



National WIC Association
Your child has you. And you have WIC.



WIC and Adjunctive Eligibility

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 provides its members with tools and leadership to expand and sustain effective nutrition services for mothers and young children.

OVERVIEW OF WIC

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the nation's premier public health nutrition program, has improved the health of at-risk women, infants, and children for over 40 years. In 2014, WIC served an average of 8.3 million participants per month through 10,000 clinics nationwide.¹

ADJUNCTIVE ELIGIBILITY IN THE WIC PROGRAM

Adjunctive eligibility enables WIC applicants to be automatically income-eligible for WIC by showing proof of participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Medicaid. The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 1989 established adjunctive eligibility as a way to simplify the WIC application process, given that the income eligibility cutoffs for these other programs were lower than those for WIC in 1989.

In the past 25 years, some states have expanded eligibility for these programs to include those with incomes above the WIC eligibility threshold of 185% of the Federal poverty guidelines. This means that, in certain states, women, infants, and/or children who would not normally qualify for WIC based on their income level are able to qualify based on their enrollment in Medicaid.

Despite the potential for enrollment of participants with incomes above the WIC threshold, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) data from a 2012 census of WIC participants indicate that only about 1% of WIC participants have incomes greater than 185% of the

Federal poverty guidelines. Additionally, nearly 75% of participants report enrolling in WIC through adjunctive eligibility. (2) In other words, the vast majority of participants who enroll in WIC through adjunctive eligibility would already qualify for WIC based on their income level.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ADJUNCTIVE ELIGIBILITY

Adjunctive eligibility:

- ➔ Links WIC to other social service and healthcare programs
- ➔ Promotes clinic efficiency
- ➔ Simplifies the WIC application process
- ➔ Streamlines paperwork
- ➔ Reduces administrative error
- ➔ Increases coordination between WIC and other programs

ADJUNCTIVE ELIGIBILITY RESULTS IN GREATER EFFICIENCY AND LOWER ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

As mentioned, nearly 75% of WIC participants apply for WIC via adjunctive eligibility. For the remaining 25% of WIC participants who must provide income documentation, the process of demonstrating eligibility for WIC can be time-consuming and cumbersome. Income documentation requires participants to find and bring a variety of documents to the WIC clinic: Pay stubs for the last 30 days, tax returns, income-verification letters, utility bills, and/or rent receipts. Enrolling in WIC through income documentation can sometimes require several trips to the WIC clinic and in some instances may take several days. Enrolling in WIC through adjunctive eligibility, on the other hand, takes about one minute and simply requires a WIC client to present their Medicaid card or demonstrate receipt of SNAP or TANF benefits. Adjunctive eligibility requires less time and paperwork, resulting in lower administrative costs

for WIC and a lot less hassle for WIC participants.

ADJUNCTIVE ELIGIBILITY STRENGTHENS OUR NATIONAL SAFETY NET

All WIC participants, regardless of how they qualify, are at nutritional risk. Adjunctive eligibility enables WIC, a preventive program, to directly link with healthcare. This results in low-income families benefitting from an integrated approach that can help prevent medical or dietary nutrition risks from escalating into serious chronic conditions. Linking WIC to Medicaid improves outcomes and saves healthcare costs. WIC helps prevent nutrition-related illnesses, developmental problems, and chronic diseases, which would be paid for by Medicaid.

CONCERNS ABOUT ADJUNCTIVE ELIGIBILITY

One formula manufacturer has recently been raising alarm bells over the roughly 1% of WIC participants who qualify for WIC adjunctively through Medicaid so that these clients are removed from the program. Doing so would force the former WIC participants to pay full price for formula rather than receive formula through the discounted state rebate rate, improving revenues for formula companies at the expense of nutritionally vulnerable infants. Because formula is expensive, it is unclear whether or not these families would be able to sustain formula-feeding, which could result in watering down formula, introducing cow's milk or juice too early, or substituting formula for sugar-sweetened beverages, all of which come with potential health consequences.

Additionally, while this infant formula company seems discontent with their WIC revenues, they have control to determine the discounted prices for WIC clients and willingly enter into contracts with states to provide formula at the

agreed upon rates.

Finally, infant formula rebates enable more at-risk mothers and young children to participate in the program with fewer taxpayer dollars. In 2014, \$1.8 billion in nontax revenues were generated through competitive bidding of infant formula and other cost containment initiatives to serve approximately 2 million participants.

CAPPING ADJUNCTIVE ELIGIBILITY WOULD TRANSLATE INTO AN INCREASED BURDEN FOR WIC STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS, AS WELL AS INCREASED COSTS FOR WIC AND TAXPAYERS

In many states, thousands of additional women and children would have to provide income documentation—which would increase administrative costs and labor time. Furthermore, the roughly 1% of WIC participants who qualify for WIC through adjunctive eligibility and have incomes above 185% of the Federal poverty guidelines, are still nutritionally vulnerable and in need of nutrition support.

THIS IMPORTANT ENROLLMENT MECHANISM SHOULD BE PROTECTED

Adjunctive eligibility links a preventive health program with a healthcare program, resulting in decreased administrative costs by reducing application time and paperwork as well as decreased healthcare costs by preventing illness and chronic disease.

1. United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2013) *Study of WIC Participant and Program Characteristics 2012 Final Report*. Alexandria, VA: US Department of Agriculture, Office of Analysis and Evaluation.