



# North Carolina WIC Update

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

Summer 2022, Volume 1



## What is WIC?

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture and administered by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

## What does WIC provide?



### HEALTHY FOOD

Participants receive fresh fruits and vegetables; milk, cheese and yogurt; whole grains and cereal; peanut butter, beans and more.



### BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

Participants receive guidance and education, peer counseling and support, and breastfeeding supplies.



### NUTRITION EDUCATION

Participants receive shopping tips, kid-friendly recipes, and personalized nutrition information.



### CARE BEYOND WIC

WIC provides referrals for services such as immunizations, dental and medical care, social services, community resources, and more.

## Who does WIC serve?



**261,110**

Women, infants and young children receive WIC benefits in North Carolina through **174** clinics statewide.



**22,330**  
Pregnant women



**20,832**  
Breastfeeding women



**58,899**  
Infants  
(under the age of 1)



**144,594**  
Children  
(up to age 5)

NC WIC participant numbers are based on March 2022 participation rates.

**"Everyone has been so kind on the phone. We have desperately needed the help this past year and I am very grateful." -NC WIC Participant**

**"Breastfeeding peer counselors kept me breastfeeding for a whole year thanks to their help." -NC WIC Participant**

## Partner Power

**Join the WIC outreach family! We need your help to reach potential WIC participants!**

The mission of the WIC Program is to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk by providing nutritious foods, breastfeeding support, information on healthy eating, and referrals. WIC collaborates with many organizations to successfully carry out the mission of the program.

WIC partners with other federal agencies, healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, advocacy groups, non-profit organizations, farmers, vendors, and many more stakeholders.

WIC recognizes that coordinating services and creating community partnerships can have a positive impact for WIC participants.

If you would like to order WIC outreach materials for distribution in your area, please submit the order form available via the link below:

[WIC Outreach Materials Order Form](#)

We hope these materials will be useful in referring potentially eligible participants to the North Carolina WIC Program.



## WIC Telehealth Innovations in North Carolina: Pioneering a Vision of Change

In 2021, the North Carolina WIC Program was awarded a USDA/Tufts Telehealth Intervention Strategies for WIC grant in the amount of \$1 million. North Carolina WIC aims to use these funds over the next two years to decrease barriers of access to WIC services and increase focus on tailored nutritional needs through four different components: (1) a participant portal app for streamlining the certification process, (2) a video chat component available on the portal to host distance appointments, (3) fixed kiosks to be placed in high participant traffic areas of the community with participant portal capabilities, and (4) a TeleWIC Service Center to be utilized by local WIC agencies that are short-staffed to facilitate distance-based appointments.



For more information, visit our NC WIC website : <https://www.nutritionnc.com/>





# North Carolina WIC Update

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

Fall 2022, Volume 2

## WHAT DOES WIC PROVIDE?



Healthy Food



Breastfeeding Support



Nutrition Education



Health Checks & Referrals



## WHO IS WIC FOR?

WIC Serves pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants and children under age 5.

Other eligibility requirements include NC residence, income and nutrition risk.

Visit [www.ncdhhs.gov/ncwic/mywic](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/ncwic/mywic) for more information on WIC eligibility.

### WIC Benefit Spotlight:

#### Healthy Foods

WIC provides access to healthy foods to help stretch a family's food dollars. A pregnant woman and a child participating in WIC could receive \$190 worth\* of healthy food every month! The WIC food package includes foods such as:

- Fruits and vegetables: fresh, frozen, canned.
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice.
- Peanut butter, legumes, and eggs.
- Milk, cheese, yogurt, tofu, and soy-based beverage.
- Whole grain bread, rolls, buns, cereals, oatmeal, tortillas, rice, and pasta.

*These foods are available in a variety of brands, sizes and types, including organic!*



\*The dollar amount listed is an estimation only. The value of the WIC food benefits will vary based on participant category and the type/brand of food purchased.

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### New Breastfeeding Recommendations Released by the American Academy of Pediatrics:

#### Breastfeeding Encouraged to 2 Years of Age

In June of 2022, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) issued an updated policy statement which extends the recommendation for the duration of breastfeeding to a minimum of 2 years (previous recommendation was a minimum of 1 year). Families are encouraged to breastfeed beyond 2 years, if desired. Studies indicate that human milk in the second year of life continues to provide benefits for both the toddler and the mother.

