The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a targeted, time limited supplemental public health nutrition program that serves over 8 million vulnerable women, infants and young children across the United States.

Mission of WIC
To assure healthy pregnancies, healthy birth outcomes and healthy growth and development for women, infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk, by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information and education on healthy eating, and referrals to health care and critical social services.

The Critical Need for WIC
Across the United States, in urban and rural areas, WIC’s time-limited services and benefits ensure that children get a strong, healthy start in life. There is clear evidence that good nutrition during pregnancy and in the first few years of life has long-term positive impacts on health. When children have a healthy start, their prospects, and America’s prospects, are brighter.

With historically strong bipartisan support and clear evidence demonstrating how WIC is both efficient and effective at improving the health of low income children, WIC ensures the future health and safety of millions of Americans.

Through quality nutrition services, WIC addresses critical public health concerns threatening America. New research suggests that the obesity epidemic, for example, may pose a threat to both national security and our economy. It is clear that WIC services that improve the healthfulness of young children’s diets are more crucial than ever.

WIC Supports the Military
Did you know that WIC supports military families across America and many military commissaries are authorized WIC vendors?

In Florida, all 10 military bases have commissaries that are authorized WIC vendors. In California, in one month (August 2016), more than 4,000 WIC military families redeemed WIC food instrument at one of the 24 commissaries, representing a total of $171,224 in monthly monetary benefits for California military families.

From Our Participants
“WIC was compassionate while others cast judgment.”
WIC Participant, Illinois

“WIC has meant support in my journey to becoming a mom.”
WIC Participant, Florida

“Many years ago I received a hand-up from WIC so that I could provide for my family to get through some very tough times.”
WIC Participant, Iowa

Who does WIC serve?

- 8 million mothers and young children each month through 10,000 clinics nationwide
- 773,000 pregnant women
- 593,000 breastfeeding women
- 2.0 million infants (under the age of 1)
- 4.2 million children (aged 1 until their 5th birthday)

FY2015 data: https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wic-program
By reducing the number of pre-term births and low birth-weight babies, WIC is contributing to substantial healthcare cost savings. It has been estimated that $13 billion per year would be saved if 90% of US infants were breastfed exclusively for six months.

Currently, only 22% of all American infants are exclusively breastfed at 6 months. As a nation, we have a long way to go. WIC is playing a critical role in supporting

WIC is good for our economy: contributing to substantial healthcare cost savings

The US spends 17% of our GDP on healthcare costs, almost twice as much as other developed countries. Despite the high spending, life expectancy in the US is shorter and the prevalence of chronic conditions is higher. By providing preventive health services during critical periods of growth and development, WIC helps to lower healthcare costs and improve health outcomes for Americans.

> WIC reduces the likelihood of adverse birth outcomes, including very low birth-weight babies.
> WIC improves birth outcomes for high-risk mothers.
> Preterm births cost the US over $26 billion a year, with average first year medical costs for a premature/low birth-weight baby of $49,033 compared to $4,551 for a baby born without complications.
> For very low birth-weight babies, a shift of one pound at birth saves approximately $28,000 in first year medical costs.
> The annual cost of WIC participation per WIC participant is approximately $775. Therefore, WIC is a wise investment.
WIC: BUILDING HEALTHY FAMILIES

WIC provides 4 core services: nutrition education, breastfeeding support, healthy foods package, and referrals to health and social services. WIC helps ensure that kids enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn.

NUTRITION EDUCATION – LEARNING TO BE HEALTHY

WIC supports families to make healthy changes to their lifestyle through nutrition education that can take various forms, from online modules to group classes to one-on-one counseling. The nutrition education in WIC helps families connect the dots between health, growth, and development.

The nutrition counseling approach used by WIC staff is participant-centered and intentionally directs WIC families to consider their own behaviors and highlights their capacities, strengths, and needs, rather than their problems or negative behaviors. WIC nutrition educators (i.e. dietitians, nutritionists and other professionals) are trained in nutrition counseling. They are credible sources of nutrition information.

In new FNS research, mothers report that WIC has helped them to make positive changes in how they feed themselves and their families.17

Twenty plus years ago, early introduction of solid foods to a babies’ diet was a significant problem (at least 62% of mothers introduced foods before 4 months of age). Today, only 20% of WIC mothers are introducing solids before 4 months.18

Breastfeeding rates rose from 42% in 1998 to 70% in 2014.

WIC NUTRITION EDUCATION HAS SHOWN TO HELP INCREASE THE CONSUMPTION OF HEALTHFUL FOODS21

FAST FACTS

RECENT RESEARCH SHOWS THAT HIGH-QUALITY ONLINE NUTRITION EDUCATION IN WIC CAN SUPPORT PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION19

ONE-ON-ONE COUNSELING IS THE PRIMARY DELIVERY METHOD FOR WIC NUTRITION EDUCATION20

WIC also supports American farmers -- over $15 million per year is spent at farmers’ markets through the WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). This program provides coupons that WIC families can use to purchase fresh and local produce at the farmers’ market.

