

Dr. Ernster and classmates,

Select one blog post related to an area of interest in your future practice. Complete the following and briefly summarize the issue described in the blog.

I have chosen the blog about giving all our young children a healthy start. As a young mother years ago, I remember the struggle to have enough formula for my babies, as well as healthy foods for my family, such as milk, cereal, peanut butter, and juice, and if it weren't for the WIC system, I would have struggled even more to feed them. There have been many changes since I participated, and this article hits home. Every child deserves access to healthy, nutritious food. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) has been a crucial resource for millions of families, providing food and critical support. Recently, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) proposed updates to WIC that aim to enhance nutrition and well-being. The following are some of the proposed changes outlined in this blog.

This proposal seeks to increase the benefit for fruits and vegetables permanently. During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, they raised this benefit temporarily from approximately \$10 per person per month to \$25 per child and roughly \$45 per adult per month. Making this increase permanent would significantly improve access to nutritious produce for children and adults. I spoke with my daughter-in-law, who receives WIC, and she said that she receives about \$47 monthly for fruits and vegetables.

These proposed updates would align with WIC foods and beverages with the latest dietary guidelines and nutritional science. This means that the items available through WIC would be even more nutritious, supporting better health outcomes for participants. Research funded by the RWJF national program office, Healthy Eating Research, indicates that WIC participants highly value the increased benefit for fruits and vegetables. It not only meets household needs but also encourages healthier eating habits.

The proposal also aims to provide participants with more options for infant formula, ensuring families have access to essential nutrition for their little ones. The updated food package aims to offer additional formula (up to 364 fluid ounces) for partially breastfed infants during their first month of life. The specific amount provided will be determined based on individual nutrition and breastfeeding assessments. Given the ongoing shortages of infant formula, any measures that enhance formula access for families are highly encouraged. WIC promotes the intake of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, which in turn fosters healthier purchasing behaviors for families. Young children enrolled in WIC during their initial two years typically achieve better diet quality scores. These scores help evaluate how closely a child's eating habits align with recommended dietary guidelines. It is suggested that WIC contributed to a 2% reduction in the child poverty rate in 2019, and without this program, the poverty rate would have been higher.

The obesity rate among children aged 2 to 4 who participate in WIC declined significantly from 15.9% in 2010 to 14.4% in 2020. This positive trend was observed across all racial and ethnic groups studied. COVID-19 Adaptations: During the pandemic, WIC adapted to meet families' needs. This included improvements like curbside pickup for groceries, which helped many families cope with the challenges posed by COVID-19. These updates reflect a commitment to the health and well-being of families, emphasizing equity and individual needs. By investing in WIC, we pave the way for a healthier future for all.