



# Special Supplemental Nutrition Program For Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

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## Outline

- Federal Program Goals
- WIC Program Benefits to Individuals and Communities
- General Program Information
- NYS WIC Program Information
- NYS WIC Program Goals
- 2014 and 2015 Changes to NYS WIC Program
- Electronic Benefit Transfer (eWIC)
- Outreach Efforts

# General Program Overview



## Program Overview

Sponsored by United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA/FNS)

Discretionary Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

### USDA WIC Mission Statement

To safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care.



## 2014-2018 USDA Strategic Plan

- Ensure that all America's children have access to safe, nutritious and balanced meals
- Reduce incidence of food insecurity
- Ameliorate rural poverty
- Promote healthy diet and physical activity
- Provide greater program integrity, efficiency and/or effectiveness

## How WIC Benefits Mothers and Infants

- Lower infant mortality rates<sup>1</sup>
- Longer pregnancies resulting in fewer premature births<sup>2</sup>
- WIC reduces incidence of low-birth-weight babies by 25% and very-low-birth-weight babies by 44%<sup>3</sup>
- Supplemental foods provide financial support for a healthy diet



## How WIC Benefits Children

- WIC increases children's intake of iron, potassium, and fiber, in contrast to SNAP<sup>4</sup>
- Healthier children have stronger immune systems, which means less lost work time for parents
- Children in WIC show better cognitive development<sup>5</sup>
- Children who received WIC achieved better Math and Reading scores than non-WIC children with similar SES<sup>5</sup>
- Obesity rates have dropped since 2009 among NYS children enrolled in WIC<sup>6</sup>



## How WIC Benefits the Community

- Women return to work sooner with breastfeeding support<sup>7</sup>
- Every WIC dollar spent on pregnant women saves \$1.92-\$4.21 in Medicaid costs for newborns and their mothers in the first 60 days of life<sup>8</sup>
- Revenue for WIC vendors - \$450 M in revenue for 3,800 NYS vendors
- Improved variety and selection of healthy food available to community members

## Eligibility and Benefits

## Who Is Eligible for WIC?

- Pregnant women
- Postpartum women up to 6 months after giving birth
- Breastfeeding women up to the infant's first birthday
- Infants and children up to 5 years of age
- Fathers and caretakers may apply for benefits for their children



## To Be Eligible For WIC, Participants Must...

- Reside in New York State
- Have a need for improved nutrition
- Meet income guidelines
  - Receiving SNAP, Medicaid, or TANF
  - Household income equal to or less than \$44,123 for a family of 4 (185% FPL)



## What WIC Offers

- Breastfeeding information and support
- Nutrition education
- Referrals to other health/social services
- Healthy foods, including fruits and vegetables



## Breastfeeding Support

Helping parents make healthy choices for their babies is an important part of WIC. WIC's goal is to improve the health of infants by encouraging breastfeeding.

Benefits of breastfeeding:<sup>9</sup>

- Provides all infant's nutrient needs for 1<sup>st</sup> six months of life
- Promotes optimal growth and development, including brain development
- Protects against gastrointestinal, respiratory, and urinary tract infections
- Reduces incidence of allergies
- Fosters bonding between mother and infant
- Reduces risk of maternal postpartum hemorrhage



## Nutrition Education

Participant Centered Services

- WIC participants and staff work together to find solutions for participants' concerns
- Participants learn about healthy habits that affect the family's well-being:
  - Sharing family meals
  - Recipes to use WIC foods
  - Think your drink (to promote more water)
  - Increase physical activity
  - Decrease screen time
  - Infant feeding cues
- Staff address specific health problems with referrals to other professionals



## Referral Services

- NYS Health Plan Marketplace
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- Food Pantries
- Immunizations
- Housing Assistance
- Domestic Violence
- Substance Abuse
- Smoking Cessation
- HEAP



## Supplemental Foods

Based on IOM recommendations, Federal regulations have aligned WIC food packages with Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) and current infant feeding guidelines from American Academy of Pediatrics.



