



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE  
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

# Idaho WIC Training **WIC Overview**



## What Will You Learn?

- Purpose of the WIC program
- Benefits of WIC participation
- Successes of the WIC program
- Processing standards
- Steps to apply for the Idaho WIC program

## Instruction Level

Prerequisite for taking the course: None

## Items Needed for This Course

- Handouts: *What is WIC?* trigger card; Authorized Food List; Medical Documentation form; Application; Participant Rights, Responsibilities and Consent form; Next Appointment card
- Access to Idaho WIC website
- No Idaho TRAIN LMS online course is required to be completed with this guidebook. For those who want more information, there is an optional WIC 101 (USDA) course available on the TRAIN LMS.

## Recommended Time

- Approximate time it takes to complete the Overview course: 1 hour
- Approximate time it takes to complete the activities and discussion: 1 hour

## Module 1: Residency, Category, and Identity

Congratulations on joining Idaho WIC, one of the most successful public health programs in the country. The official title for WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. It is a program for low-income and nutritionally or medically at-risk:

- Pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women
- Infants
- Children (up to age 5)

WIC is a short-term program intended to impact lifetime nutrition and health behaviors in a specific at-risk population. The WIC program provides:

- Nutrition education and health information
- Breastfeeding promotion and support
- Supplemental nutritious foods
- Health screenings
- Referrals to other health programs and services in the community

WIC started as a pilot project in 1972 in a few states. In 1974, due to its success, the WIC program expanded services across the U.S. The purpose of the WIC program is to prevent health problems and improve the health of program participants during important times of growth and development. This is done by providing nutritious foods and nutrition education as a supplement to good health care. The WIC program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Since the program receives money from the federal government via USDA, the WIC program has to follow federal regulations that are set for the program. It is the job of the State WIC office to ensure that all Idaho clinics are following the federal regulations. In Idaho, WIC is overseen by the Department of Health and Welfare. Throughout Idaho, there are seven public health districts and two Native American health agencies that provide WIC services. Over 200 grocery stores around the state are authorized to accept WIC checks. Because WIC participants buy food at local grocery stores, WIC helps the local economy. In 1974, the Idaho WIC program began with 100 participants. Since then, the program has grown steadily and now serves over 36,000 participants.

WIC improves the health of nutritionally at-risk women, infants, and children. WIC is one of the most successful and cost-effective public health programs. WIC has been shown to have the following effects:

- Fewer premature births
- Fewer low birth weight infants
- Fewer infant deaths
- Greater savings in health care costs
- Improved intake of key nutrients in preschoolers

- Decline in iron-deficiency anemia
- More women informed about the benefits of breastfeeding their infants
- Increase in women choosing to breastfeed their infants and in length of time their infants were breastfed
- Improved immunization rates among WIC children
- Improved growth rates in WIC children

To participate in the WIC program, an applicant must meet the following four criteria:

1. Be an Idaho resident. Federal regulations require applicants to live within state boundaries to receive WIC benefits from that state.
2. Belong to one of the following categories:
  - Pregnant woman
  - Breastfeeding woman up to one year after delivering an infant
  - Non-breastfeeding woman up to six months after pregnancy ends
  - Infant
  - Child under 5 years of age
3. Be income eligible. The gross family income must meet specific guidelines. The maximum allowable WIC family income is 185% of the federal poverty guidelines. The income guidelines are revised each year by the Office of Management and Budget.
4. Have an identified nutritional or medical risk. Nutritional risk is defined as one of the following:
  - A health condition detected by biochemical or anthropometric measurements. An example is an underweight child. This will be discussed in more detail in a future module.
  - Other nutritional concerns
  - A condition making an individual more likely to have inadequate nutritional patterns or nutrition-related medical problems

Note: Participating in WIC does not change an individual's or family's eligibility for other programs such as SNAP (Food Stamps) or Medicaid.

## **Benefits of the WIC Program**

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### **Nutrition Education and Breastfeeding Promotion and Support**

The WIC program's full name is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. Valuable prevention tools that you will be providing to participants are nutrition education, and breastfeeding information and support. Nutrition education is a unique benefit of the WIC program. It is designed to be easily understood by participants, related to their nutritional need(s) and specific concerns, and focused on improving health. In addition, the Idaho WIC program has taken a leadership role in promoting breastfeeding and supporting breastfeeding women.

