

California WIC Facts & Figures

What is WIC?

WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, a 100% federally funded program providing nutritious food (via prescriptive checks), individual counseling and nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to other needed services to at-risk, low-to-moderate income (up to 185% of the federal poverty level) women and children up to the age of five. Dozens of scientific studies have shown WIC to be a cost-effective and positive public health intervention, preventing infant mortality, low birth weight and other poor birth outcomes, and improving the nutrition and health of participants.

Whom Does WIC Serve?

Nationwide, WIC currently serves over 8.5 million participants including almost half of all infants born in the United States, with an FFY 2008 \$6.02 billion dollar budget. In California, the nation's largest WIC program, 82 local agencies serve about 1.41 million participants at 623 local centers. Over 60% of infants born in California receive WIC services. The program employs close to 3,500 state and local staff, and participants redeem WIC checks at just under 4,000 grocery stores statewide. WIC caseload reflects California's diversity. The majority of participants (78%) are Latinos, followed by Caucasian (8%), African American (5.5%), Asian (5%), and Native American (0.87%). While 63% are enrolled in Medi-Cal, only 20% are participating in CalWORKS and Food Stamps. Approximately 24% of WIC participants are pregnant and post-partum women, 22% are infants and 54% are children ages 1-5.

WIC Funding Details

California WIC operates with \$700 million in FFY 2008 food grant funds, \$321 million in food manufacturer rebates, and \$274 million in Nutrition Services and Administration grant funds. WIC has received strong bipartisan support throughout its 32-year history. Significant funding increases have allowed California WIC to grow from a service level of 520,000 participants in 1991 to 1.41 million participants per month today.

Infant Formula Rebates

Under federal law, in order to contain costs, state WIC programs are required to procure infant formula using a competitive bidding system, awarding a sole-source contract to the firm awarding the lowest net price (wholesale price minus rebate). Nationally in 2004, infant formula rebates generated \$1.64 billion, allowing the WIC program to serve over 2 million additional participants, or 25 percent of the estimated average monthly caseload. Starting August 2007, California implemented a formula rebate contract with Mead Johnson Nutritionals, generating \$283 million annually, allowing the state to serve an additional 382,000 participants each month. California also has rebate contracts to a number of fruit juice processors, which garnered about \$2.7 million savings in juice expenditures per month in FFY 2007 allowing support of almost 45,000 additional participants.

New WIC Food Package Rule

The WIC Program is poised to achieve a quantum leap in achieving healthier outcomes among the millions we serve. On December 6, 2007, USDA issued an Interim Final Rule updating the WIC Food Packages for the first time in over 20 years. Based on Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) and current infant feeding practice guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the food packages will include fresh vegetables and fruits, whole grains, tofu, lower amounts of cheese, juice and eggs, and will provide lower-fat milk to all participants over 2 years. WIC State agencies will have greater flexibility in prescribing food packages to accommodate participants with diverse cultural food preferences. State agencies have until August 2009 to implement the provisions of this Rule.

Useful WIC Websites

USDA FNS WIC

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/default.htm>

New WIC Food Package Resources:

http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Learning_Center/Food_Packages.html

National WIC Association

<http://nwica.org>

California WIC Program, Department of Public Health

<http://www.wicworks.ca.gov/>

California WIC Association

<http://www.calwic.org>

CWA Reports

<http://www.calwic.org/reports.aspx>

California Department of Public Health, Breastfeeding Resources

<http://www.wicworks.ca.gov/breastfeeding/BFResources.html>

Breastfeeding Success

<http://www.breastfeedforall.org>

Breastfeeding Task Force of Greater Los Angeles

<http://www.breastfeedingtaskforla.org>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Breastfeeding Resources

<http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/>