

# Addressing Food Insecurity in Early Childhood

Presented by: Share Our Strength

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# No Kid Hungry is a Campaign By Share Our Strength

We're an organization dedicated to ending hunger and poverty. Through proven, effective campaigns, we connect people who care to ideas that work.



# We're Ending Childhood Hunger

Every kid needs three meals a day to grow up healthy, happy and strong. But today in America, too many children are missing those meals. This is a problem we know how to solve.



## SCHOOL MEALS

Schools are at the center of our work - community centers trusted by parents and staffed by people who know the children by name and care about them. At school, kids can get the healthy food they need - for every meal of the day.



## GRANTS

We distribute grants to schools, food banks and community groups across the nation to help them get the essential resources they need to feed kids, from meal carts to refrigerators to delivery trucks.



## ADVOCACY

We work with national, state and local elected leaders, fighting for policies that help families make ends meet - from expanding food assistance programs to cutting through red tape to help feed children during the pandemic.

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# Food Insecurity Among Young Children in America

# Food Insecurity and Child Development

- Estimates from Feeding America show that 1 in 6 (or 13 million) children faced hunger in 2021.
  - In 2019 (pre-pandemic), 11 million children were food insecure
  - Before the start of the pandemic, national food insecurity rate had reached its lowest point since the 1990s
- In 2019, about 18 percent (or 4.13 million) young children between the ages of 0 – 5 lived in poverty. (Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation Data Center)
- According to the World Health Organization, “Early childhood is the most intensive period of brain development during the lifespan. Adequate stimulation and nutrition are essential for development during the first three years of life.”

# Child Food Insecurity State Snapshot

**Table 8. States with the highest projected child food insecurity rates in 2021  
(compared to 2020 projections and 2019 actuals)**

Ranking	State	2021	2020 (ranking)	2019 (ranking)
1	Louisiana	26.0%	27.4% (1)	23.0% (1)
2	Hawaii	24.6%	27.0% (2)	18.3% (9)
3	New Mexico	23.7%	26.2% (4)	22.0% (3)
4	Texas	23.6%	24.0% (7)	19.6% (7)
5	Nevada	23.0%	26.7% (3)	17.7% (12)
6	Arkansas	22.9%	24.4% (6)	21.4% (4)
7	Oklahoma	22.5%	23.8% (8)	20.4% (6)
8	Mississippi	22.2%	24.9% (5)	22.2% (2)
9	Alabama	20.4%	23.3% (9)	20.8% (5)
9	Arizona	20.4%	21.2% (16)	17.6% (14)

Source: Feeding America Brief March 2021

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# Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

# WIC: Population Served

- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education.
  - To be eligible, you must meet income guidelines (at or below 185% of the federal poverty guidelines = \$48,470 pre-tax for family of 4), a state residency requirement, and be determined to be at “nutritional risk” by a health professional.
  - While most states use the maximum guidelines, states may set lower income limit standards.
- The WIC target population are low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk
  - Pregnant women (up to 6 weeks after birth or after pregnancy ends)
  - Breastfeeding women (up to infant’s 1<sup>st</sup> birthday)
  - Non-breastfeeding postpartum women (up to 6 months after birth or after pregnancy ends)
  - Infants (up to 1<sup>st</sup> birthday)
  - Children up to their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday
- WIC serves 53 percent of all infants born in the United States.

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, USDA



## WIC Program Details and Benefits

- WIC benefits provide an average of about \$62 monthly for each participant.
- WIC participants have access to nutrition education, breastfeeding counseling, immunization screening and referral, and more.
- Women who participate in WIC while pregnant give birth to healthier babies who are more likely to survive infancy.
- WIC Cash Value Voucher (CVV) checks are issued monthly to be used only for purchasing fruits and vegetables, whether fresh, frozen, canned, or dried. Under normal circumstances, the monthly CVV is \$9 per child and \$11 for women.

