



## WIC FACT SHEET

### WHAT IS WIC?

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a short-term intervention program designed to influence nutrition and health behaviors in a targeted, high-risk population.

### WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

Pregnant, breastfeeding, or postpartum women, infants and children under five years of age who meet the following:

- Income level has to be less than or equal to 185% of poverty guidelines
- Nutrition risk must be documented
- Those eligible may receive WIC services even if they are working, are under the care of a private physician, and/or have private insurance. To determine eligibility, clients must provide proof of ID, proof of residency and proof of income or Medicaid/food stamp enrollment.

### WHAT DO THE PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE?

#### Quality Nutrition Education Services

- Participants receive individualized nutrition and parenting education as often as is necessary from competent personnel at their local health department.

#### Breastfeeding Promotion and Education

- Breastfeeding women receive counseling and support from trained professionals.

#### A Monthly Food Prescription

WIC provides nutritious foods tailored to supplement the dietary needs of participants. The foods are specifically chosen to provide high levels of protein, iron, calcium and vitamins A and C; nutrients that have been scientifically shown to be lacking or needed in extra amounts in the diets of the WIC population. These five nutrients plus other nutrients are critical for assuring healthy growth and development.

- Pregnant or postpartum women and children: milk, cheese, eggs, fruit juice, and dried beans, peas or peanut butter
- Breastfeeding women: same as above plus carrots and tuna if they totally breastfeed
- Infants 0-6 months of age: iron-fortified formula or any formula intended for oral feeding if ordered by physician for a specified medical condition
- Infants 6-12 months of age: same as above plus dry infant cereal and fruit juice

#### Access to Medical Care

WIC staff are mandated by federal regulations to:

- Refer WIC participants to primary health care provider for maternal, prenatal and pediatric services
- Remind and encourage participants to keep their appointments with their primary health care provider for routine physicals and immunizations.



### **WHEN AND HOW DOES THE PARTICIPANT RECEIVE THE FOOD?**

The participant receives food coupons every other month from their local health departments. These coupons specify which foods the recipient is to receive. The coupons are then redeemed by the participant through an approved retail grocery store.

### **HOW LONG WILL PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE WIC SERVICES?**

- Prenatal women stay on the WIC program until six weeks postpartum.
- Postpartum women may continue (if still eligible) until six months postpartum.
- Breastfeeding women may remain on the program for as long as one year after delivery (if they continue to breastfeed).
- Infants may remain on the WIC program until their first birthday.
- Children may be eligible for WIC up to five years of age. They must be reassessed for eligibility every six months.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT YOUR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
OR CALL 1-800-228-9173**

**WIC IS BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE FOR AMERICA'S CHILDREN**

### **HEALTH BENEFITS**

#### **Women who participates in WIC:**

- Have longer pregnancies leading to fewer premature births
- Have a reduced rate of very low birth-weight babies
- Have fewer fetal and infant deaths
- Seek prenatal care earlier in pregnancy
- Consume more key nutrients such as iron, protein, calcium, and vitamin C
- Have greater breastfeeding initiation rates (Increased to 44% from 34% in 1990)

#### **Infants whose mothers participate in WIC:**

- Are breastfed at rates 10% and 25% more frequently than non-WIC participants

#### **Children who participate in WIC:**

- Have a greater assurance of normal growth
- Have better vocabulary test scores than non-participants (four to five year olds)
- Have better digit memory test scores than non-participants
- Demonstrate a 16% lower anemia rate after six months on the program
- Have increased immunization rates
- Have improved access to regular health care
- Show improvements in diet quality



## **COST SAVINGS**

### **Cost of serving a Pregnant Woman in WIC:**

- It costs approximately \$530 a year to serve a pregnant woman in WIC
- One WIC dollar spent on a pregnant woman saves \$1.92 to \$4.21 in Medicaid for the newborn and mother
- It costs \$22,000 per pound to raise a low or very low birth-weight baby to normal weight
- It costs \$40 per pound to provide WIC services to pregnant women

### **Cost of Low and Very Low Birth-Weight Babies:**

- Improved birth-weight reduces Medicaid cost on average of \$12,000 to \$15,000 per infant

### **WIC Saves Dollars:**

- \$1.2 billion in non-tax revenues have been generated in one year through the competitive bidding of infant formula, thus allowing WIC to serve 1.7 million participants
- An exclusively breastfed WIC infant saves Medicaid and WIC \$160 per month in the first six months of life

## **WIC PARTICIPANTS**

### **Income:**

- The average number of persons in a WIC family is four
- The average income of a participant is \$10,808 annually
- More than one-third of participants do not participate in any other federal assistance programs

### **Age**

- 83% of the pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women on WIC are between the ages of 18-34
- Only 10% are under the age 17

### **Racial Distribution:**

- 40% of all WIC participants are White
- 31% are Hispanic
- 24% are Black

### **Education Level:**

- On average, women participants have 12 years of education

**WIC is a USDA Program. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.**

**GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES/DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH**