

## WIC At A Glance



**WIC Defined:** WIC is the more commonly known term for The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and

Children. WIC is a federally funded initiative, the goal of which is to protect the health of low-income pre and postpartum women and young children by providing healthy food, nutrition education, and referrals to other health and social services.

**A WIC in Time:** The very first WIC clinic opened its doors in 1974 in Pineville, Kentucky. With humble beginnings, WIC served 88,000 people in its first year at a total cost of 10.4 million dollars. Today, WIC serves over 9 million people with total program costs reaching over 6 billion dollars. WIC operates through 90 state agencies including all 50 states, 34 Indian tribal organizations, 5 U.S. territories (Northern Mariana, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands), and The District of Columbia. It also provides healthy foods to 45% of infants, 37% of pregnant women, and 25% of children up to the age of 5 in the United States.



**WIC, At Your Service:** The WIC program offers a variety of services. The First and foremost, WIC provides access to nutritious food and formula by supplying participants with paper food instruments detailing WIC Food Packages, or more recently, the EBT cards. Participants use these to secure allowable food items from locally approved grocery stores. All allowable foods provided meet strict USDA guidelines to ensure that they are healthy, balanced, and provide nutrition that would otherwise be missing from a participant's diet. Along with



nutritious food, WIC provides access to educational materials that cover a myriad of topics, ranging from the importance of breastfeeding, to parenting tips and techniques. Lastly, WIC provides screenings to evaluate nutritional needs, as well as referrals to other health and social services that may aid the participant.



**Is WIC For Me?** To participate in the WIC program, it is necessary to meet the following requirements:

- A participant must be pre or postpartum female, infant (under the age of 1), or a child (age 5 or under)
- A participant must live in the state in which they applied for benefits.
- A participant's gross income must be at or below 185% of the U.S. Poverty Income Guidelines. The participant automatically qualifies on an income level if they are receiving SNAP benefits, Medicaid, or TANF. The state may also determine eligibility if the participant has qualified for certain other State programs.
- The participant must be assessed as a nutritional risk, the guidelines of which shall be determined on a per state basis.

**WIC Moving Forward:** Currently the state of Virginia's WIC program is working to convert its payment system from paper food instruments (similar to a check) to an EBT card. This project will greatly assist in making the WIC payment system easier and less cumbersome for the participant. The EBT card will offer more discretion at the time WIC purchases are made, as well as eliminate the need to keep track of several months' worth of food instruments.

