

# Media Talking Points



- ❖ The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a Federally-funded nutrition program that provides nutrition education, supplemental foods, breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals for healthcare and social services. WIC serves low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants, and children until the age of 5. WIC has proven effective in preventing and improving nutrition-related health problems within its population.
- ❖ Since its beginning in 1974, the WIC Program has earned the reputation of being one of the most successful public health nutrition programs. Numerous studies, reviews and reports demonstrate that the WIC Program is cost effective in protecting or improving the health and nutritional status of low-income women, infants and children.
- ❖ The WIC Program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In North Carolina, it is administered by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, Women's and Children's Health Section, Nutrition Services Branch. WIC services are provided by county health departments, community and rural health centers, and community action agencies.
- ❖ The North Carolina WIC Program currently serves over 200,000 participants each month. In *[insert county or agency name]*, we serve approximately *[insert number of participants]* each month.
- ❖ To participate, persons must live in North Carolina, have a household income equal to or less than 185% of the U.S. Poverty Income Guidelines and be at nutritional risk. A person receiving Medicaid, Work First Families Assistance (TANF) or assistance from the NC Food and Nutrition Services (Food Stamps) automatically meets the income eligibility requirement. A nutritionist or competent professional authority makes a nutritional risk assessment at no cost to the participant, usually at the local WIC office.

- ❖ Nutrition education is a large component of the WIC Program. A trained nutrition professional can work one-on-one with individuals:
  - To teach about the relationship between nutrition, physical activity and good health.
  - To improve eating and physical activity habits as they relate to the participant's nutritional risk.
  - To promote optimal use of the WIC Program's supplemental foods and other nutritious foods.
  - To provide nutrition education appropriate to an individual's age, educational background, household situation, language, cultural and ethnic preferences, and nutritional needs.
  
- ❖ Breastfeeding promotion and support are an integral part of the WIC Program. WIC strives to increase the initiation, duration and exclusivity of breastfeeding among women enrolled in the program. All WIC agencies have trained staff ready to assist mothers in making informed decisions about their infant feeding choice. WIC also educates mothers in the basics of breastfeeding and offers the Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program to support pregnant and breastfeeding moms.
- ❖ Prenatal education is done through educational materials or classes. Women can learn about the benefits of breastfeeding, ways to make breastfeeding comfortable, how to tell if the baby is getting enough and fitting breastfeeding into mom's lifestyle.
  
- ❖ WIC participants are encouraged to breastfeed, but it is understood that breastfeeding is not for everyone. WIC provides contract milk-based or soy-based iron-fortified formula for the first year of life. All babies receive infant cereal, and infant fruits and vegetables starting at 6 months of age. Fully breastfed babies receive higher amounts of infant fruits and vegetables as well as infant meats.
  
- ❖ WIC has a shared relationship in the community receiving referrals from healthcare facilities as well as offering referrals for such needs as immunizations, well baby checkups, child care, and dental care.
  
- ❖ The WIC program and the supplemental food offered promote healthy habits for healthy families.