



National WIC Association
WIC for a Healthier America



Fiscal Year 2016 WIC Funding Legislative Agenda

As the nation's premier public health nutrition program, WIC is a cost-effective, sound investment—ensuring the health of our children.

NWA'S MISSION
NWA inspires and empowers the WIC community to advocate for and promote quality nutrition services for all eligible mothers and young children, and assure effective management of WIC.

WIC for A Healthier, Stronger America!

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children – WIC – has improved at-risk children's health, growth and development, and prevented health problems for over 40 years. **WIC children enter school Ready to Learn**, showing better cognitive performance.

WIC serves over 8.3 million mothers and young children, over half of all America's infants and one-quarter of its children 1–5 years of age. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) using National Research Council methodology estimates that there remains significant unmet need and many WIC eligibles are unable to receive services with coverage rates among states ranging from a low of 44% to a high of 87%.

Families Turn to WIC in Economic Crises

Families turning to WIC for nutrition assistance are vulnerable and at-risk. Economic crises compound their vulnerability, and access to WIC services is critical. WIC food packages and the nutrition services that accompany them ensure that WIC mothers and young children stay healthy.

Quality Nutrition Services – at WIC's Heart

Quality nutrition services are the centerpiece of WIC: nutrition and breastfeeding counseling and education, nutritious foods, and improved health-care access for low and moderate income women and children with, or at risk of developing, nutrition-related health problems including overweight, obesity, and type-2 diabetes. WIC's committed, results oriented, entrepre-

neurial staff stretch resources to serve the maximum numbers of women, infants, and children and ensure program effectiveness and integrity.

As the nation's premier public health nutrition program, **WIC is a science-based, rigorously studied, cost-effective, sound investment – ensuring the health of our children.**

WIC is Strongly Bi-Partisan Supported

Voters across Political, Ideological, Ethnic and Socio-Economic Groups Hold WIC in High Regard – A vast majority of voters (69%) have a strongly favorable view of WIC ranking it just behind Social Security and Medicare and above National Defense; That favorability grows to 72% when voters learn more about WIC's nutrition and health services; Two-Thirds of voters, including a majority of Republicans view WIC as effective; By two-one voters oppose cutting WIC funding as a deficit strategy including independents, Hispanics, moms, and a majority of Republican women; Opposition to cuts remains strong after hearing strong arguments from both sides; **The electoral risk of supporting cuts to WIC is greater than the reward** – Results of a 2011 Bi-Partisan Public Opinion Poll Conducted by American Viewpoint and the Mellman Group.

NWA Funding Recommendations

Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriation – NWA recommends: Congress fund the WIC Program at \$6.684 billion. This is \$61 million above the President's Budget request of \$6.623 billion. While both requests will serve 8.5 million mothers and young children, **NWA's request provides an**

additional \$30 million to fund breastfeeding peer counselor initiatives at the full authorized level, \$6 million in enhanced fruit & vegetable cash value vouchers for fully breastfeeding women, and \$5 million to support WIC research and evaluation. It includes: \$14 million for WIC infrastructure, \$30 million for Management Information Systems (MIS), \$50 million for Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT), and \$90 million for breastfeeding peer counselors.

Funding for WIC must be adequate to:

- ➔ assure that no eligible applicants are turned away
- ➔ maintain current and anticipated WIC participation levels
- ➔ assure adequate nutrition services and administration (NSA) funding
- ➔ respond adequately to economic forecasts of rising food cost inflation
- ➔ provide funds for nutrition services to maintain clinic staffing and assure competitive salaries

NWA recommends: Congress and the Administration carefully monitor WIC participation and food cost inflation to assure that the approved appropriation responds to economic conditions and meets unmet needs.

NWA recommends: Congress assure that the WIC Contingency Fund is maintained and adequately funded at \$150 million — to meet the demand for WIC services in situations of unpredictable caseload or food costs affected by multiple factors including fuel price spikes and weather-related conditions.

Protecting and Preserving the Integrity of the WIC Food Packages

Securing Science Based Decisions – The nutritional value of the food packages and the types and kinds of foods included in the WIC food packages are and must remain science based and immune from politics and the legislative process.

This assures public trust and confidence in the health and nutritional value of WIC foods. Congress supported **NWA's** call for a regular scientific review of the WIC food packages, leading to recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine (IOM) to create healthier food packages by including fruits and vegetables, culturally appropriate foods, milk substitutes, low fat dairy products, and reduced quantities of eggs and juice in the food packages.

NWA recommends: Congress support efforts to protect nutrition science and the regulatory and science review process. The IOM is currently undertaking a second review of the food packages, expected to be released in 2016, with a view to updating them to meet the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Enhancing the Quality of the Fully Breastfeeding WIC Food Package

Maintaining the Enhanced Value of the Breastfeeding Food Package – In 2005, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommended an enhanced breastfeeding food package to encourage and support mothers who choose to fully breastfeed. USDA Food & Nutrition Service (FNS), in publishing its Interim Final Rule on the WIC Food Packages, correctly emphasized the distinction between the fully breastfeeding food package and other food packages for women when it set the fruit and vegetable cash value vouchers for this food package at \$2 above the value for other food packages for women. The fiscal year 2010 Agriculture Appropriations Act directed FNS to increase the fruit and vegetable cash value voucher for all women to \$10, eliminating that important distinction.

NWA recommends: To maintain the enhanced value of the fully breastfeeding food package, as recommended by the IOM and as proposed by FNS in the Interim Final Rule, the monthly cash value voucher

benefit for fully breastfeeding women be increased by \$2 for a total funding increase of \$6.02 million based on an average monthly (FY 2014) participation of roughly 250,700 fully breastfeeding women.