## Supplemental Foods

WIC food packages:

- Promote and support successful long-term breastfeeding
- Provide wide variety of nutritious foods for participants
- Offer specific foods to meet dietary needs during critical times of growth and development
- Provide flexibility in accommodating participants' cultural food preferences
- Are designed to address national health issues such as low-birth-weights, childhood obesity

## WIC Foods

Average benefit = \$65 per month

- Low-Fat or Fat-Free Milk
- Cheese
- Eggs
- Fruits & Vegetables
- Whole Grain Cereal & Bread, Brown Rice
- Legumes
- Peanut Butter
- Infant Formula
- Jarred Infant Vegetables, Fruit, & Meat
- Infant Cereal



## WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

- Provides \$24 per family/year for purchase of fresh, seasonal fruits & vegetables
- Utilizes local Farmers' Markets
- 941 farmers participated in 2014
- Runs from July to November



## New York State WIC Program

## NYS WIC Program

- Approximately 470,000 Participants
  - 111,000 Women
  - 107,000 Infants
  - 248,000 Children
- 1400 staff in 93 Local Agencies (LAs)
- Over 400 Permanent and Temporary Sites
- 3,800 Authorized Vendors



## 2015 NYS WIC Program Funding

- \$450 million in Food Benefits (Grants and Rebates)
- \$115 million in Local Grants (Federal and State Funds)
- Federal Funding is Discretionary
- 2015 Federal food funding is sufficient to serve an additional **65,000** participants



## NYS WIC Strategic Priorities

- Performance Improvement and Data Driven Decisions
- Embrace and Leverage Technology
- Enhance Partnerships and Communication
- Streamlining Program Administration
- Align Resources With Goals



## NYS WIC Program Goals/Objectives

- Increase Breastfeeding Rates
- Provide Participant Centered Services
- Increase Retention and Outreach
- Enhance Vendor Management
- Implement Food Package Changes
- Develop Implementation Plans for NYWIC/EBT



## 2014/2015 NYS WIC Program Activities



### Local Agency Performance Improvement

- 2015 Performance Improvement Projects
  - Implementation of creative, innovative strategies to improve quality of WIC services
  - \$7 million in funding
  - Targeted toward specified areas of program servicesality assurance
  - Results will be compiled and best-practices shared throughout WIC agencies
- 2016 Agency Assessment Process will include Performance Metrics



## NYS WIC Breastfeeding Support

- 300 Breastfeeding Peer Counselors
- Registered Dietitians
- Certified Lactation Counselors (CLCs)
- International Board of Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs)
- Enhanced food package for breastfeeding women
- Breast Pumps

## WIC Learning Community to Promote Exclusive Breastfeeding (EBF)

- Intervention involving prenatal WIC participants to improve exclusive breastfeeding rates
- 12 WIC agencies selected, 47 Staff trained
- Replication of initiative developed by Vermont WIC: You Can Do It WIC Can Help
- 5 Core Elements for Breastfeeding Success
- 412/861 women enrolled in pilot (48%)
- First infant deliveries – March 2015
- Outcome metrics will be available October 2015

## Nutrition Services

- Empowering WIC Staff
- WIC Staffing Policies
- Resource Materials
- Training Services through the WIC Training Center
- 2015 WIC Staff Competency Assessment



## Proof of Eligibility Policies

- 2014 Changes to Income Verification Policies:
  - Allow online verification of adjunct eligibility
  - Require income verification no more frequently than every 3 months
  - Streamline documentation requirements



## NYS WIC Vendor Management

- 2014 USDA Management Evaluation
- Blind Not-to-Exceed Amount
- Exempt Formula Policy changes
- Vendor Peer Groups
- Changes to NYS WIC Vendor Regulations
- Improve the WIC shopping experience



## 2015 Food Package Changes

- Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for Infants
- Yogurt
- Whole wheat pasta & tortillas
- Canned legumes
- White potatoes
- Women & children with medical need are allowed jarred infant fruits and vegetables
- Enhanced State Benefit: Increased Vegetable and Fruit Benefit for pregnant and breastfeeding women, and children (\$4 per month)



## Progress towards electronic WIC (eWIC)

Federal regulations mandate that States implement an electronic benefit card by 2020. The New York State target year is 2019

eWIC benefits will:

