



Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

Media contacts: Don Sabre, Human Services and Public Health Department.: 612-348-2247
Karen Mayer, Human Services and Public Health Department: 612-348-6249
LuAnn Schmaus, Public Affairs: 612-348-7865

Fast facts

- ▲ WIC clients in 2008:
 - 45 percent are children aged one to five
 - 28 percent are infants aged birth to one
 - 27 percent are women
 - 40 percent are African American or black
 - 25 percent are Hispanic
 - 16 percent are white
 - 10 percent are Asian
 - 7 percent are multiracial
 - 1 percent are American Indian
 - Less than 1 percent are Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ▲ According to the Minnesota Department of Health, 70 percent of the state's WIC participants are under the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG).

What is the WIC program?

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a federal-grant program that targets low-income women and children who are nutritionally at risk, including medically based risks such as anemia and underweight, and diet-based risks. Services include nutritional counseling and education, foods such as infant formula and cereal, and referrals to health and social services.

How many are helped and at what cost?

Hennepin helps approximately 24,000 women and children with nutrition each month. The majority of participants are children under the age of five. Hennepin's annual cost for WIC is approximately \$3.2 million.

Who uses and what are the benefits of WIC?

- WIC is for pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, postpartum women who are no longer breastfeeding and their children under the age of five.
- To qualify for WIC, the family must be at or below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG). In 2008, the FPG was \$25,900 for a family of two or \$39,220 for a family of four. However, the majority of WIC families are at or below the FPG.
- Pregnant women who participate in WIC have longer pregnancies leading to fewer premature births. They have fewer low and very low birthweight babies. They experience fewer fetal and infant deaths. They seek prenatal care earlier in pregnancy and consume more key nutrients such as iron, protein, calcium and Vitamin C.
- Society benefits by saving on health-related costs of children who are born with low birthweights. A shift of one pound at birth saves approximately \$28,000 in first-year medical costs.
- WIC prenatal benefits reduce the rate of very low birthweight babies by 44 percent.
- Medicaid costs are reduced on average between \$12,000 and \$15,000 per infant for every very low birthweight prevented.
- Low-income children benefit. Those not enrolled in the WIC program have a higher prevalence of anemia than those in WIC. Four- and five-year-olds whose mothers participated in WIC during pregnancy had better vocabularies than children whose mothers had not received WIC benefits. Children who participated in WIC after their first birthday had better digit memory test scores than children who did not participate in WIC.