

# WIC Basics: What Health Care Providers Should Know

Up-to-date Information on the Connecticut WIC Program for the Health Care Professional



## What is WIC ?

WIC, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for **W**omen, **I**nfants and **C**hildren is a federally-funded discretionary nutrition assistance program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). In Connecticut, WIC is administered by the Department of Public Health and delivers services to participants through 12 local agencies and various satellite locations located throughout the state.

As a discretionary program, WIC is required to operate within strict budgetary constraints. In Connecticut, the WIC Program serves approximately 60,000 participants per month. The current economic climate notwithstanding, we are continually looking at ways to provide quality nutrition services within our existing resources. Federal regulations require all applicants and returning participants receive a nutrition assessment to determine their WIC eligibility. WIC nutrition benefits include: nutrition counseling and education, WIC supplemental foods, and referrals to health and other social services.

## WIC Needs Health Care Providers

Health care providers play an important role in the WIC certification visit. WIC nutrition professionals rely on information collected from health care providers to complete a nutrition assessment. This information is most often recorded on the WIC Certification/Medical Referral Form. Required data include: patient's current weight and height/length (within 60 days of certification appointment), bloodwork (hematocrit or hemoglobin), documentation of any acute or chronic medical conditions, medications, and special dietary needs or restrictions. To view guidelines for completing WIC certification forms go to our website <http://www.ct.gov/dph>, on the left navigation bar, click on Parents & Children, scroll down to the Women, Infants and Children link, click on "For Medical Providers" in the left navigation bar.

## Connecticut WIC Eligibility Requirements: At a glance

- **Categorical eligibility**

Pregnant women (through pregnancy)

Breastfeeding women (up to one year)

Non-breastfeeding postpartum women  
(up to 6 months)

Infants (up to 1st birthday)

Children (5th birthday)

- **Meet income guidelines, which are set at 185% of the Federal poverty line.**

- **Be at nutritional risk; WIC uses 2 broad categories of risk: medically based such as low birth weight (LBW) and diet based, such as inappropriate nutrition and feeding behaviors.**

- **Live in Connecticut.** (WIC does not require proof of citizenship or alien status.)

## What WIC Provides

### Breastfeeding Promotion and Support

Connecticut WIC supports the American Academy of Pediatrics' statement, *Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk*. WIC encourages pregnant mothers to breastfeed their infants unless medically contraindicated. Evidence-based information, and both prenatal and postpartum lactation support is available to WIC participants. Breastfeeding women get a special food package, and assistance with obtaining a breast pump is also available. For many years, WIC has been viewed as "a formula program". However, since the mid-1990's WIC has focused efforts on training staff in breastfeeding, and more than 60% of new mothers breastfeed for some length of time. Currently in Connecticut most WIC nutrition staff are Certified Lactation Counselors (CLC) and are available to provide individual support for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.



**In Connecticut, all WIC local agency nutrition professionals are trained to support the breastfeeding goals of our WIC moms.**

### Later in March

### Look for the next

### WIC Fact Sheet:

WIC Working with  
Health Care Providers:  
Required Medical  
Documentation &  
Formula Policies

### Nutrition Counseling and Education

The WIC nutrition professional (Registered Dietitian or Nutritionist) provides individualized counseling to families based on a complete WIC nutrition assessment to encourage development of healthy eating behaviors. WIC local agencies also offer a variety of group education sessions focused on prenatal nutrition, breastfeeding, infant and toddler feeding issues and prevention of overweight and obesity to support healthy families.

### Referrals to Health and other Social Services

WIC prides itself in facilitating appropriate referrals for families to a variety of services such as SNAP (formerly Food Stamps), Head Start, medical and dental services, substance abuse programs and many more. WIC also educates families on the importance of immunizations, lead poisoning prevention and smoking cessation.

### Nutritious Foods

A WIC nutrition professional selects WIC foods for participants based on a nutrition assessment. Participants receive WIC checks (with specific foods such as milk, cheese, eggs, juice, cereal and peanut butter or dried beans or peas) to redeem at authorized WIC grocery stores. Food packages vary according to the participant's category and age. The WIC foods were selected to provide certain nutrients found to be deficient in WIC's target population and are critical in periods of growth and development. The WIC Food Package was recently revised based on research conducted by the Institute of Medicine (IOM).

In July 2009, the Connecticut WIC Program plans to implement the Revised WIC Food Package and needs your help to facilitate this effort with our mutual clients. More detail on the Revised WIC Food Packages will be provided in April's WIC Fact Sheet. For additional information specific to the Connecticut WIC Program please visit our website at: <http://www.ct.gov/dph>, on the left navigation bar, click on Parents & Children, scroll down and click on the Women, Infants and Children link.