### **Supplemental Nutritious Foods**

In conjunction with nutrition education and breastfeeding promotion, WIC provides a monthly benefit of nutritious foods to supplement the dietary needs of participants. The foods are specifically chosen to provide high levels of protein, iron, calcium, and vitamins A and C, nutrients shown to be lacking or needed in extra amounts in the diets of the WIC population. Calories and other essential nutrients provided by the WIC food packages are important for good health, growth, and development.

### **Types of Foods Offered by the WIC Program**

While not a food, WIC food dollars received in Idaho can be used for breastfeeding equipment for mothers who are breastfeeding. All WIC staff are provided with tools and training to support and promote breastfeeding.

Infants may also receive infant formula. Typically, infants receive standard milk-based or soy-based infant formula. If infants have a medical need, they may qualify for other types of formula. A medical documentation form is required for this. When infants are older (6 months through 11 months), they receive baby food. Breastfed infants receive baby food meats.

Children and women receive several different types of foods in varying amounts. Healthy foods are selected to help improve the diets of WIC participants:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Fruit juice and vegetable juice
- Milk
- Eggs
- Cheese
- Yogurt
- Breakfast cereal

- Whole wheat bread and other whole grain products (such as tortillas and pasta)
- Peanut butter
- Dry beans, peas or lentils
- Breastfeeding women receive canned meat (tuna/salmon)

### **Referrals to Other Health Programs and Services**

WIC staff share information and make referrals to other health services and programs within the community that may be beneficial to the participant. You will become familiar with community resources in your area to better serve participants.

### **Who is on the WIC Team?**

Each local agency WIC team is led by a Coordinator. The WIC Coordinator is a Registered Dietitian (RD, also known as RDN) who has special training in nutrition. Other RDs may also be on the WIC team, as well as clinical assistants, clerks/receptionists/customer service representatives, a Breastfeeding Coordinator, and peer counselors. Not all agencies have all positions. This typically depends on the size of your agency.

The State WIC office is led by the State WIC Manager. The State WIC Manager is an RD. Other RD and staff on the State WIC team cover specific program areas. The State office also has an administrative assistant, a Vendor Coordinator and help desk support staff. The State WIC office provides program direction for local agencies and computer support for the WIC computer system, WISPr. Anytime you have a question related to your work, please check with your trainer, supervisor, or Coordinator for help. If none of those persons can be reached, you may call the State office at 208-334-5948 or toll-free at 866-347-5484.

### **Locations of Idaho WIC Clinics**

Local WIC clinics operate within seven District Health departments and two Native American Health Service agencies. These nine WIC agencies operate WIC clinics throughout the state. Each clinic is unique in terms of the number of participants served, the number of staff, workspace for clinic, and days and hours of clinic operation.



**Complete Activities 1 & 2 in your Activities Workbook**

## **Module 2: Application Process**

## Steps to Apply for WIC in Idaho

### 1. Applicant contacts WIC

Persons interested in applying for WIC in Idaho generally will:

- Telephone or email the local WIC clinic for information
- Show up at the local WIC clinic with questions about applying
- Telephone or email the State office with questions

When a person calls, emails or visits the clinic, this is considered the **initial contact date**. Depending on your local agency's procedures for providing information to interested persons, you may or may not be the one answering questions about applying for WIC in Idaho. *Ask your local agency Coordinator or trainer how the process to sign up for WIC works in your clinic(s).*

### 2. Applicant is screened

When someone contacts the local WIC clinic about applying for WIC a screening for eligibility may happen. This means that the applicant will be asked the following questions:

- *"Are you a resident of Idaho?"*
- *"Where (what town/county) do you live?"*
- *"Are you applying for yourself (woman) or for a child?"*
- *(if for a child) "What age(s) is the child(ren)?"*
- *(if for self) "Are you pregnant or have you recently delivered a baby?"*

Questions similar to the above will assist in determining if the applicant is eligible based on **residency** and **category**. If it is determined that the applicant is eligible based on residency and category, additional questions may be asked to determine if the applicant is **income eligible**.

- *"How much is your gross monthly income (before any deductions) for your household?"*
- *"How many people live in your household?"*

Income can be quickly calculated based on the federal income guidelines that are based on the number of persons in a household and the amount of income for that household. More detail about income will be provided in another module.

