

# North Dakota WIC



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH



## 2014 Annual Report

**6,875** infants received WIC benefits in 2013 (that is about 65% of the 10,391 resident births).

**\$8.5** million was spent in grocery store sales at the 175 grocery stores approved by WIC statewide.

**80** communities had access to WIC services provided by local public health, hospitals and tribal agencies.

### Who WIC Serves

**55%** of households have between three and four individuals

**59%** are two-parent families

**78%** of participants are working families

**22,345** North Dakota Women, Infants & Children Served

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) provides benefits to low-income pregnant and postpartum women, and to infants and young children who are at nutritional risk.

Research shows that poor nutrition during fetal development and a baby's first five years causes life-altering effects to health, limits memory development and a child's ability to learn, and adds to health care costs.

WIC helps families combat food insecurity and nutrition-related health problems, including obesity and type 2 diabetes.

During this critical period of a child's development, WIC provides nutritious food, nutrition education, breastfeeding support and referrals to other health and social services.

# 2014 WIC Funding

ND WIC is sustained by federal dollars and rebates. In 2014, ND WIC benefits were available due to:

- \$10.4 million in Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture
- \$2.1 million from the infant formula manufacturers rebates  
(which all becomes more food dollars)



**70% of all funds were spent on food.**  
The remaining funds support participant services like nutrition education and breastfeeding support (25%) and program management (5%).

## Participant Input

Every year ND WIC staff invite WIC families to share how the program is doing and suggest areas that may need to be improved. This annual survey helps staff with program planning and gives insight into program effectiveness. This past year:

**79%** said WIC helped their family eat more fruits and **71%** said it helped them eat more veggies.

**91%** said WIC staff are friendly and happy to see them and **84%** said WIC staff see them on time.

**87%** said WIC staff discuss their needs or concerns.

**82%** rated the WIC program as 'everything is great' and **15%** said 'good.' That's a **97%** approval rating!

### Participant Praises for WIC:



I genuinely feel cared about and that WIC staff are there for more than just a job. I feel they show great interest and support in my family!

WIC has definitely helped provide better food choices for my family.

# How WIC Improves the Health of North Dakota Families

A recent research study has shown that WIC prenatal participation is associated with a greater likelihood of receiving adequate prenatal care and reduces mortality and adverse birth outcomes such as low birth weight and prematurity. Children who participate in WIC are more likely to be immunized, to have a regular source of medical care.

## WIC Foods Promote a Healthy Lifestyle

WIC provides checks to buy specific healthy foods that:

- Are high in the nutrients missing from diets of lower income families, like calcium, iron, protein, folic acid and vitamins A, C and D
- Meet the individual participant's health needs
- Satisfy the federal nutrition requirements set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Influence healthy eating habits to help improve quality of life and prevent chronic diseases like diabetes, cancer and childhood obesity



## WIC Foods

**For Infants: (Birth - 12 months)** - WIC strongly encourages breastfeeding as the preferred method of infant feeding. Formula-fed infants receive the WIC contract brand of iron-fortified infant formula. Beginning at 6 months of age, infants may also receive iron-fortified infant cereal and baby food fruits, vegetables and meats (for exclusively breastfed babies only). At 9 months, infants may also receive fresh fruits and vegetables instead of the baby food.

**For Women and Children** - Women and children receive milk, cheese, eggs, cereals high in iron and low in sugar, peanut butter, fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain products (bread, tortillas, or brown rice), dry/canned beans or peas, and fruit and vegetable juices. Women who exclusively breastfeed their babies may also receive canned tuna or salmon.

## Referral Services

WIC families are also provided with referrals to prenatal care, preventative health care and other services, such as Medical Assistance (Medicaid); SNAP (food stamps); Housing and Fuel Assistance; Head Start; and services offered by Local Public Health agencies like immunizations, smoking cessation, car seats, child developmental screenings and family planning.

**58% of WIC families also participate in SNAP (food stamps) and 78% participate in Medicaid.**

## What's New with ND WIC

**Implemented the final changes to the WIC food packages**, including providing only fat-free skim or 1% milk and increasing the cash value voucher for fresh fruits and vegetables for children to \$8/month.

**Completed statewide implementation of wichealth.org**, which is online nutrition education for participants, and will be participating in the breastfeeding peer counseling pilot project through wichealth.org.

**Trained all WIC staff on the Secrets of Baby Behavior** by the UC Davis Human Lactation Center. This training provided staff the tools to teach WIC participants how to identify their infants' behavior which helps parents meet their infants needs, breastfeed longer and prevent overfeeding.

Continued to support WIC nutritionists in becoming **International Board Certified Lactation Consultants**. Currently five WIC nutritionists have this certification in addition to the many WIC nutritionists that have attended advanced breastfeeding training.

**Completed the planning phase for moving toward electronic benefit transfer, or EBT**. This is the first step in getting the state ready to offer the WIC food benefits on a card by the October 2020 deadline.

