



FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

What Is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children?

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) serves low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk. WIC provides participants with nutritious foods to supplement participant diets, nutrition education, and referrals to health and other social services.

Who Administers WIC?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers WIC at the Federal level.

At the State level, WIC is administered by 89 State agencies, including all 50 States, 33 Indian Tribal Organizations, American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Services are provided at a variety of local clinic locations including, but not limited to, county health departments, hospitals, schools, and Indian Health Service facilities.

How Does WIC Work?

WIC participants receive benefits to purchase items from a food package tailored to their specific nutritional needs. They also receive nutrition education, including breastfeeding support, and referrals to other health care services as needed through their local WIC clinic.

In some WIC State agencies, participants receive benefits via paper checks or vouchers. Other State agencies issue benefits via a debit-type card known as electronic benefit transfer (EBT). However, all WIC State agencies have been mandated to implement WIC EBT statewide by October 1, 2020.

WIC benefits are generally utilized at retailers such as authorized grocery stores or WIC-only stores. However, in some rural or remote locations, such as Alaska, food may be delivered to a participant’s home.

How Can People Participate in WIC?

Pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age 5 who meet certain requirements are eligible. These requirements include income eligibility and State residency. Additionally, the applicant must be individually determined to be at “nutritional risk” by a health professional or a trained health official.

Where Can I Go To Learn More About WIC?

To learn more, visit: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic>. To find the WIC offices serving your area, go to: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts>.

Whom at FNS Can I Contact To Discuss WIC?

Please contact the FNS Division of External and Governmental Affairs at fnsgovaffairs@usda.gov.

Key Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children Data

	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019 (estimate)
Participation (in thousands)	8,024	7,696	7,286	6,870	6,396
Total cost (in millions)	\$6,241	\$6,023	\$6,023	\$5,463	\$5,217