Evaluation of Healthy Families New York Program Referrals
New York State Office of Children and Family Services
Sarah Whitehouse
School of Public Health, University at Albany SUNY

BACKGROUND
- Healthy Families New York (HFNY) is a home visiting program administered by New York State Office of Children and Family Services. This program is designed for new parents at risk of child maltreatment or abuse.
- HFNY program enrollment relies on referrals from community organizations, one of the most fruitful sources historically being Women Infants and Children (WIC). WIC is administered by New York State Department of Health.
- Anecdotally, HFNY programs reported WIC referrals had declined in recent years. This study looked to understand the referral relationship between WIC and HFNY.
- Research suggests cross-agency collaboration may lead to improved outcomes in the human services sector, given support from management and proper resources. Cross-agency collaboration can address complex issues, such as providing all appropriate services to families in need.

METHODS
- MIS Data: A review of referrals from WIC to HFNY during SFY 2013 to SFY 2017 from HFNY Management Information System (MIS).
- HFNY Program Leader Focus Groups: HFNY Programs leaders grouped by WIC region:
  - WIC Capital District, WIC Central, WIC Western, WIC Metro 1, and WIC Metro 2
  - What is working in your relationship with your local WIC provider?
  - What concerns do you have about your relationship with your local WIC offices?
  - What are your hopes for your relationship with your local WIC provider?
- HFNY Program Manager Survey: Survey on perception of WIC referrals and relationship given to program managers. Survey collected data on:
  - Administrative Information
  - WIC Relationship Information
  - HFNY/WIC Program and Referral Information

RESULTS
- MIS Data: Change in WIC Referrals by Year
  - Change in WIC referrals for 2013-2017:
    - 2013-2014: Increase
    - 2014-2015: Increase
    - 2015-2016: Increase
    - 2016-2017: Decrease

Focus Groups
- What’s Working?
  - HFNY having a presence at WIC offices
  - MOU with specific information
  - HFNY staff doing in-person outreach at WIC offices
  - WIC representative on HFNY advisory board
- What’s Concerning?
  - [WIC Offices] Lack of Knowledge about HFNY program services
  - WIC enrollment is down
  - E-WIC rollout
- Hopes for the Future?
  - Increased rapport between HFNY and WIC staff
  - Show how HFNY can help WIC reach their goals
  - Seamlessness between HFNY and WIC
  - Overall Increased Collaboration
- Survey
  - 35 programs completed the survey on 53 WIC relationships
  - Good or Better:
    - WIC member on advisory board
    - Combined activities
    - Frequent, positive communication
  - Less than Good:
    - Competition
    - Lack of communication
    - Staff turnover

HFNY/WIC Program and Referral Information
- Referrals from WIC most commonly come from WIC Nutritionist and Breastfeeding Counselors.
- 37% of partnerships reported no one at local WIC offices make referrals.
- Majority of referrals are coming from a screening form at the WIC office, and HFNY having a presence at local WIC office.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS
- Strengths
  - All data were derived from HFNY programs. This bottom-up approach best reflects the actuality of what programs are experiencing.
  - Information from this project informed next steps and actionable items to improve the HFNY/WIC relationship.
- Limitations
  - Possible errors with data collection and reporting e.g. recording referrals to WIC from HFNY.
  - This study solely looked at data from the HFNY perspective and was unable to incorporate any information from WIC directly.

CONCLUSIONS
- Conclusions
  - HFNY has experienced a decrease in program referrals from WIC, especially since 2017
  - Focus group and survey data identified issues leading to decrease in referrals
  - Decrease in referrals was not experienced statewide, districts are affected differently
  - Decrease in referrals may speak to siloed nature of NYS agencies. Increasing referrals will require increased collaboration with the NYS DOH
- Implications
  - These results created an opportunity to discuss the findings with the DOH
  - Efforts on the local, regional, and state level are suggested to rekindle relationship between WIC and HFNY to improve referrals and enrollment for both programs

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
A sincere and hearty thank you to my mentors Kristen Kirkland, PhD and Claudia Miranda-Julian, PhD. Their guidance was instrumental in the implementation and execution of this project.