



# **Fit WIC**

**Programs to Prevent  
Childhood Overweight  
In Your Community**

**The Implementation Manual for the  
Fit WIC Childhood Overweight Prevention Project**



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Childhood Overweight In Your Community**

*The Implementation Manual  
for the  
Fit WIC Childhood Overweight Prevention Projects  
(1999-2002)*

Supported by  
**United States Department of Agriculture  
Food and Nutrition Service  
and  
University of California, Berkeley  
Center for Weight and Health**

# ***Fit WIC*** **Programs To Prevent** **Childhood Overweight In Your Community**

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## **Preface**

As part of the response to the determination of a national obesity epidemic by the Surgeon General, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) refocused the WIC Program Special Project Grant funding for Fiscal Year 1999 to launch WIC Childhood Obesity Prevention Projects. The competitive process resulted in cooperative agreements with five WIC State agencies – California, Kentucky, Vermont, Virginia, and the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona (ITCA) – with California receiving additional funding to serve as the lead state for the effort. Working individually within their jurisdictions, but sharing information and ideas in regular group meetings with FNS and a representative from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (CDC/DNPA), these projects evolved into "*Fit WIC*."

Prevention of childhood overweight is not an easy task. In America today many mothers and other adult members in the 4 million WIC households are overweight or obese. And though it is a food and nutrition program, many WIC service providers themselves are overweight. But, with direct involvement with 35 percent of the pregnant women, almost one-half of the infants and about one-fourth of all preschool children in the nation, WIC provides an excellent gateway to address the issue at those critical stages when eating patterns are first being established.

The problem of childhood overweight is a biological problem with complex social and behavioral roots. *Fit WIC* is not the cure for childhood overweight. Rather it is a mechanism for the nation's premier early childhood food and nutrition program to evolve and become a more important part of the societal solution. Specific quantifiable impacts of *Fit WIC* on eating behaviors, feeding interactions and, ultimately, healthy weight are yet to be studied. But *Fit WIC* provides a roadmap based on strong theoretical ground, for how WIC can improve services to this end in the variety of real settings found across the country.

We are grateful to all of those who assisted in making *Fit WIC* a successful partnership. This includes the State WIC representatives and social scientists from each

of the States (listed in Acknowledgments, Chapter 11 of this manual). Special thanks are extended to the staff of the Center for Weight and Health at the University of California, Berkeley, in particular Dr. Pat Crawford, Dr. Monica Schaeffer, Cindy Caffery, and Wendi Gosliner, for their firm but gentle efforts in leading the project and the development of this Implementation Manual. Their professionalism, good nature and dedication to quality were instrumental in orchestrating the efforts of the State WIC representatives and the social scientists.

We appreciate the initial and ongoing support of the FNS Grants Management Branch, without which these projects could not have been awarded and extended as needed to produce quality products.

We are also proud to recognize the outstanding contributions of our project officer, Edward Herzog of the FNS Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation and our WIC program liaison, Marta Kealey of the Supplemental Food Programs Division. Ed demonstrated his exceptional skill in project management both in guiding the project, and negotiating the complexities of grant technical management within the Federal system. We especially appreciate his ability to handle these tasks independently and keep us informed, while properly bringing to managerial staff only those issues that truly needed such consideration. Marta did an outstanding job of providing technical support on WIC policy and operations.

And finally, we extend our thanks to all of those others at the State, Tribal and local levels who participated in these special projects while continuing the daily work of providing quality WIC services to the women, infants and children in their communities. We hope that *Fit WIC* will in the long run, help you to better address the challenge of childhood overweight prevention in your communities.

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