



MICHAEL J. "MIKE"
WAGUESPACK, CPA

Report Highlights

Oversight of Outreach and Participation – Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

Louisiana Department of Health – Office of Public Health

Audit Control # 40250036

Performance Audit Services • June 2026

Why We Conducted This Audit

We evaluated the Louisiana Department of Health's (LDH) oversight of program outreach and participation for Louisiana's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which is administered by LDH's Bureau of Nutrition Services within the Office of Public Health. We conducted this audit because proper administration of the WIC program is important, as it provides essential nutrition to at-risk mothers, infants, and children and reduces healthcare costs that may be incurred if participants did not have access to proper nutrition.

What We Found

Overall, we found LDH could improve its oversight of clinic outreach and address other barriers, such as transportation and restrictive appointment requirements, that may contribute to Louisiana's low WIC participation rate. Specifically, we found the following:

- **During federal fiscal years (FFY) 2024 through 2025, LDH did not ensure WIC clinics in Louisiana met outreach requirements.** According to FFY 2025 outreach reports, 56 (56.0%) of 100 clinics did not conduct at least one outreach activity per month as required by the policy. Outreach is important, as Louisiana ranks 50th in the nation for WIC coverage rate, which is a percentage of the WIC-eligible population being served in the state. LDH should provide clearer guidance to clinics on what activities should be conducted to satisfy the monthly outreach requirements.
- **LDH could integrate tools to streamline the income verification process in the WIC clinics to prevent delays in enrollment.** In addition, LDH requires income verification letters for cash-paid applicants to enroll in WIC, which is more stringent than federal regulations require. Unnecessary application requirements create administrative burdens that may make it challenging for individuals to access and use government benefit programs like WIC.
- **LDH could improve participation in the WIC program by ensuring more clinics offer appointments off-site and outside of regular business hours as well as ensuring that parents are aware of exceptions to required in-person clinic visits.** As of April 2026, 81 (81.0%) of Louisiana's 100 WIC clinics operate exclusively between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., when working parents may find it difficult to attend mandatory in-person appointments. In addition, Louisiana has only one mobile clinic that exclusively serves an air force base. The exhibit on the next page shows the 19 WIC clinics that are open in Louisiana outside of the hours of 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

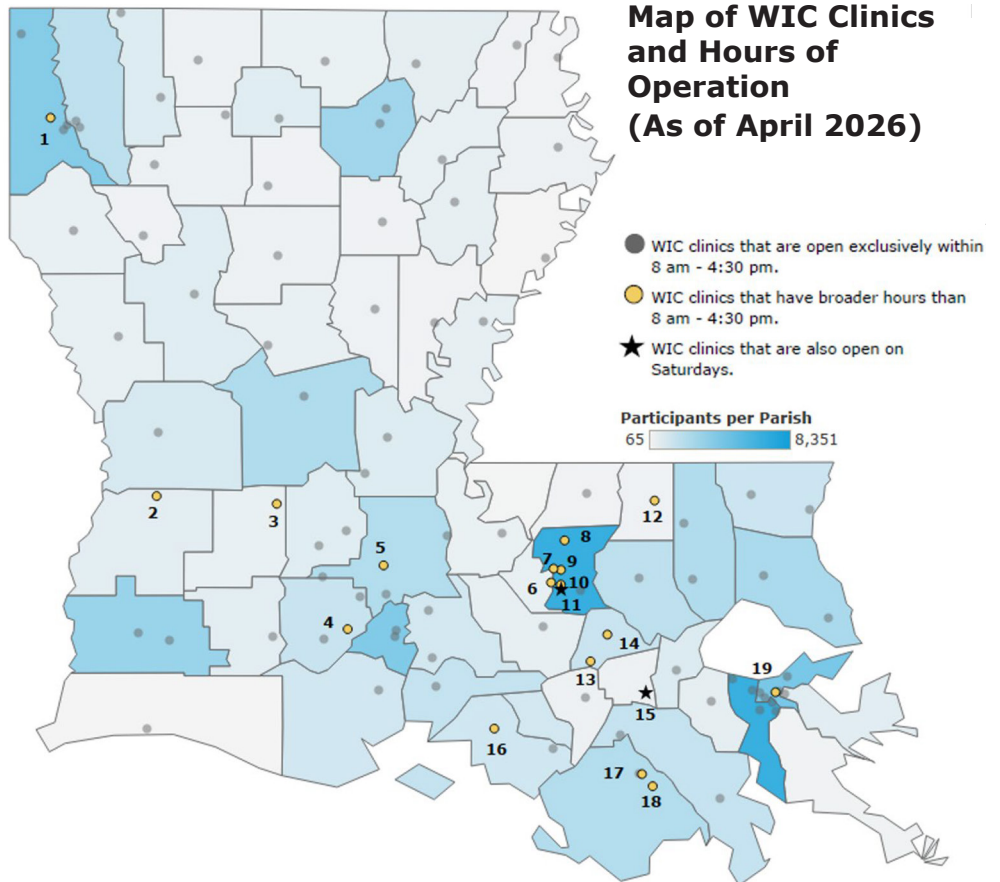
Continued on next page

Oversight of Outreach and Participation – Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

Louisiana Department of Health – Office of Public Health

What We Found (Cont.)

- **LDH could improve participation in the WIC program by addressing transportation barriers, ensuring strategic placement of WIC clinics, offering accurate information on available clinics, and ensuring clinics are responsive to phone calls.** LDH does not include WIC transportation in its Medicaid contracts and has one in-house WIC transportation van that serves only two parishes. In addition, 23.5% of our calls to clinics for interviews went unanswered.



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data provided by LDH.

- **LDH could improve food redemption rates through expanded product options and nutritional education, as 46.8% of the total units included in WIC food packages were not redeemed during calendar year 2025.** According to the United States Department of Agriculture, during FFY 2021 through 2024, the state did not use \$111.6 million (34.6%) of available WIC funding. In addition to expanded food options, LDH should require clinic staff to regularly address low redemption rates through nutrition education related to items not being redeemed.

We made 13 recommendations, and LDH agreed with 12 recommendations and partially agreed with one recommendation. See Appendix A in the report for the agency's full response.