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, USDA

# WIC: Food Packages

## Snapshot of WIC Food Packages for Children and Women

Maximum Monthly Allowances of Supplemental Foods<sup>1</sup>

	Children	Women		
Foods	Food Package IV: 1 through 4 years	Food Package V: Pregnant and Partially (Mostly) Breastfeeding (up to 1 year postpartum)	Food Package VI: Postpartum (up to 6 months postpartum)	Food Package VII: Fully Breastfeeding (up to 1 year postpartum)
Juice, single strength	128 fl. oz.	144 fl. oz.	96 fl. oz.	144 fl. oz.
Milk <sup>2</sup>	16 qt.	22 qt.	16 qt.	24 qt.
Breakfast cereal <sup>3</sup>	36 oz.	36 oz.	36 oz.	36 oz.
Cheese	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 lb.
Eggs <sup>5</sup>	1 dozen	1 dozen	1 dozen	2 dozen
Fruits and vegetables <sup>4</sup>	\$9.00 in CVV	\$11.00 in CVV	\$11.00 in CVV	\$11.00 in CVV
Whole wheat or whole grain bread <sup>5</sup>	2 lb.	1 lb.	N/A	1 lb.
Fish (canned) <sup>6</sup>	N/A	N/A	N/A	30 oz.
Legumes (dry or canned) and/or Peanut butter	1 lb. (64 oz. canned) Or 18 oz.	1 lb. (64 oz. canned) And 18 oz.	1 lb. (64 oz. canned) Or 18 oz.	1 lb. (64 oz. canned) And 18 oz.

<sup>1</sup> Refer to the full regulation at [e-CFR](#) for the complete provisions and requirements for WIC foods.

<sup>2</sup> Allowable fluid milk substitution options: yogurt, cheese, soy beverage, and tofu.

<sup>3</sup> At least one half of the total number of breakfast cereals on State agency food list must be whole grain.

<sup>4</sup> Fruits and vegetables are issued via a cash-value voucher (CVV) or benefit (CVB)

<sup>5</sup> Allowable whole grain options: brown rice, bulgur, oatmeal, whole-grain barley, whole wheat macaroni products, or soft corn or whole wheat tortillas.

<sup>6</sup> Allowable canned fish options: light tuna, salmon, sardines, and mackerel.

# WIC Participation and Challenges

WIC Program Participation among eligible families has steadily declined since 2011.

Total participation from previous 5 years:

Year	Total Participation
2021	6,244,000
2020	6,247,000
2019	6,396,000
2018	6,870,000
2017	7,286,000

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, USDA

Challenges to Initial and Continued Participation:

- Extensive administrative tasks
- Time commitment: common for participants to have 4 or more appointments each year, lasting 45 minutes – a few hours
- Shopping for WIC foods can be difficult and embarrassing
- Some families incorrectly believe they are not eligible for WIC once children turn one
- Public charge and WIC perceptions

## WIC COVID Waivers

- The Families First Coronavirus Response Act gave the USDA Food and Nutrition Service the authority to issue waivers to state agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The authority expired on September 30, 2021. However, most waivers are extended until 90 days after the end of the nationally-declared public health emergency.

### Examples of changes in program requirements provided by the waivers:

- Remote enrollment or re-enrollment
- Deferred certain anthropometric (height and weight) and bloodwork requirements (all medical documentation waivers ended Dec 31, 2021)
- Permitted appropriate substitutes for the types and amounts of certain WIC-prescribed foods if availability is limited
- Remote issuance of WIC benefits
- Increase in the Cash-Value Voucher/Benefits (CVV) for fruit and vegetable purchases: \$24 for children, \$43 for pregnant and postpartum women, and \$47 for fully and partially breastfeeding women participants (extended through March 31, 2022)

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# Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): State Snapshot

# WIC Coverage Rates

States with Highest Coverage Rates

State	Coverage Rates in 2018
Puerto Rico	77.3%
Vermont	75.1%
California	67.1%
Minnesota	66.3%
Maryland	65.8%
Massachusetts	64.4%
Michigan	64.0%
Oregon	63.3%
Maine	63.0%
Mississippi	61.6%

States with Lowest Coverage Rates

State	Coverage Rates in 2018
South Carolina	47.3%
Virginia	47.3%
Idaho	47.1%
Kansas	46.9%
Tennessee	46.1%
Montana	45.7%
Utah	45.2%
District of Columbia	44.6%
New Hampshire	44.1%
New Mexico	43.9%

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# New Developments and Approaches

