivers they set a good example by eating a variety of foods from all food groups.

4. **Helping children explore new foods**—The calendar has many illustrations of foods which may be unfamiliar to young children (okra, bok choy, mango, blackberries, etc.). Using the calendar as a tool, share strategies for introducing new foods to children. You can suggest that the caregivers include children in the purchasing process at the store; talk about the color, shape, or smell of the new food. They can discuss how the food would be prepared—steamed, fried, raw or frozen. Lastly, offer suggestions on serving the food to children—allowing them to choose how much to eat, offering new foods more than once before they may be accepted, etc.
5. **Highlight healthy cooking methods**—Many of the recipes illustrated in the calendar are made using healthy cooking styles—less fried foods, less added fat and sugar, and more fresh foods. Techniques such as “oven-fried” fish, baked empanadas, and grilled shrimp and pineapple skewers may introduce new ways of cooking to WIC clients. Encourage them to try the recipes and offer additional recipes as needed using similar cooking methods.
6. **Be Active!**—Each month of the calendar includes a small box with a suggestion for caregiver-child activities. Point out these tips to caregivers and encourage them to try different ways of being physically active with their children. Discuss that activity does not need to be difficult or require special equipment. Solicit ideas from the caregivers on how they currently stay active with their children. Talk about activities that can be done both indoors and outdoors as weather permits.
7. **Highlight a particular cultural eating pattern**—Many of the cultural eating patterns illustrated in the calendar provide healthy ways of fixing food as well as in their choices of foods. Either emphasizing the healthy aspects of the culture from which the client comes, or picking another culture with foods that are enjoyed by the WIC family, discuss how they can stay true to their traditions and still eat healthfully. Point out the use of fruits and vegetables, lower fat proteins, and ways to cut fat and sugar in food preparation. Offer additional recipes that may expand their use of traditional foods and cooking methods.
8. **Include healthy snacks**—Although discussion of healthy snacks is not illustrated in the calendar, you may find it helpful to suggest snack options using the foods from a particular cultural group or area of the world as shown in the calendar. For instance, you might talk about hot chocolate with cinnamon as a snack (Mexico); trail mix with nuts and dried fruit (Middle East); roasted squash or pumpkin seeds (Native American); or a banana mango smoothie.
9. **Breastfeeding**—In August, the calendar highlights breastfeeding and World Breastfeeding Week. This can be a great way to introduce breastfeeding and talk about the importance of watching for baby’s hunger cues, skin-to-skin time, and staying hydrated during breastfeeding. Use the recipe, weekly tips and illustrations to make counseling points.
10. **Focus on a particular Food Group**—Although the calendar uses the MyPlate concept to show how families can include all of the food groups in a meal, you may wish to emphasize a particular food group. For instance, if a parent is concerned about how to get their child to eat more fruits and vegetables, use the calendar to talk about the variety of foods in each group, options for how they are served (the pictures show a variety of options), and ways to “hide”

vegetables or fruits within more complex recipes (Empanada, banana mango smoothie, Goulash soup).

11. **Try non-meat sources of protein**—Many cultural groups utilize non-meat sources of protein to replace or extend the meat in their diets. Using beans, lentils, peas, soybeans, tofu, peanut butter and eggs to create healthy main dishes may be a new concept to some WIC families. Use the illustrations as well as a variety of recipes to explain how these foods can be budget friendly as well as tasty. Point out that many of the non-meat sources of protein can be purchased with WIC checks.
12. **Using spices in cooking**—Often WIC families may have limited resources with which to purchase spices for cooking. Because of this, they may limit their choices to those most often used. Encourage them to try other spices such as cumin, chili powder, curry, or ginger to season their foods and create a new flavor. Provide them with low cost sources to purchase these spices (dollar stores often have a variety of low cost spices).
13. **Seasonal Cooking**—stews and soups for winter; fresh fruits in the spring and early summer; cool –cooking recipes for summer. The calendar lends itself well to showing WIC families how they can use foods in season to make healthy meals for their families. Choose a meal that works well with the time of year and discuss how using foods in season can reduce food costs. You may also decide to emphasize a particular type of recipe (stews and soups like Goulash soup and Harvest stew) for winter.