

WIC saves lives and improves the health of nutritionally at-risk women, infants and children. The results of studies conducted by FNS and other non-government entities prove that WIC is one of the nation's most successful and cost-effective nutrition intervention programs.



United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service Southeast Region

WIC was established as a permanent program in 1974 to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk. This mission is carried out by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, nutrition education (including breastfeeding promotion and support), and referrals to health and other social services.

Since 1974, the WIC Program has earned the reputation of being one of the most successful Federally-funded nutrition programs in the United States. Collective findings of studies, reviews and reports demonstrate that the WIC Program is cost effective in protecting and improving the health/nutritional status of low-income women, infants and children.

Research has shown that the WIC Program has been playing an important role in improving birth outcomes and containing health care costs. A series of reports published by USDA based on linked 1988 WIC and Medicaid data on over 100,000 births found that every dollar spent on prenatal WIC participation for low-income Medicaid women in 5 States resulted in:

- longer pregnancies;
- fewer premature births;
- lower incidence of moderately low and very low birth weight infants;
- fewer infant deaths;
- a greater likelihood of receiving prenatal care; and
- savings in health care costs from \$1.77 to \$3.13 within the first 60 days after birth

Studies have also found that WIC participation is associated with having a positive effect on children's diet and diet-related outcomes, significantly improved rates of childhood immunization and regular medical care, and improved cognitive development influences in school achievement and behavior. [Click here](#) to read WIC research studies. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ops/wic-studies>

The foods provided through the WIC Program are designed to supplement participants' diets with specific nutrients. WIC authorized foods include infant cereal, baby foods, iron-fortified adult cereal, fruits and vegetables, vitamin C-rich fruit or vegetable juice, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, soy-based beverages, tofu, peanut butter, dried and canned beans/peas, canned fish, whole wheat bread and other whole-grain options. For infants of women who do not

fully breastfeed, WIC provides iron-fortified infant formula. Special infant formulas and medical foods may also be provided if medically indicated.

WIC benefits are not limited only to food. Participants have access to a number of resources, including health screening, nutrition and breastfeeding counseling, immunization screening and referral, substance abuse referral, and more.

Find out more: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-benefits-and-services>

WIC Quick Facts

- If you participate in another assistance program you may be automatically income-eligible for WIC.
- Breastfeeding mothers are eligible to participate in WIC longer than non-breastfeeding mothers.
- More than half of the infants in the U.S. participate in WIC.
- WIC participants support the local economy through their purchases.
- WIC works with farmers markets to help increase participant access to provide fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables.

WIC's LOVING SUPPORT MAKES BREASTFEEDING WORK

Breastfeeding promotion and support is a core component of the benefits that the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) provides to safeguard the health of our participants. We recognize that much hard work and effort occurs at the State and local levels to provide this important benefit to all pregnant and postpartum participants.



One of the significant milestones in our breastfeeding promotion efforts is the USDA National Breastfeeding Promotion Campaign, “Loving Support Makes Breastfeeding Work,” which was launched in 1997 to promote breastfeeding to WIC participants and their families. Based on a social marketing approach, the goals of the campaign are to encourage WIC participants to initiate and continue breastfeeding; increase referrals to WIC for breastfeeding support; increase general public acceptance and support of breastfeeding; and provide technical assistance to WIC State and local agency professionals in the promotion of breastfeeding. (In Photo: [Global Latch on Event](#) at a WIC Clinic in Marietta, GA)

WIC breastfeeding initiation rates have increased over time since the launch of the Loving Support campaign. Data from the WIC Participants and Program Characteristic Report show that 41.5 percent of WIC mothers nationwide initiated breastfeeding in 1998. Breastfeeding rates in WIC have steadily increased from 48.3% in 2002 to 69.8% in 2014. We now have 2 out of 3 WIC moms initiating breastfeeding.

[Click here](#) to learn more about WIC's Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program.

LOVING SUPPORT AWARD OF EXCELLENCE



The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA), required the USDA to implement a program recognizing exemplary breastfeeding support practices at WIC local agencies and clinics. Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

developed the Loving Support Award of Excellence to recognize and celebrate the model work local agencies do to promote and support breastfeeding. Local WIC Agencies operating a peer counseling program *for at least one year*, and who met all of the core components of the FNS *Loving Support® Model for a Successful Peer Counseling Program*, were eligible to apply for an award.

