
Office of Nutrition Services

Description: The Office of Nutrition Services works to create opportunities for people with limited resources to make healthy nutrition choices. We support healthy eating, breastfeeding, access to healthy foods, and physical activity through contracts with local health jurisdictions, community agencies, tribal organizations, and food retailers. The U.S. Department of Agriculture funds our services.

Mission/Purpose: We improve the health of low-income individuals and families through nutrition education and related services.

Target Populations: Low-income residents of Washington State.

- The Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program and WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program each serve low-income pregnant women, new and breastfeeding moms, and children under age five.
- The SNAP-Ed program serves individuals who are eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Major Functions

Major Issues

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program

- Provide WIC nutrition services through contracts with local health jurisdictions, community agencies, and tribal organizations. Services include: monthly checks for healthy food, health screenings and referrals, nutrition education, and breastfeeding support.
- Establish and maintain a list of foods approved for purchase with Washington WIC checks.
- Contract with food vendors and growers to sell WIC-approved foods.
- Assure proper banking and processing of WIC checks.
- Prevent and monitor for program abuse and fraud.

Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program

- Provide one-to-one peer support to new breastfeeding WIC moms through contracts with local agencies.
- Assist local agencies in recruitment, training, and support of current and former WIC clients to become breastfeeding peer counselors.

Farmers Market Nutrition Program

- Promote consumption of fresh and local produce.
- Recruit, contract, train, and monitor authorized growers and markets.
- Distribute checks to eligible WIC participants.

SNAP-Ed

Contract with local agencies and tribes to deliver innovative nutrition and physical education projects to SNAP-eligible populations.

- Increased demand for services due to reduced federal and state funding for poverty and health programs.
- Anticipated federal funding decreases.
- Local WIC and SNAP-Ed agencies are facing decreasing resources and flexibility.
- Reduction in funding for the Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program will reduce services.
- Although need for the program has increased, participation in WIC has decreased. The program is conducting outreach to assure people who are eligible have access to services.
- The WIC program is in the process of a new information and data system. This is a major, several-year effort, with substantial funding from USDA, and requiring significant staff time. The end product will include implementation of electronic benefit transfer (EBT) for WIC participants. The program will meet the USDA mandate to implement EBT by 2020.
- USDA requires that WIC programs implement Cost Containment measures related to food costs. The program has implemented many containment measures, but continues to explore new methods.
- DSHS is changing the allocation method for SNAP-Ed grants to an open RFP process for FFY 2016



Budget: For the 2015-17 biennium, the Office of Nutrition Services budget is \$367.1 million with interagency reimbursements (IARs) included. This consists of General Fund State (less than one percent); Federal (80.3 percent); General Fund Local from a federally mandated infant formula rebate contract to purchase WIC foods (17.1 percent); and 2.5 percent from Inter-Agency funding for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education. The office has 83 FTEs consisting of full time and project staff, plus IT support staff. Staff are located in Tumwater.

**Division of Prevention and Community Health
Office of Nutrition Services
Total Allotments by Fund Type
2015-17 Biennium**

Total = \$367,081,673 (With IARs)
Total = \$357,746,369 (Without IARs)

