



# NWA STATEMENT ON THE WHO INTERNATIONAL CODE OF MARKETING OF BREAST-MILK SUBSTITUTES

## NWA'S MISSION

The National WIC Association (NWA) provides its members with tools and leadership to expand and sustain effective nutrition services for mothers and young children.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the nation's leading nutrition program, endorses breastfeeding as the optimal way to feed and nourish infants. WIC serves more than half of the infants born in the United States and is in a unique position to ensure that our nation's infants begin life with the nourishment to flourish.

Adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1981, the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes was ratified by more than 100 nations and joined by the United States in consensus Resolutions in 1994 and again in

1996. The aim of this Code is "to contribute to the provision of safe and adequate nutrition for infants, by the protection and promotion of breastfeeding, and by ensuring the proper use of breast-milk substitutes, when these are necessary, on the basis of adequate information and through appropriate marketing and distribution." Any activity that undermines breastfeeding violates the aim and spirit of the Code.

**THE NATIONAL WIC ASSOCIATION (NWA)** endorses the WHO Code and assumes a leadership role in supporting the recommendations in the Code through the WIC Program.

There are five main themes from which the Code recommendations were developed:

1. The encouragement and promotion of breastfeeding;
2. The promotion and support of appropriate and timely complementary feeding (weaning) practices with the use of local food resources;
3. The strengthening of education, training and information on infant and young child feeding;
4. The promotion of the health and social status of women in relation to infant and young child health and feeding; and
5. The appropriate marketing and distribution of breastmilk substitutes.

NWA's commitment to the recommendations is evidenced most recently by the development of its

National Breastfeeding Strategic Plan. In addition, NWA strongly supports the current state and local agency breastfeeding promotion and support practices that adhere to these recommendations. Such practices include:

- » Establishing a breastfeeding friendly clinic environment
- » Providing peer counselors for mother-to-mother connections
- » Developing breastfeeding competencies appropriate to each staff position
- » Offering breastfeeding classes and breastfeeding aids including breast pumps
- » Providing work place support to WIC mothers and their employers
- » Providing, when needed, instruction on the safe usage of formula which minimizes the negative effects on breastfeeding
- » Prohibiting the display of formula samples or formula marketing materials in clinics

The WIC program provides a reliable source of nutritious supplemental foods to pregnant and breastfeeding women and enhanced food packages to both fully breastfeeding women



and their infants. Updated in 2009, the revised WIC food packages further reflect WIC's commitment to disease prevention and its fight against obesity while strengthening its breastfeeding support and promotion efforts. WIC collaborates with other healthcare providers to support breastfeeding and help create a breastfeeding-friendly environment for families. Meanwhile, all breastfeeding mothers receive ongoing support and education from WIC staff.

NWA promotes exclusive breastfeeding for infant feeding through the first year of life and beyond, with the addition of appropriate complementary foods when the infant is developmentally ready. NWA calls for all WIC staff and other public health programs to promote activities that support the Code.

## **WIC: EMPOWERING FAMILIES, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES**

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

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