

WIC 2010: Meeting the Need

WIC is the “Federal Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children.”



The benefits of WIC nutrition services begin even before the child is born.



WIC is a critical nutrition program – that works

In this time of economic challenge in our nation, WIC services are more needed than ever. In a recent national Gallup poll, 18 percent of people interviewed reported having times in the last year when they did not have enough money to buy food for themselves or their families.¹

U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services Kevin Concannon says, “The WIC food packages provide supplemental foods designed to meet the special nutritional needs of low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, non-breastfeeding postpartum women, infants and children up to five years of age who are at nutritional risk. We share the responsibility – with state and local governments, community organizations and parents – of ensuring that our nation’s children have the access to nutritious foods they need to get a good start in life.”²

The WIC Program helps assure good nutrition for nine million of these vulnerable women, infants, and children across the nation. In addition, many studies have shown WIC is efficient and cost effective. Together with public health and community partners, WIC makes a major contribution to better birth outcomes and good health for Washington’s children.

Nutrition education and referrals are the keys

WIC provides the right foods at the right time. Participating families use their WIC checks to buy fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads and tortillas, tofu, soy beverage, milk, eggs, juice, dried beans, peanut butter, and, if they are not breastfeeding, iron-fortified formula. In most Washington communities, WIC families also get Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program checks to buy fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers.

Having food available through WIC checks is only one part of the solution. WIC’s participant-centered nutrition education encourages families to make healthy choices for snacks and meals – and these healthy habits can change lives. Trained WIC staff coach families enrolled in the WIC Nutrition Program on good nutrition and physical activity, normal growth and development, the importance of health screening, and help connect them to prenatal and preventive health care, and other needed services. In 2010 WIC staff made 1.4 million referrals to resources like prenatal and oral health care, smoking cessation, First Steps, and Medicaid.

WIC helps support local economies – 2010 facts

WIC funds come from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The biggest portion of WIC dollars – about 72 percent – are spent in local communities on food for mothers and children. The second biggest cost is supporting WIC services in local agency clinics.

\$120 million in groceries – WIC funds purchased healthy foods for young families in over 739 large and small grocery stores statewide.

\$743,722 in local fresh fruits and vegetables – Over 920 Washington growers sold locally grown fruits and vegetables to mothers and young children that WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program checks help provide.

\$32.1 million for local jobs – By funding 61 community and public health agencies to provide WIC nutrition services at over 207 clinic sites around the state, WIC helps support almost 1,000 local jobs.

With health screening, breastfeeding support, nutrition education, and referrals, families get much more from the WIC Nutrition Program than checks for foods. Communities benefit as well, because good nutrition helps prevent chronic diseases and the need for costly medical care, and healthier children are more likely to enter school ready to learn.

WIC is a proven, cost effective public health program



In 2010 the Washington WIC Nutrition Program received an award from USDA for achieving high breastfeeding rates among participants in our state.



WIC Nutrition Program – who we serve

- **Over 65 percent** of infants born in rural counties were served by the Washington WIC Nutrition Program; statewide 50 percent of all infants born were served.
- **More than 316,000** women, infants and children participated in WIC.
- **Working families made up 65 percent** of WIC participants, and yet 66 percent of WIC families were living on poverty-level incomes.
- **Over 15,300 WIC clients are in the military** or are from military families.

WIC makes a difference

A healthy birth is the foundation for a healthy life. As an integral part of Washington's public health system, WIC works to prevent both immediate and long-term health problems. In addition to improved nutrition, pregnant women participating in WIC are more likely to have early prenatal care and to breastfeed, and they are less likely to be heavy smokers than similar moms not in WIC.³ This is important because children not exposed to second-hand smoke are less likely to suffer from asthma symptoms and related hospitalizations.⁴ Mothers served by WIC have better birth outcomes: they are half as likely to have very low birth weight babies, which come with health concerns and high medical cost.³

WIC's top priority is promoting breastfeeding

Breastfeeding support is a core WIC service and a national public health strategy to protect children from serious health risks. All pregnant women and new mothers participating in WIC are encouraged to breastfeed, and almost 85 percent of WIC moms do – more every year. Trained staff and peer counselors are available to support new breastfeeding mothers through the beginning stages, and loan breast pumps to help those who return to school or work continue breastfeeding.

- Breastfeeding lowers the baby's risk of infections, diarrhea, SIDS, obesity, diabetes, asthma, and childhood leukemia.⁵
- For every 1,000 newborns who are not breastfed, there are 2,033 more doctor visits, and 212 more hospital days compared to babies breastfed for three months.⁶
- Each breastfed baby saves \$450 to \$1,450 per year in medical costs, compared to costs for babies that are not breastfed.⁵
- Helping mothers to breastfeed contributes to preventing obesity. Breastfed children are less likely to suffer from childhood obesity.⁷
- Breastfeeding strengthens the bond between mother and baby.

Healthier babies have a better opportunity for strong growth and development and being more ready to learn when they start school.

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HEALTHIER WASHINGTON

For more information about the Washington State WIC Nutrition Program or to get footnoted references visit www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/WIC or call 1-800-841-1410.

For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-841-1410 (TDD/TTY 1-800-833-6388).