The NC WIC Program endorses the new recommendation from the AAP and promotes and supports breastfeeding by providing a breastfeeding-friendly environment for all WIC families and WIC staff. Local WIC agencies provide breastfeeding education, referrals, peer counseling services, and breastfeeding supplies.



## Smart Bites by WIC

Recipes with a focus on WIC foods



### Macaroni & Cheese

Servings: 4-6

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups dry whole grain pasta such as elbow macaroni, spirals, or wheels
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups milk
- 2 cups American cheese, shredded or cut into cubes
- ¼ cup minced onion
- 1 cup cooked vegetables

#### Directions

Cook macaroni following package directions. Drain well. Melt butter in a separate pan. Add flour, salt and pepper. Stir until smooth. Add milk slowly while stirring. Add onion to mixture. Cook over medium heat until mixture boils and thickens, stirring constantly. Stir in cheese. Cook until the cheese melts. Add cooked macaroni and vegetables to the cheese sauce and heat through.

For more information, visit our NC WIC website: [www.ncdhhs.gov/ncwic](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/ncwic)





# North Carolina WIC Update

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

Winter 2022, Volume 3

## WHAT DOES WIC PROVIDE?



Healthy Food



Breastfeeding Support



Nutrition Education



Health Checks & Referrals



## WHO IS WIC FOR?

WIC Serves pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants and children under age 5.

Other eligibility requirements include NC residence, income and nutrition risk.

Visit [www.ncdhhs.gov/ncwic/mywic](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/ncwic/mywic) for more information on WIC eligibility.

### WIC Benefit Spotlight:

#### Nutrition Education

The WIC program provides nutrition education to families at no cost, one of the four pillars of the program. Nutrition education in WIC aims to:

- Teach about the relationship between nutrition, physical activity, and health.
- Improve eating and physical activity behaviors.
- Promote the use of WIC supplemental foods to address individual nutrition risk factors.



Participants receive nutrition education during the application and certification process for WIC and then at subsequent appointments throughout the year. Families receive participant-centered education that is relevant to their age, nutritional needs, cultural preferences and interests. Multiple nutrition topics are covered to positively impact health and nutrition status.

## North Carolina WIC Online Referral Form

Did you know?

The North Carolina WIC Program has an online referral form. Health care providers and other community partners can use the form to refer families to WIC. In addition, WIC applicants can self-refer using the form. The referral form is available via this link: [NC WIC Online Referral Form](#)

Once the online referral form is submitted, the WIC clinic chosen on the form will contact the family within 20 days, often sooner. The number of online referrals increased during the pandemic and has remained steady. In September 2022, North Carolina WIC received over 1,000 online referrals. The most common sources of referrals are physician's offices and other health care providers, family members and friends.



## Flu Vaccine Reminder!

With flu season well under way, it's a great time to remind families to get a flu vaccine. An annual flu vaccine is recommended for all people 6 months of age and older. To protect infants under 6 months of age who are not eligible for the flu vaccine, make sure all people who live with or care for them are vaccinated.

Consider these facts:

- **Certain groups are at higher risk for serious illness from flu**, including **children younger than five, pregnant women**, people over 65, and those with certain chronic medical conditions such as heart or lung disease.
- **Studies have shown that vaccines reduce the risk of flu-associated deaths by half in children with high-risk medical conditions and by two-thirds in healthy children.**
- **Vaccination can also make illness milder for those who do get the flu.**

To learn more about the flu and where you can find a vaccination location, please visit [www.myspot.nc.gov/flu](http://www.myspot.nc.gov/flu).

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[WIC Outreach Materials Order Form](#)

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# North Carolina WIC Update

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

Spring 2023, Volume 4

## WHAT DOES WIC PROVIDE?



Healthy Food



Breastfeeding Support



Nutrition Education



Health Checks & Referrals



## WHO IS WIC FOR?

WIC Serves eligible pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants and children under age 5.

### Eligibility requirements

include NC residence, income and nutrition risk.