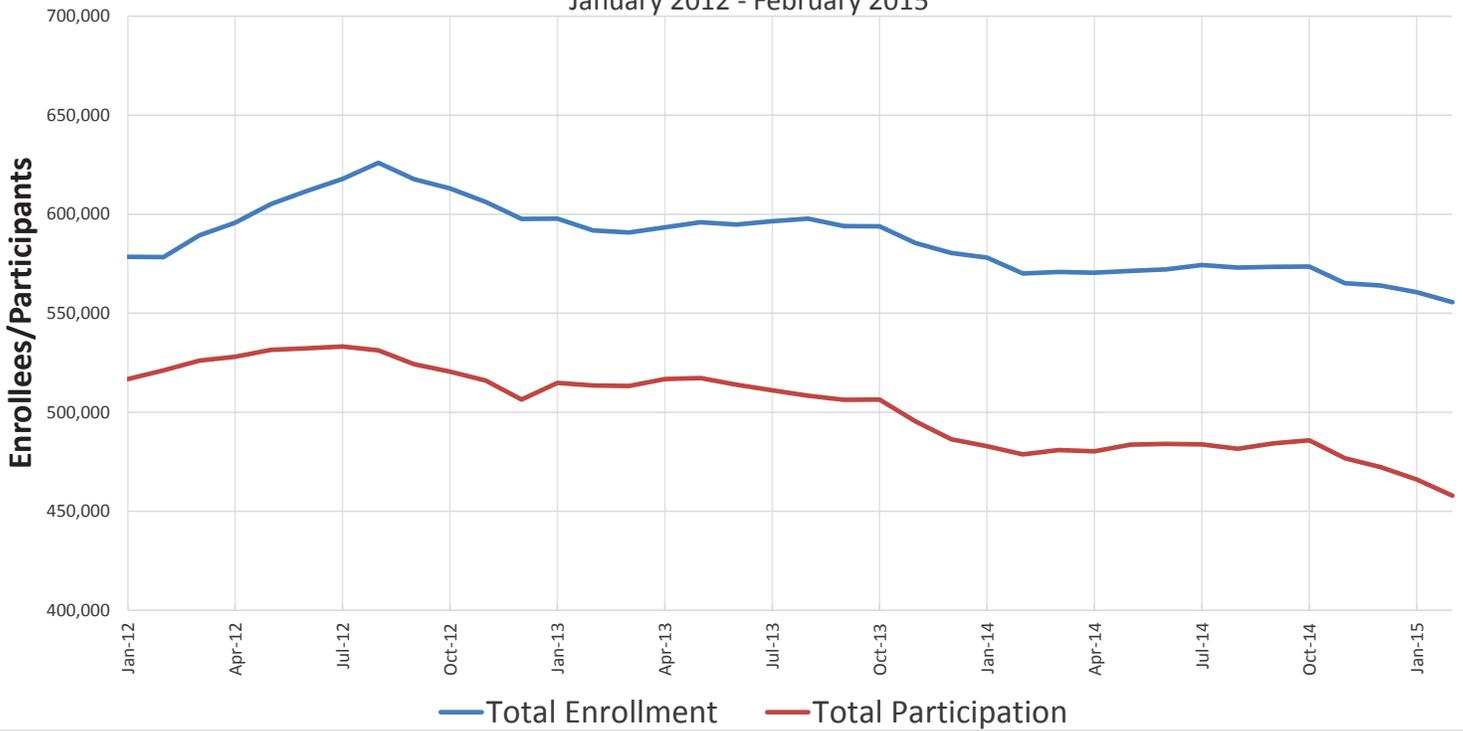
- Be available on a debit-like card
- Make it easier for participants to checkout at grocery lines
- Eliminate stigma of paper checks at the cash register
- Identify WIC-approved foods automatically with cash register system
- Allow mixed basket shopping
- Offer flexibility to shopping visits
- Provide faster reimbursement to vendors



