

The Nevada Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is closely connected to the health-care delivery system. WIC provides nutrition education, supplemental foods, and referral to other community-based health and social service providers.¹ Program participants must be Nevada residents, and include women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have recently given birth; and their infants or children up to age five. Families must have low incomes and a nutritional risk.² The participants' household income must be below 185 percent of the federal poverty line (see page 43 for poverty guidelines). The program is classified as a federal food program, as funding revenues are primarily from the United States Department of Agriculture. (Information regarding other federal food programs can be found on pages 43-48.) WIC participants receive vouchers for highly nutritious supplemental foods that can be redeemed at retail stores. Nutrition education is provided to all program participants. Individuals identified at higher risk receive counseling from nutrition professionals. All participants are integrated into the health-care system through referrals to appropriate providers in order to improve their health and nutrition-related behaviors.

Extensive national surveys have found that substantial numbers of pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and young children from families with low incomes have inadequate nutrition and health care. This results in higher rates of low-birthweight babies, poorer development in the early years of life, lack of readiness to enter school, poorer overall health, and higher costs of medical care. The WIC program "has been proven to increase the number of women receiving prenatal care, reduce the incidence of low birthweight and fetal mortality, reduce anemia, and enhance the nutritional quality of the diet of participants."³

The WIC program operates statewide through a network of clinics. Clinics in Washoe and Clark counties are operated through contractual agreements with local agencies; whereas, clinics in the rest of the state are operated directly by the state. In all cases, coordination with other local providers ensures that the program improves the utilization of basic health care by serving as an adjunct to existing health care. Additionally, revenues are received from rebates on foods purchased (infant formula and cereal) through single-source contracts with food manufacturers, billings to retail groceries for improper charges, and occasional other small grants. Outreach is conducted to encourage potentially eligible individuals and families to apply. The program operates a toll free number (1-800-8NEV-WIC) for basic information and clinic-location referral.

The Nevada State WIC program serves an average of 39,000 low-income nutritionally at-risk women, infants, and children in Nevada each month. This monthly average for fiscal year 2000 is an increase of 3,000 participants from the previous year. Each month the WIC program serves an average of 10,200 women (4,100 pregnant women, 2,900 breastfeeding women, and 3,200 recently postpartum women); 10,600 infants; and 18,200 children.⁴

Program effectiveness is measured by tracking the numbers of different types of participants, as well as the estimated percentage of eligible women and children. Effectiveness is also measured through the percentage of infants breastfed, percentage of infants introduced to solid food at four months or later, and the percentage of children weaned from the bottle by 14 months.

The Nevada Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program Continued

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

State Fiscal Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Number of women (pregnant, postpartum, or breastfeeding)	8,961	9,019	9,341	9,162	9,760
Number of infants (birth to 12 months)	8,983	9,359	9,702	9,943	10,348
Number of children (1-4 years)	17,387	18,021	17,969	17,338	17,751
Total number of participants	35,331	36,399	37,012	36,443	37,859

Source: Nevada Department of Human Resources, Division of Health, WIC Program.

The Health Passport Project

The Nevada WIC program is currently participating with the Western Governors Association (WGA) in a project which uses electronic health cards to improve information sharing and administrative efficiency among public and private health-care providers and nutrition programs. The on-going test demonstration of the Health Passport Project in Reno began on June 2, 2000, and is scheduled to run through December 2001. If successful, and federal funding is available, the Health Passport Project will become available to the rest of the state. This project provides WIC Program benefits through Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) utilizing Smart Card Technology and is gaining widespread support from participants, vendors, and clinic personnel. The goal of the Health Passport Project is to develop and demonstrate a versatile, multipurpose electronic card that will streamline access to, and delivery of, a variety of public and private services and benefits to individuals to improve their health and the health of their families. At present, participating organizations include the WIC Program, the Immunization Program, and the Head Start Program.

Source: Nevada Department of Human Resources, Division of Health, WIC Program.