### WIC Benefit Spotlight: Breastfeeding Education and Support

WIC provides breastfeeding education and support to help WIC families meet their infant feeding goals. WIC families:

- Learn the benefits of breastfeeding.
- Receive education and support to get a good start and to continue breastfeeding for as long as desired.
- Receive referrals and information from trained staff and breastfeeding experts.
- Have access to breastfeeding supplies, including a breast pump, when needed.

The WIC breastfeeding food packages are designed to support the nutritional needs of a breastfeeding dyad by providing more nutritious food. WIC offers the Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program that provides parent-to-parent support, encouragement and assistance throughout the breastfeeding journey.



### Feature: WIC Local Agency Outreach Pitt County WIC

The Pitt County WIC Program collaborates with community partners for referrals and to hold events to reach potential WIC participants. At a recent event, Chef LaiSha Buck, WIC Nutritionist, partnered with the Nurse Family Partnership to create a wonderful meal that brought WIC ingredients



to life. Parents and caregivers learned about providing healthy meal options for their families using WIC foods. Collaborating with community partners and hosting an event like this is a great way to spread the word about WIC!

The temporary increase in the monthly WIC Cash Value Benefit has been extended through September 2023.

The enhanced benefit provides \$25 for children, \$45 for pregnant and postpartum women, and \$49 for fully or partially breastfeeding women per month for fruits and vegetables.

### WIC Program — Myth or Fact?

**Children are only eligible to participate in WIC until their 1st birthday. Myth!**

**Fact**—WIC is available to children up to age 5. WIC provides eligible children with access to nutritious foods and nutrition education to help promote healthy eating habits.

**WIC food benefits are impacted by the cost of foods. Myth!**

**Fact**—WIC foods are covered, no matter the cost. WIC families receive a prescription for specific foods (e.g., eggs, milk, whole grains) based on quantity (e.g., dozen, gallon, ounces). Because WIC foods are issued and redeemed based on type and quantity, families are protected from high food costs on these nutritious foods. One exception is the benefit for fruits and vegetables, which is issued as a dollar amount.

**WIC is for non-working families. Myth!**

**Fact**—The WIC Program serves low-income, working and non-working families that meet eligibility guidelines.

**Participation in the WIC Program is considered in the public charge determination. Myth!**

**Fact**—WIC does not ask for or consider citizenship or immigration status as a part of eligibility determination.

**We invite you to help spread the word about WIC!**

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We hope that these materials will be useful in referring potentially eligible participants to the NC WIC Program.





# North Carolina WIC Update

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

Summer 2023, Volume 5

## WHAT DOES WIC PROVIDE?



Healthy Food



Breastfeeding Support



Nutrition Education



Health Checks & Referrals



## WHO IS WIC FOR?

WIC Serves eligible pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants, and children under age 5.

### Eligibility Requirements

include NC residence, income and nutrition risk.

Visit [www.ncdhhs.gov/ncwic/mywic](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/ncwic/mywic) for more information on WIC eligibility.

## WIC Benefit Spotlight: Referrals for Health and Social Services



The WIC Program connects participants with other health, social services and community resources to assist in achieving positive health outcomes.

WIC offers referrals to meet individual health needs, goals, and nutrition concerns identified during the WIC nutrition assessment. Referrals from WIC may include prenatal and well child care, immunization services, dental care, food assistance resources, counseling for smoking cessation and substance use, mental health resources, and more.

WIC is here to help support the health of your clients. Studies show that women who participate in WIC have improved pregnancy outcomes, resulting in healthier babies. Children who participate in WIC are more likely to receive regular preventive health services and have higher rates of childhood immunizations.

## North Carolina State Action Plan for Nutrition Security

On April 28, 2023, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) released the [NC DHHS State Action Plan for Nutrition Security](#), which includes strategies to reduce food insecurity and support child and family well-being in North Carolina.

The North Carolina WIC Program is an integral part of initiatives being implemented:

### Increase the reach of NCDHHS' Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) and WIC nutrition programs.

- The NC WIC Program is engaged in a Cross-Enrollment pilot project aimed at increasing participation in the WIC program for those already participating in FNS or Medicaid.
- The NC WIC Program is implementing a USDA/Tufts Telehealth Intervention Strategies for WIC grant that will create a participant portal with a video appointment component to further decrease barriers of access to WIC services.