Breastfeeding Support and Promotion

Within the US, there is a disparity in breastfeeding rates between low-income women and higher-income women. The barriers to breastfeeding include social pressures, a quick return to work after delivery, lack of facilities to breastfeed or pump in the workplace and targeted marketing by the infant formula industry. WIC has been successful in supporting low-income women with the initiation of breastfeeding and is leading efforts to increase breastfeeding duration. In the last two decades, 28% of WIC moms initiated breastfeeding. Breastfeeding rates rose from 42% in 1998 to 70% in 2014.
HOW DOES WIC SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING?

» Breastfeeding education is integrated into prenatal education for all pregnant WIC participants.

» WIC mothers choosing to breastfeed are provided information through counseling and breastfeeding educational materials.

» Breastfeeding mothers:
  - receive follow-up support from trained staff, including peer counselors where available.
  - are eligible to participate in WIC longer than non-breastfeeding mothers.
  - can receive breast pumps and breastfeeding accessories to help support the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding.

» Mothers who exclusively breastfeed their infants receive an enhanced food package.

» WIC helps moms to breastfeed for longer. New research shows that at 12 months’ post-partum 18% of WIC moms are still breastfeeding. This is a vast improvement, 20+ years ago only 7% of moms were breastfeeding at 12 months.22

» WIC staff are trusted sources of breastfeeding information, in fact, a recent FNS study shows that WIC staff are the second most common group that women speak with about breastfeeding (after husbands/partners).23

The long- and short-term impacts of breastfeeding are well established. Research indicates that breastfeeding can help reduce the risk of some diseases and infections for both the infant and mother and, for infants, reduce the risk of developing obesity later in childhood.

WIC services improve breastfeeding rates among diverse populations of low-income women.24 Participation in the WIC breastfeeding peer counseling program is associated with an increased rate of breastfeeding initiation.25 In addition, women who attend WIC breastfeeding support groups are twice as likely to plan to breastfeed as those who do not.26

FAST FACTS

93% OF STATE AGENCIES REPORT OPERATING OR OVERSEEING A LOCAL AGENCY THAT HAS A PEER COUNSELOR PROGRAM27

BREASTFEEDING INITIATION RATES IN WIC HAVE INCREASED FROM 42% IN 1998 TO 70% IN 201428

BREASTFEEDING MOMS CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM LONGER AND RECEIVE A SPECIAL ENHANCED FOOD PACKAGE TO SUPPORT THEIR UNIQUE NUTRITIONAL NEEDS

MATERNAL WIC PARTICIPATION HAS BEEN SHOWN TO IMPROVE BREASTFEEDING RATES29

HEALTHY FOOD – FUELING HEALTHY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The WIC food package provides a wide range of healthy food to supplement the diets of WIC mothers and young children. A pregnant woman, postpartum mom, breastfed infant, formula-fed infant, or a young child, receives different foods tailored to meet their nutritional needs.

The WIC food package is reviewed at least every 10 years. The independent National Academy of Medicine has made sure that the food package is science based aligned with the most up-to-date Dietary Guidelines for Americans, meets the nutritional needs of WIC families, is culturally appropriate, and includes foods that appeal to young families. This process ensures that all of the foods in the food package are only included if scientific research deems them important to support the health of low-income women, infants, and children -- only necessary foods are included in WIC.

WIC families shop for their WIC foods using either an EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) card or paper vouchers. By 2020, all states must transition to using EBT cards. As of January 2017, 24 states and Indian Nations have fully implemented EBT statewide. The transition to EBT will reduce opportunities for fraud and abuse, ensuring WIC remains efficient and effective.

WIC foods include:

» Commercially prepared infant fruits/vegetables and meat
» Infant cereal
» Milk
» Whole grain cereals
» Whole wheat bread
» Canned fish
» Canned and dry beans/peanut butter
» Cheese
» Juice
» Eggs
» Iron fortified formula

In addition to the WIC food package, WIC mothers and young children receive a Cash Value Voucher (CVV) for fruits and vegetables that they can spend at the grocery store on fruits and vegetables of their choice. Some states also allow CVV to be used at farmers’ markets.

The food package was last updated in 2009 after an independent scientific
review in 2006. Since that update, a growing body of literature has emerged that demonstrates the positive impact WIC foods have on the families we serve.30 31 32 33 34

Through referrals, WIC builds bridges, connecting families to primary and preventive health care and social service resources.

» The healthcare needs of children participating in both WIC and Medicaid are better met than low-income children not participating in WIC.38

» Children who participate in WIC are more likely to have immunization rates comparable to children with higher incomes.39

WIC: A BRIDGE TO PEDIATRIC DENTAL CARE

Tooth decay is one of the most chronic childhood conditions.40 One study found that children who participated in WIC were more likely to have a dental visit and use preventive dental services and less likely to use emergency services for dental problems.41 Results from the same study also indicated that children who participated in WIC for a full year were about 1.7 times more likely to have 2 or more dental visits per year than those children who never participated in WIC.42 Likewise, WIC children between ages 1 and 2 have lower dental-related Medicaid costs compared to children who do not participate in WIC.43