WIC Infrastructure Funding

NWA recommends: that no less than \$14 million in unencumbered infrastructure funding be provided.

Enhancing Service Delivery Through Information Technology

Improving the Use of Information Technology to Enhance Service Delivery and Building Management Information Systems (MIS) – Technology provides a critical foundation for quality WIC services and program integrity. Funding WIC technology from existing resources compromises WIC's ability to deliver services and develop responsive MIS systems. Current limits on funding prevent roughly one in three WIC State agencies from meeting USDA core functions. To develop and maintain MIS and render systems electronic service delivery (EBT) ready. – **NWA recommends:** *Congress provide an additional \$30 million annually in unencumbered funds outside the regular NSA grant to implement MIS core functions, upgrade WIC technology systems, maintain MIS and electronic services, and render MIS systems EBT-ready.*

Moving WIC to Electronic Benefits Service Delivery by 2020

Providing for a Participant and Vendor Friendly Electronic Benefits Service Delivery System (EBT) – EBT is the most efficient, cost effective, green way of delivering participant benefits. **NWA** strongly supports the need for consistent, national standards for both on-line and off-line

EBT technology solutions to assure systems integrity, ease of implementation, and service delivery effectiveness. **NWA** urges that State agencies have full choice in determining the EBT system that is most appropriate for a given State's unique circumstances and encourages State agencies to partner collaboratively with their retail community to assure smooth implementation.

WIC EBT assures program integrity providing data on the type and amount of foods purchased, allowing for accurate rebate billing on infant formula, ensuring retailer claims do not exceed the shelf price, assuring secure transactions, timely and accurate claims, reducing resources spent on retailer compliance activities, monitoring and reconciling retailer overcharges, reducing forgery and fraud opportunities, increasing accountability, reducing paperwork, improving administrative efficiencies, and streamlining clinic operations increasing the time available for nutrition counseling and education.

WIC EBT assures participants convenience and the ability to purchase the full complement of food benefits within the valid period, through easy, quick, secure, discreet, confidential single transactions for all items purchased in a particular shopping trip, an accurate listing of benefits prior to and after shopping, increased time for nutrition education in the WIC clinic, and improved targeted nutrition counseling and education based on redemption patterns.

WIC EBT assures retailers participant purchases of only WIC-authorized foods, eliminates improper substitutions, reduces cashier error and the need for intensive training, provides for a secure, single transaction for all items purchased, allows for timely claims, settlements, fast and easy

operation, reduced paperwork by eliminating paper food instruments, numerous activity reports, and more trips to the store by participants resulting in increased purchases.

NWA recommends: *that Congress provide at least \$50 million per year up to a total of \$219 million, to provide for the smooth transition of WIC service delivery from paper based systems to EBT systems, assuring State WIC EBT implementation by the close of fiscal year 2020.*

Promoting and Supporting Breastfeeding in WIC

Breastfeeding is the normal and most healthful way to feed infants – The benefits to infants and mothers are numerous.

For children, science shows that human milk: may lower the risk of obesity in childhood and adolescence; promotes and supports development; protects against illness symptoms and duration; improves IQ and visual acuity scores; lowers cancer rates; decreases cavities; improves premature infants' health; and significantly reduces health care costs.

For mothers: decreases the likelihood of ovarian and breast cancers; reduces the risk of osteoporosis and long-term obesity; increases bonding between mother and child; and significantly reduces the incidence of child neglect.

WIC maintains that breastfeeding is the best source of infant nutrition and currently earmarks funds for breastfeeding promotion and support activities. All WIC staff have a role in promoting and providing support for the successful initiation and continuation of breastfeeding. **NWA** promotes exclusive breastfeeding for infant feeding through the first year of life and beyond, with the addition of ap-

propriate complementary foods when the infant is developmentally ready, usually around six months of age.

A 2009 American Academy of Pediatrics cost analysis found that if 90% of women breastfed exclusively for 6 months, the United States would save \$13 billion and prevent nearly 1,000 infant deaths per year.

Enhancing a Successful Breastfeeding Initiative – Since 2005, Congress has set aside monies to fund what has become a successful breastfeeding peer counseling initiative. Previous year funding needs exceed the appropriated level. **NWA recommends:** *Congress provide \$90 million for breastfeeding peer counselor initiatives to assure more breastfeeding mothers access to critical breastfeeding support.*

Assessing the Effects of Nutrition Services

Providing for Innovation, Data Collection, and WIC Outcomes Research

Research – To support rigorous research and evaluation documenting WIC's continued success – **NWA recommends:** *flexible use of Special Project Grants funds, State WIC funds and other grant resources for health outcomes research and evaluation to identify effective nutrition education and breastfeeding promotion and support services, to test innovative service delivery and food prescriptions, and to support USDA's partnership with NWA to achieve WIC sensitive research and evaluation objectives.* **NWA urges Congress to provide \$5 million to support updated rigorous health outcomes research and evaluation** documenting WIC's continued success.

As the nation's premier public health nutrition program, WIC is a cost-effective, sound investment – ensuring the health of our children.

Love them lots. Feed them well!
Your child has you. And you have WIC!

WIC For A Healthier, Stronger America!

NWA's mission: providing leadership to promote quality nutrition services; advocating for services for all eligible women, infants, and children; and assuring the sound and responsive management of WIC.

Please direct all questions to NWA at 202-232-5492.