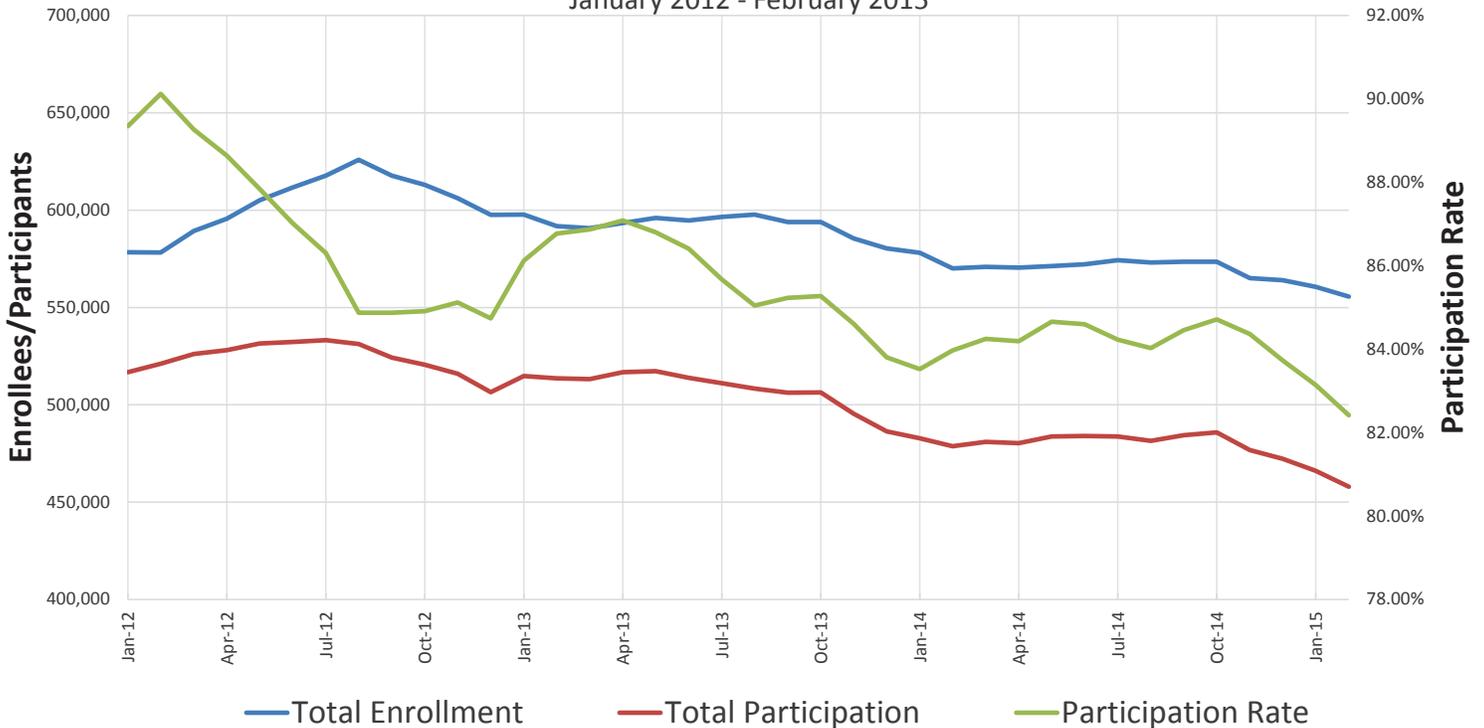
## Program Participation Rates



New York State WIC Program Enrollment vs. Participation  
January 2012 - February 2015



New York State WIC Program Enrollment vs. Participation  
January 2012 - February 2015



# Recent Trends in NYS WIC Participation

	2013	2014	January 2015
Participation	513,181	485,693	466,092
Enrolled	597,466	576,133	560,585
Enrolled Served	85.9%	84.3%	83.1%
% of Estimated Eligibles* Served	67.4%	63.8%	61.2%

\*Based on 2013 Estimated Eligibles of 761,620



# Outreach Efforts

- Streamlining Program Administration
- Enhancing the Shopping Experience
- Local Agency Performance Improvement Projects
- Providing Tools to Local Agencies
- Partnerships







Growing Up Healthy Hotline refers callers to the nearest local agency 1-800-522-5006

These websites include contact information for NYS local agencies:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/wic/>

<https://health.data.ny.gov/Health/Women-Infants-and-Children-WIC-Program-Site-Inform/g4i5-r6zx>



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