



Key Issues Facing California WIC Providers

1. Federal Funding Proposals: WIC at Risk

Frontline WIC nutrition services are under siege in California. Chronic underfunding, eroded by rising costs and unfunded mandates, has reached a crisis level. In order to serve current need with existing funds, local WIC programs in California have already begun reducing staffing levels, curtailing services to high-risk families, and limiting direct contacts with WIC participants. Many are contemplating clinic site closures.

But in Washington, WIC funding is more likely to be cut than increased. This year, it appears that WIC will probably survive yet another round of dangerous and misguided budget proposals from the Bush Administration. But next year and beyond, these proposals, including one that would require almost \$50 million in state matching funds for WIC nutrition services, will definitely be back.

Needed from the Legislature:

- **Tell the President and Congress to hold WIC harmless from dangerous funding cuts.**
- **Consider supplemental General Fund support for WIC – state funding for targeted and evidence-based nutrition services in California.**

2. Obesity Epidemic: Harnessing WIC Foods and Education

Obesity and overweight have become one of the most serious and costly public health problems facing the nation. About 28% of all California WIC participants (and 25% of WIC kids age 1-5) are overweight, with many at risk of becoming obese. An updated WIC food prescription that meets the Dietary Guidelines, especially by including fresh fruits and vegetables, is badly needed if WIC is to successfully support healthier shopping and eating behaviors to combat obesity, while at the same time continuing to prevent household food insecurity.

Needed from the Legislature:

- **When federal rules changing WIC foods are published this summer, comments will be needed from all interested parties. Support the Institute of Medicine's science-based recommendations for updating WIC foods, detailed in their report The WIC Food Package: Time for a Change.**

- **Support the Department of Health Services' speedy and creative implementation of final WIC Food Package.**

3. Breastfeeding Support: WIC and Partners Can Do More

Sustained breastfeeding (exclusive breastfeeding up to six months, as recommended by the Academy of Pediatrics) has long been recognized as a proven obesity prevention strategy for myriad and well-documented reasons. A recent GAO study detailed the negative impact of formula marketing on breastfeeding rates among low-income women, and the important role of the WIC program in protecting a mother's right to make an informed infant feeding choice.

Needed from the Legislature:

- **Support SB 246 (Figueroa), which exempts hospitals from tissue bank licensing requirements for collecting, storing and processing a mother's breastmilk when needed for her own baby.**
- **Learn about the "Baby Friendly" Hospital initiative urge hospitals in your districts to become certified as Baby Friendly.**
www.babyfriendlyusa.org
- **Support the California Task Force on Youth and Workplace Wellness during World Breastfeeding Week, August 1-7, honoring businesses that support breastfeeding mothers. This builds on the passage of AB 1025 (Frommer, 2001).** www.californiabreastfeeding.org