

The Women's, Infant and Children (WIC) Program was piloted as a supplemental food program in 1972 aimed at improving the health of pregnant mothers, infants and children in response to growing concern over malnutrition among many poverty-stricken mothers and young children.

The first WIC site was opened in Kentucky in January 1974. WIC was operating in 45 states by the end of 1974.

WIC was established as a permanent Program in 1975 and eligibility was extended to non-breastfeeding women (up to 6 months postpartum) and children up to age 5. WIC had initially provided supplemental foods to children up to age 4 and to breast-feeding postpartum mothers.

Legislation introduced new elements into the Program in 1978:

- Nutrition education must be provided.
- The supplemental foods should contain nutrients found lacking in the target population, and have relatively low levels of fat, sugar, and salt.
- States needed to coordinate referrals to social services including immunization, alcohol and drug abuse prevention, child abuse counseling, and family planning.

In 1992 WIC introduced an enhanced food package for exclusively breastfeeding mothers to further promote breastfeeding.

In 1997 USDA implemented "Loving Support Makes Breastfeeding Work" campaign to increase breastfeeding rates among WIC mothers and improve public support of breastfeeding.

The Breastfeeding Peer Counselor initiative was launched in 2004: Women with breastfeeding experience and training (often past WIC participants) became counselors to support other women learning to breastfeed.

2009: Based on Institute of Medicine recommendations, USDA introduced a new food package with foods consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for American and established dietary recommendations for infants and children over two years of age. Fruits, vegetables, and culturally sensitive substitutes for WIC foods are now part of the WIC food package. In addition, mothers who exclusively breastfeed receive more healthy foods with the enhanced WIC food package for exclusively breastfeeding mothers.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 mandated that all WIC State Agencies must adopt an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system. The new debit card system is to replace the paper vouchers still in use in many States since 1968.

WIC continues to adapt to changing needs, with ongoing efforts to improve access and ensure that all eligible families can benefit from the program. To determine eligibility, contact your local WIC office. The Meigs County Health Dept.'s WIC Program can be reached by calling 740-992-0392 Monday through Friday from 8AM-noon and 1-4PM.

Lindsay Cundiff, WIC Clerk

