



# Investing in Long-Term Support for Women, Infants, and Children

*WIC works, providing critical nutrition assistance services for millions of children and families nationally and to more than 100,000 Ohioans who are most at risk of poor outcomes.*

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a federally funded program that has provided children and their families with critical nutrition resources since 1972. Distinct from other programs, WIC provides nutritional guidance plans and funds to purchase approved food items that supplement the dietary needs of the participants. These plans are designed to promote healthy nutritional habits and increase breastfeeding.

In 2022, the federal government provided \$161 million to the Ohio Department of Health to administer the program. This investment supports nutrition and services during pregnancy and through the first five years following birth to families with incomes below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), as well as participants in Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

## WIC Works



Children in WIC **are less likely to be born with low birth weight.**<sup>i</sup>



Children in WIC are significantly **less likely to be born prematurely.**<sup>ii</sup>



Families in WIC are **less likely to experience a Perinatal death** during pregnancy.<sup>iii</sup>



**Infant mortality is lower** among WIC participants and is **significantly lower** among Black participants.<sup>iv</sup>



Children in families with low incomes participating in WIC are **as likely to be vaccinated** as children in families with higher incomes and are significantly **more likely to be vaccinated** than low-income children not participating in WIC.<sup>v</sup>



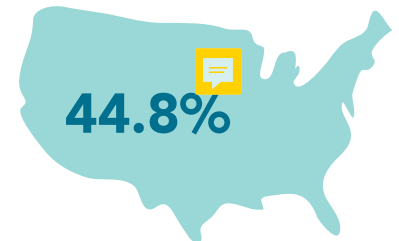
Children whose families participated in WIC during pregnancy **are less likely to repeat a grade** and are **less likely to be diagnosed with ADHD.**<sup>vi</sup>



## Challenges within WIC

The Ohio WIC program requires no state funds and provides crucial nutritional assistance to families and children across the state. Providing WIC services to as many eligible families as possible results in positive outcomes for every community.

**Only 34% of eligible Ohio children, ages 1-4, received WIC benefits in 2019.**



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture (2019)

**The lack of modernization and accessibility adds unnecessary roadblocks to providing these services. With regular required in-person meetings, many participants struggle to meet program requirements.**

- Only 48% of Ohioans who make less than \$75,000 a year live within a 2-mile radius of a WIC clinic, making it more difficult for families who are eligible for the program to be able to reliably access the benefits.
- High standards of proof for identification, income, and address create an unnecessary administrative burden for families applying for WIC.

## Making WIC More Accessible for All Eligible Ohioans

There are concrete policy and administrative solutions that Ohio can implement to improve and maximize access to WIC services for Ohio's children, women, and families.

- **Pilot WIC using a telehealth format**, eliminating the need for frequent and burdensome meetings at WIC clinics.
- **Allow WIC benefits to be added to the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card automatically**, rather than WIC benefits being added at in-person monthly meetings. Ohio is one of only 9 states that require in-person benefit transfer.
- **Create a central WIC website**. The website could consolidate information from all 88 counties and provide comprehensive resources to eligible families.
- Encourage partnerships and data sharing through pursuing **multi-program enrollment with Ohio Benefits**.



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