

# Nutrition Program Facts Food and Nutrition Service



## WIC

### The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children

#### Serving Migrants in the WIC Program

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a Federal grant program that operates in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, American Samoa and 33 Indian Tribal Organizations. The WIC Program provides nutrient-dense supplemental foods, nutrition education and health care referrals to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk and meet income eligibility standards.

WIC has a long history of providing services to migrant workers and their families. Beginning with a demonstration project in the 1970's, program policies have been developed to ensure that WIC services are focused on the needs of the migrant population. In addition, WIC Program regulations enhance and ensure program access and services to migrants.

#### **Eligibility**

Special procedures exist to facilitate the WIC certification of migrant farmworkers and their families. This includes expedited processing of applications for certification. A Verification of Certification (VOC) card is used to ensure that migrant farmworkers and their families receive continued WIC benefits when they move from one area or State to another. Proof of income and nutritional risk eligibility is documented on the VOC card. During the health screening for WIC eligibility, migrancy is considered a nutritional risk factor. The term "Migrant Farmworker" is defined in WIC regulations to ensure continuity of identification throughout the program.

## **Outreach and Education**

WIC State agency annual plans must include a strategy to reach and enroll migrant farmworkers and their families. WIC services are offered at Community and Migrant Health Centers to the extent feasible. Nutrition education goals must include meeting the special needs of the migrant community. State agencies must take steps to provide information in other languages when there is a significant WIC eligible non-English speaking population. Numerous nutrition education and program information materials have been developed in languages other than English, particularly Spanish.

## **Appropriations**

The Child Nutrition Act of 1966, as amended, mandates that not less than nine-tenths of one percent of appropriated funds shall be available for services to eligible members of migrant populations. For fiscal year 2003, over \$40.8 million was earmarked by WIC State agencies to serve migrants.

## **Coordination**

In July 2000, WIC issued a Coordination Best Practices Handbook to provide States agencies with strategies to coordinate and co-locate WIC services at Migrant and Community Health Centers and Indian Health Service sites. The handbook highlights a number of successful programs that coordinate to provide WIC and other services to the migrant population in innovative ways. It provides practical ideas to implement strategies which increase WIC participation for underserved eligible populations. The handbook was distributed to 2000 local WIC agencies, 86 WIC State agencies, 3000 Community and Migrant Health Centers, and 600 Indian Health Service sites.

### **For more information:**

For more information, contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Public Affairs Staff at 703-305-2286, or by mail at 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 819, Alexandria, Virginia 22303. Information on FNS programs is available on the World Wide Web at [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov)

November 2003