The award is given at three levels of performance that build on one another: Gold, Gold Premiere, and Gold Elite. The application consists of a total of 45 questions from three areas: Effectiveness of a Peer Counselor Program, Partnership, and Other criteria; 29 questions for Gold Award and additional 16 questions for higher level awards. Breastfeeding performance data is also used to determine Gold Premiere and Gold Elite Awards. The awards are valid for a four year period; however an agency may apply for an award of higher achievement after one year of receiving an award.

By recognizing these local agencies' success and sharing best practices, the WIC Loving Support Awards of Excellence provide successful models and motivation to other WIC local agencies with the goal of ultimately increasing breastfeeding rates among WIC participants.

Below are the Loving Support Awardees for the Southeast Region. (In Photo: SERO's Awardee at Regional LSA Ceremony in Atlanta, GA). [Click here](#) to view a Breastfeeding Success Story Video from the Cobb Douglas WIC District.

FLORIDA Citrus County WIC 09; Florida Department of Health - Clay County WIC Program; Florida Dept. of Health, Nassau County Women, Infants and Children Program; Florida

Department of Health-Lee County Women Infant Children Program; & Polk/Hardee County WIC

GEORGIA Clayton County Board of Health; Cobb & Douglas Public Health WIC Program; North Central Health District WIC Program; North Georgia Health District 1 & 2 WIC Program; South Central Health District; Southeast Health District WIC Program; & West Central Health District 7 WIC

KENTUCKY Ashland-Boyd County Health Department; Calloway County Health Department; Kentucky River District Health Department; & Northern Kentucky District Health Department

MISSISSIPPI Lafayette County WIC – Mississippi Dept. of Health & Mississippi State Dept. of Health - District III Bolivar County Health Department

NORTH CAROLINA Alexander County; Columbus County Health Department; Gaston County Department of Health and Human Services; & Pender County WIC

INDIAN TRIBAL ORGANIZATION Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians WIC Program

SOUTH CAROLINA Beaufort Jasper Hampton Comprehensive Health Services; Bluffton Health Clinic; Midlands Public Health Region; SCDHEC Pee Dee Region – Conway Health Department; SCDHEC Pee Dee Region – Sumter Health Department; SCDHEC Pee Dee Region – Williamsburg Health Department; & Upstate - Public Health Regional Office

TENNESSEE Davidson County; East Tennessee Region WIC; & Northwest Tennessee Region - Dyer County Health Department

[Click here](#) to learn more about USDA's Loving Support Model.

WIC At a Glance



Population Served:

The WIC target population are low-income, nutritionally at risk:

- Pregnant women (through pregnancy and up to 6 weeks after birth or after pregnancy ends).
- Breastfeeding women (up to infant's 1st birthday)
- Nonbreastfeeding postpartum women (up to 6 months after the birth of an infant or after pregnancy ends)
- Infants (up to 1st birthday). WIC serves 53 percent of all infants born in the United States.
- Children up to their 5th birthday.

Benefits

The following benefits are provided to WIC participants:

- Supplemental nutritious foods
- Nutrition education and counseling at WIC clinics
- Screening and referrals to other health, welfare and social services



Examples of where WIC services are provided:

- county health departments
- hospitals
- mobile clinics (vans)
- community centers
- schools
- public housing sites
- migrant health centers and camps
- Indian Health Service facilities

WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides supplemental foods, health care referrals and nutrition education at no cost to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding post-partum women, and to infants and children up to 5 years of



age, who are found to be at nutritional risk.

[Learn more >](#)

Who Gets WIC and How to Apply

In general, WIC is administered in each State or territory by State Health Departments or Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs). To be eligible for the WIC Program, applicants must meet all of the following eligibility requirements: Categorical, Residential, Income, and Nutrition Risk (Click here for details about [WIC's Eligibility Requirements.](#)).

Contact the WIC State or local agency serving your area to schedule an appointment. Applicants will be advised about what to bring to the WIC appointment to help determine eligibility.

Click here for [a listing of the toll-free numbers of WIC State agencies](#) or click here for [a listing of State agencies in alphabetical order](#). Many of the State agencies listed provide a toll-free number for you to call and/or a website about the WIC Program operating in that area.

[Click here to find out if you might be eligible for WIC benefits.](#)

STAY CONNECTED

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