



1107 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 625, Sacramento, CA 95814 • 916-448-2280

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**April 7, 2008**

**Contact:**

Laurie True, Executive Director  
California WIC Association  
916/448-2280 or 916/607-4822  
[ltrue@calwic.org](mailto:ltrue@calwic.org)

Robbie Gonzalez-Dow, MPH, RD  
California WIC Association  
831/521-7208 or [rgonzalez@calwic.org](mailto:rgonzalez@calwic.org)

**WIC is Updating its Menu!**  
**Nutrition program for moms, kids will add fresh produce and grains next year.**

*Los Angeles, CA.* – As food prices rise along with poverty and obesity rates, the federal Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition Program is revising the foods it provides to 1.4 million low-income women and children in California. For the first time in its 35-year history, families will be able to buy fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and soy products with their WIC checks. These nutrient-dense, lower-fat items will replace some of the juice, milk, cheese and eggs currently offered by WIC.

Close to 300 people attended a public summit today sponsored by California WIC Association and PolicyLink, to discuss the changes, which will be implemented in 2009. The statewide meeting, entitled *Making Change Matter: Maximizing the Health Impact of the New WIC Foods*, gathered input from a diverse crowd of nutrition experts, small grocers, and public health advocates on ways to maximize the community health benefits of these historic changes. “If planned carefully and leveraged by strategic partnerships,

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the implementation of the new WIC food changes could result in dramatic health improvements in communities most impacted by the obesity epidemic,” says Laurie True, executive director for the California WIC Association.

Based on recommendations by the Institute of Medicine, the changes will align WIC foods with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the American Academy of Pediatrics. “The WIC food changes are more consistent with the nutrition education messages already provided to California’s 1.4 million WIC participants,” says Linnea Sallack, CA State WIC Program Director. “For years we have been educating participants to eat more fruits and vegetables; eat foods lower in saturated fat; increase whole grains and fiber; drink less sweetened beverages and juice; and to breastfeed. Now the foods provided will match the messages,” says Sallack.

Ursula Koster, a current WIC participant and resident of Los Angeles is excited about the improved WIC foods. “Right now, food is so expensive, so WIC really helps. With the new food list, I can buy fresh fruits and vegetables that my family likes. I know they’re good for you -- but so expensive!”

The revisions to WIC foods, which are purchased with WIC checks in over 4,000 California grocery stores, are mandated by new regulations issued recently by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. California’s 100% federally-funded WIC Program, with a budget of close to \$1 Billion, is operated by the Department of Public Health through 82 local contractors. To be eligible for WIC, pregnant and post-partum mothers and young children up to age five must be poor (annual income at or below \$38,000 for a four-person family) and at nutritional risk.

“The WIC food packages will make healthy choices easier and more affordable in low-income communities. This is an unprecedented opportunity for California health

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programs and local advocates to work together in new ways to decrease health disparities,” says Judith Bell, President of PolicyLink, a national research institute advancing economic and social equity.

California WIC Association – [www.calwic.org](http://www.calwic.org)

PolicyLink – [www.policylink.org](http://www.policylink.org)

California Department of Public Health WIC Program – [www.wicworks.ca.gov](http://www.wicworks.ca.gov)

USDA, Food and Nutrition Services -

[www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Learning\\_Center/Food\\_Packages.html](http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Learning_Center/Food_Packages.html)

***INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES: Officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Public Health; local WIC providers; food and grocery industry representatives; and community-based organizations (Spanish-language available).***

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