Sometimes a person applying for WIC may make more money than is allowed according to the income guideline table. If this is the case, further questions regarding the applicant's income may be asked:

- *"Does anyone living in the household receive Medicaid, SNAP (Food Stamps), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)?"*

If the applicant answers yes to the above question, he/she may still be eligible for WIC. (As you learn more about enrolling someone into the WIC program, you will be provided additional information on income eligibility.)

### 3. Applicant is given a certification appointment

Once an applicant is determined to meet the above screening criteria for WIC, the applicant will be given an appointment that same day or a few days later. This appointment is called a **certification**. A certification is the process by which an applicant is enrolled in the Idaho WIC program.

The WIC Next Appointment card provides information for the applicant on what items to bring in order to determine eligibility for program participation.

Locate and review the WIC Appointment Information form you gathered in your clinic

### Processing Standards

Now that you have an idea of what applying to the WIC programs consists of, it is important to understand the timeframe for when appointments must be made. Processing standards are a set timeframe in which an applicant must be seen to determine their eligibility or ineligibility.

Pregnant women and members of migrant workers and their family members must be notified of their eligibility or ineligibility within 10 days of the date of the first request for program benefits. All other applicants shall be notified of their eligibility or ineligibility within 20 days of the date of the first request for program benefits. The processing timeframes begin when an applicant calls or visits the local agency to make an oral or written request for program benefits.

#### Examples for New Participants:

When an applicant has never been on WIC, when they first make contact to obtain benefits, this is their initial contact date.

- A pregnant woman calls to schedule an appointment on August 5, 2015 and the next available appointment is August 13, 2015. In this situation, processing standards are met because her initial contact date is August 5, 2015 and her appointment to certify is August 13, 2015, which is 8 calendar days from her appointment. If she comes in on August 13, 2015 and is certified, then her certification date would also be August 13, 2015.
- A mother calls a smaller clinic in the area to schedule an appointment with her infant on July 10, 2015. She would like to come in on a Tuesday or Wednesday.



Unfortunately, the clinic she called is only open on Wednesdays every other month. You offer to initially see her in the main clinic and then transfer her to the smaller clinic closer to her home. She agrees and states she will call the other clinic to schedule an appointment. The applicant calls the next day to make an appointment and is scheduled for July 20, 2015. In this situation, processing standards are met and the clinic should ensure the initial contact date is July 10, 2015 when she called the smaller clinic and not July 11, 2015 when she called the main clinic the next day to schedule her appointment.

### **Examples for Existing Participants:**

When an applicant has been on WIC, as soon as a certification period ends, the person instantly becomes an applicant again even if they've been on the program non-stop.

- As the end of a child's 2-year-old certification period approaches, staff schedule for a new certification appointment on April 1, 2016. The Responsible adult brings in the child for the appointment to certify on April 1, 2016. The certification is completed. This is considered the day she made an oral request for benefits for this new certification. Processing standards would be met. The initial contact date, appointment date and certification date would all be April 1, 2016. Staff would have to enter the initial contact date.
- As the end of a child's 2-year-old certification period approaches, staff schedule for a new certification appointment on March 1, 2016. Due to extenuating circumstances, when the Responsible Adult brings in the child for the appointment to certify on March 1, 2016 they cannot be seen. The clinic offers her the next available appointment March 8, 2016. They return March 8, 2016 and are certified. Processing standards would be met. The initial contact date is March 1, 2016, the appointment date changed to March 8, 2016 and the certification date would be March 8, 2016. Staff would have to enter the initial contact date.

The initial contact date must be accurately recorded in WISPr. While we want to try to meet processing standards with every participant, there are reasons where it may be acceptable to schedule participants out of processing standards. For example, by the request of the applicant or participant. They may want to coordinate appointments with other family members. Staff must document why an applicant or participant's appointment does not meet processing standards if applicable.

### **Steps to Certify for Idaho WIC**

At the certification appointment, you will meet with the WIC applicant(s) to complete the process to determine program eligibility. Remember, to be eligible for WIC in Idaho, a person must:

- Be a *resident* of the State of Idaho

- Belong to one of the *categories* WIC serves
- Be *income eligible*
- Have a *nutritional need*

**Note:** The certification procedures remain the same for those persons who are currently on WIC and their certification period has expired. Each certification is new. The order of the steps may vary in each clinic. Later in your training, you will get access to a training environment in the WIC computer system (WISPr). There, you will practice entering information to complete a certification and perform other WIC functions.