# New Settings and Ideas for Addressing Food Insecurity

## WIC Innovations

- Online ordering
  - Availability to use SNAP online boomed during COVID; WIC still not eligible for online shopping despite unique challenges of WIC participants
    - Click and Collect Model involves a three-step process: placing a WIC grocery order online, picking it up, and paying for it at the store. Pilot study supported by No Kid Hungry and conducted in Tennessee found this model was sustainable and scalable, and feasible and acceptable to WIC participants and WIC vendor staff.
- Data matching – Benefits Data Trust (BDT) and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities conducted pilots in four states (Virginia, Montana, Massachusetts, Colorado) to successfully cross program data



# New Settings and Ideas for Addressing Food Insecurity

## WIC Messengers

- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
  - Pediatricians are trusted and can be effective messengers to encourage families to enroll in WIC, SNAP
  - Could regularly screen for food insecurity using the two-question Hunger Vital Signs screener
- Childcare providers can also screen/refer to nutrition security programs, as they have the best view of how families are doing and what they may need

## Medicaid & Food Security

- Humana KY Pilot Program with the East Kentucky Dream Center and the Kentucky Health Dept/HANDS program – designed to address rural food access challenges
- FLiPRx program in Washington, DC, with Children's National Hospital

## Other Food Security Resources

- School meals even for younger children: Talk to local schools (check websites) about who qualifies for healthy school meals at no cost.
- School meals over the summer: Text 'food' or 'comida' to 304-304 to find where you can get free meals near you.
- Local food banks: Feeding America, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank>



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Thank you!

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## Additional Data

# WIC: Food Packages

## Snapshot of WIC Food Packages for Infants Maximum Monthly Allowances of Supplemental Foods<sup>1</sup>

	Fully Formula Fed (FF)		Partially (Mostly) Breastfed (BF/FF)		Fully Breastfed (BF)	
Foods	Food Packages I-FF & III-FF  A: 0-3 months B: 4-5 months	Food Packages II-FF& III-FF  6-11 months	Food Packages I-BF/FF & III- BF/FF  A: 0 to 1 month B: 1-3 months C: 4-5 months	Food Packages II- BF/FF & III- F/FF  6-11 months	Food Package I-BF  0-5 months	Food Package II-BF  6-11 months
WIC Formula	A: 823 fl. oz. reconstituted liquid concentrate  B: 896 fl. oz. reconstituted liquid concentrate	630 fl. oz. reconstituted liquid concentrate	A: 104 fl. oz. reconstituted powder  B: 388 fl. oz. reconstituted liquid concentrate  C: 460 fl. oz. reconstituted liquid concentrate	315 fl. oz. reconstituted liquid concentrate		
Infant cereal		24 oz.		24 oz.		24 oz.
Infant food fruits and vegetables <sup>2</sup>		128 oz.		128 oz.		256 oz.
Infant food meat						77.5 oz.

<sup>1</sup> Refer to the full regulation at [e-CFR](#) for the complete provisions and requirements for infant formula and infant foods in the WIC food packages.

<sup>2</sup> At State agency option, older infants may be issued a cash-value voucher for fresh fruits and vegetables in lieu of a portion of jarred infant foods.

## WIC Participation Rates State Snapshot (Increase)

State	Total Participation in November 2020	Total Participation in November 2021	Percent Change November 2021 vs. November 2020
Georgia	185,514	209,255	12.8%
Alaska	14,572	16,321	12.0%
Louisiana	88,210	91,253	3.4%
Delaware	17,100	17,514	2.4%
New Jersey	139,502	142,413	2.1%
Kansas	45,790	46,666	1.9%
Oklahoma	89,901	90,958	1.2%

Source: USDA WIC Data Tables

## WIC Participation Rates State Snapshot (Decrease)

State	Total Participation in November 2020	Total Participation in November 2021	Percent Change November 2021 vs. November 2020
Mississippi	78,102	67,170	-14.0%
New Mexico	38,234	33,561	-12.2%
Pennsylvania	174,252	154,754	-11.2%
Missouri	92,612	83,095	-10.3%
Ohio	174,248	158,634	-9.0%
Michigan	213,495	197,275	-7.6%
Hawaii	26,762	24,782	-7.4%

Source: USDA WIC Data Tables