**Increase breastfeeding support and rates.** The NC WIC Program has implemented USDA's WIC Breastfeeding Support Curriculum training for local WIC agency staff based on staff role, to build knowledge and skills in breastfeeding education and support.



## WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program

The Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (BFPC) Program is designed and funded to advance the unique benefit to provide mother-to-mother breastfeeding support. The BFPC program trains peer counselors to provide basic breastfeeding education to WIC participants who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Peer counselors are paraprofessionals and some are former WIC participants. It is an evidence-based intervention which has been proven to increase breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity rates. This mother-to-mother support is an essential component to ensure the success of breastfeeding promotion and support in the WIC Program.



## We invite you to help spread the word about WIC!

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# North Carolina WIC Update

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

Fall 2023, Volume 6

## WHAT DOES WIC PROVIDE?



Healthy Food



Breastfeeding Support



Nutrition Education



Health Checks & Referrals



## WHO IS WIC FOR?

WIC Serves eligible pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants, and children under age 5.

### Eligibility requirements

include NC residence, income and nutrition risk.

Visit [www.ncdhhs.gov/ncwic/mywic](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/ncwic/mywic) for more information on WIC eligibility.

### WIC Benefit Spotlight:

## Breastfeeding Support

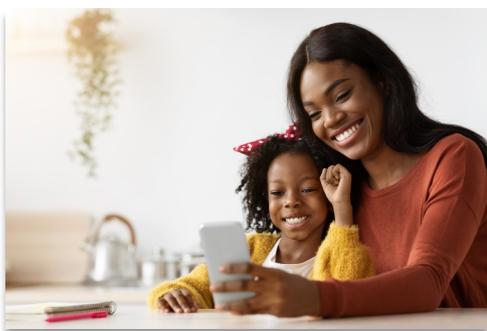
Each year, the USDA announces the WIC Breastfeeding Award of Excellence recipients. The WIC Breastfeeding Award of Excellence Program recognizes local WIC agencies that have demonstrated model practices in Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (BFPC), as well as those who are at varying stages of implementing exemplary breastfeeding promotion and support practices. This year, North Carolina had the highest number of awardees in the Southeast region, with eight North Carolina local WIC agencies receiving the award. Each of the awarded local agencies shows a strong commitment to the implementation and maintenance of their BFPC program. Through engaging community stakeholders, and developing strong community partnerships, North Carolina WIC provides the highest level of support for its participants and families. Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the recipients!



## Modernization of WIC: Remote Service Options

The provision of remote services, via COVID waivers, to eligible families over the last several years has proven to be highly effective and efficient. Research suggests that the burdens eligible participants face when it comes to accessing and maintaining benefits, are significantly reduced when participants have access to remote services.

USDA recognizes the benefits of remote services and how they have become foundational to offering a modern WIC experience to participants. In an effort to provide the best experience for participants, NC WIC has worked to modernize the WIC experience. As of August 1st, 2023 remote appointment options are being offered to eligible participants where available. This will allow WIC staff the opportunity to be flexible and accommodating of participants' needs when scheduling appointments for families. Contact your local WIC agency to learn about their remote services.



### We invite you to help spread the word about WIC!

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[WIC Outreach Materials Order](#)



## Sausage, White Bean, and Spinach Soup

Makes 4-6 Servings

### Ingredients:

- 1 pkg of your favorite pre-cooked sausage, thinly sliced
- 2- 15oz. cans white beans, rinsed
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 3 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 1 tbs oil (olive, canola, vegetable)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cups chopped fresh spinach (or 16oz frozen)

### Directions:

- Heat oil in large stock pot over medium heat.
- Add sliced sausage, garlic, carrots, celery, and broth to pot. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and cook for 20-30 minutes, or until vegetables are fork tender.
- Add beans and continue to cook for 10 more minutes.
- Add spinach and cook until spinach is wilted (if fresh) or thawed (if frozen).
- Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- Serve warm with crunchy bread.



## Recipes

Recipes with a focus on WIC foods



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For more information, visit our NC WIC website: [www.ncdhhs.gov/ncwic](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/ncwic)



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