**Joined the Mountain Plains State Consortium**. In an effort to find a long term, cost sustainable solution to our management information system (MIS) needs, North Dakota WIC joined with a number of other state WIC agencies to support a common state of the art MIS.

## Healthy Weight in Children

Over the past 40 years WIC has improved at-risk children's health, growth and development and prevented health problems. Since WIC reaches so many infants and children, it has an important role to play in helping children maintain a healthy weight.

North Dakota WIC:

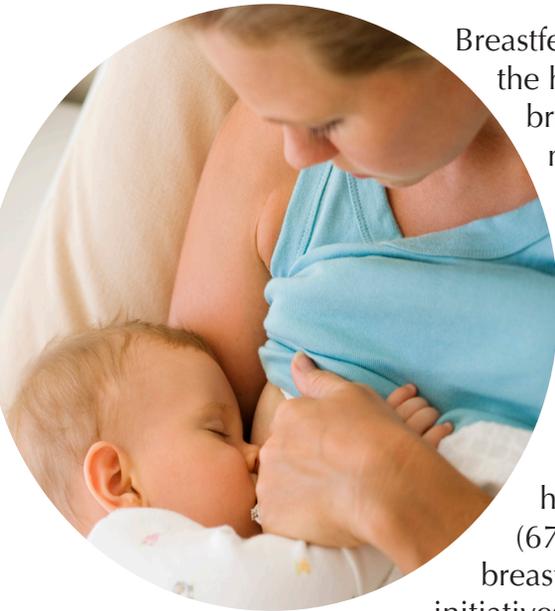
- Promotes breastfeeding as the normal way to feed infants and young children because it reduces the likelihood of childhood obesity. Breastfeeding classes, support groups, peer counselors, and breast pump supplies are provided to WIC moms to support them in their decision to breastfeed.

- Provides nutritious foods to participants such as fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grain products. To reduce the amount of fat in the WIC food package, only fat-free or 1% milk is allowed along with less amounts of cheese. All WIC juices are 100% fruit juice and provide the appropriate amount of juice to be consumed each day. WIC cereals are low in sugar and provide a good source of iron, and many are high in whole grains.

- Offers participant-centered nutrition education on: proper nutrition across the life cycle, healthy meal planning and family meals, and ways to be physically active as a family. Healthy eating habits are important for even our youngest participants. Parents are taught how to understand their baby's behavior and feeding cues and the proper guidelines for feeding infants (how often to feed, when to introduce solid foods, etc.).

- Collects height and weight measurements (including body mass index or BMI) frequently on WIC children and provide counseling and referrals to their healthcare providers as appropriate.

# WIC and Breastfeeding Peer Counseling



Breastfeeding is one of the most powerful and cost-effective ways to protect the health of infants and children. North Dakota WIC actively promotes breastfeeding as the optimal method of infant feeding. Infants who are not breastfed are more likely to experience infections and chronic conditions like allergies, asthma and diabetes later in life. Studies show that infants who are not breastfed are likely to require more doctor visits, hospital stays and prescriptions compared to infants who are breastfed. Breastfed children are less likely to be affected by childhood obesity, and breastfeeding strengthens the bond between mothers and their babies. Breastfeeding also provides benefits to the mother by lowering her risk of breast and ovarian cancer. Most North Dakota mothers start breastfeeding (82%), however the numbers of WIC mothers who start breastfeeding is lower (67%). WIC has been working on many initiatives to help increase the breastfeeding initiation and duration rates. One of WIC's most successful initiatives is the breastfeeding peer counseling program.

*After you leave the hospital it's easy to get overwhelmed and feel like you don't know what you're doing, and it's one thing to do research online and ask for help over the phone, but to have someone who knows what they're doing actually be there for you, in person, during your absolute hardest moments, makes all the difference in the world. I can't begin to explain how thankful I am.*

-WIC breastfeeding mom

ND WIC is proud to have breastfeeding peer counseling programs at three local agencies. Peer counselors are generally women in the community with personal breastfeeding experience who provide information and support to WIC mothers. They help prevent and manage common breastfeeding concerns and become a valuable source of support and encouragement to mothers. They also form important connections to health services in their community. Research shows that peer counselors positively influence breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in the WIC population. Peer counselors complement and reinforce the breastfeeding information and support provided by other WIC staff. Last year the average breastfeeding duration rate was six months for WIC moms who participated in the breastfeeding peer counseling program.

# North Dakota WIC Participants and Food Dollars

There are 22 local WIC administering agencies providing services across the state, identified by the different color areas on the map below. The administering agencies include single- and multi-county public health units, community hospitals and tribes. Below are monthly averages for participation by county (or parts) and the monthly average of food dollars spent by the administering agency by county (where data is available). The star designates the location of the main office of the WIC administering agency.

