

# HOW BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS CAN IMPROVE WIC

*Using Behavioral Science in Your Everyday Work*

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April 23, 2018

# AGENDA

- What is ideas42 and behavioral science?
- The context of chronic scarcity
- Case Study: Our work in California
- Next steps for behavioral science and WIC
- Q&A

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# What is ideas<sup>42</sup> ?

We use theories of **behavioral science** and psychology to **design solutions** to some of the world's most **persistent social problems**.

# WE WORK WITH A WIDE RANGE OF PARTNERS



Non-profits

Governments

Foundations

Business



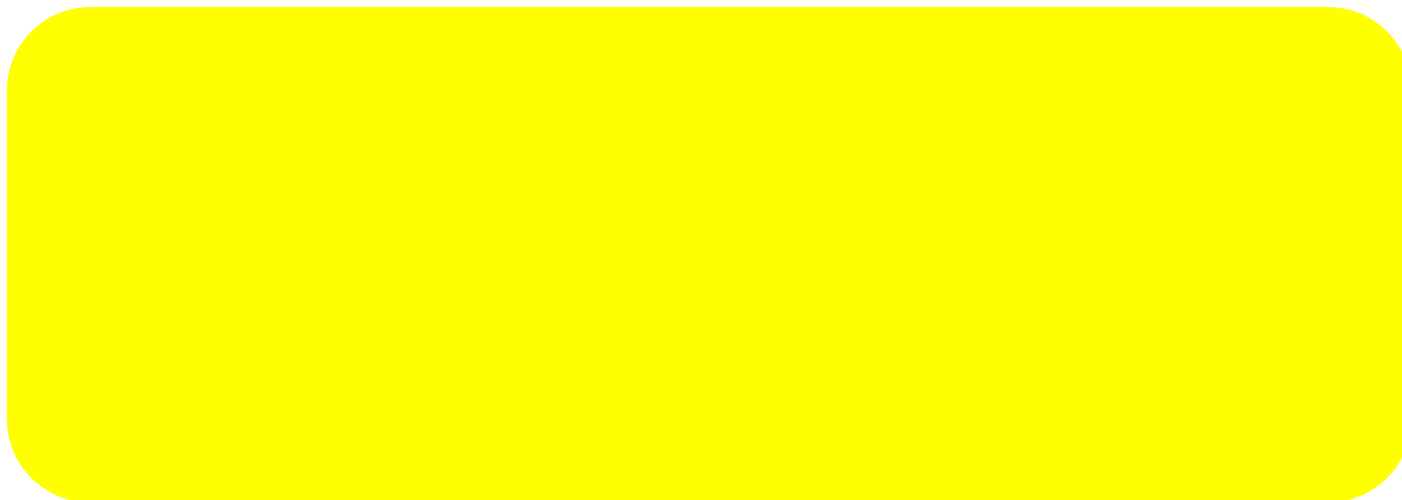
**LET'S START WITH A GAME...**

**YOU HAVE ONE JOB...**

**Say out loud the color of the  
shape you see on the screen.**





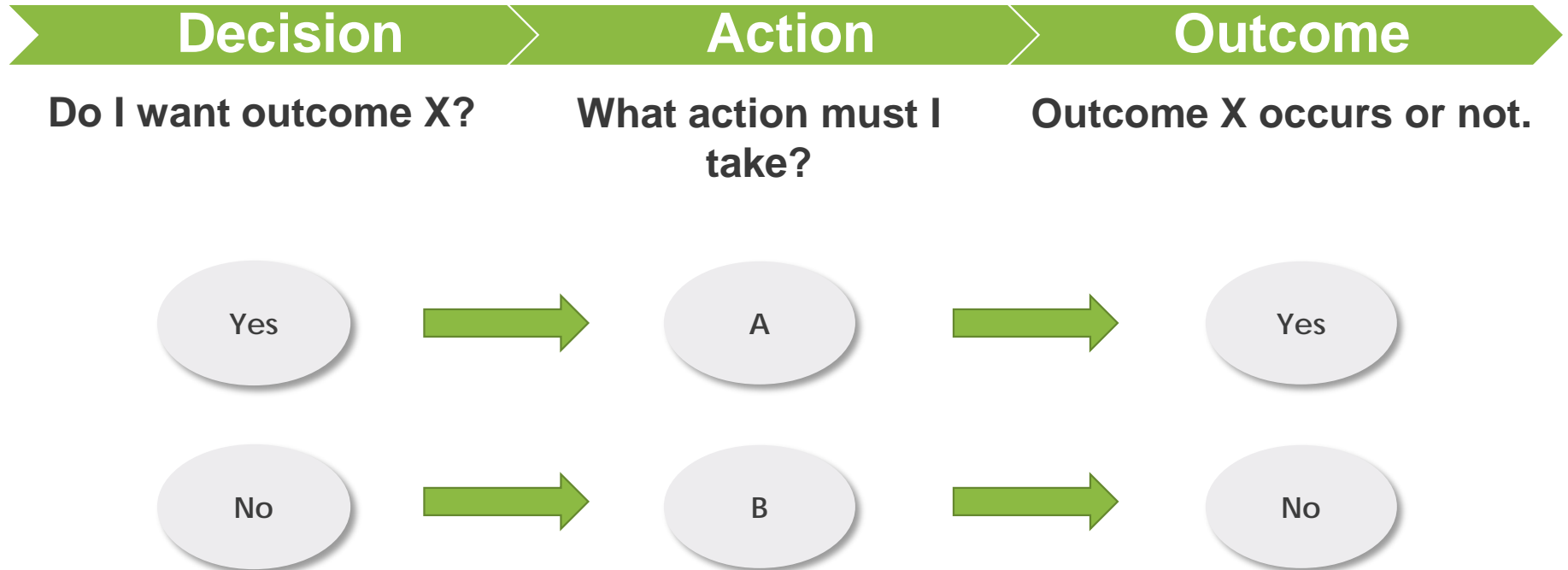




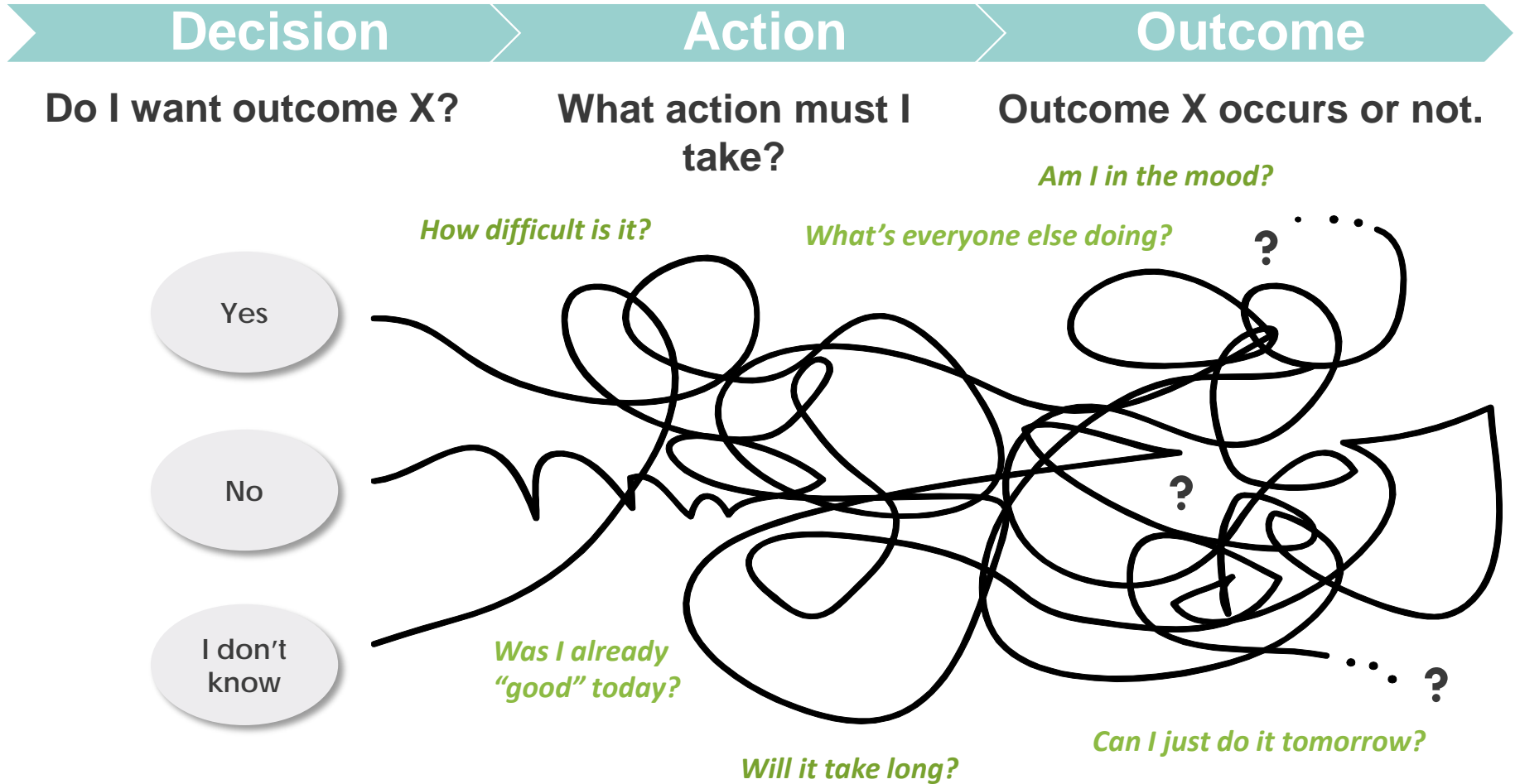


**BLUE**

# STANDARD DECISION MAKING MODEL



# BEHAVIORAL DECISION MAKING MODEL



# WHO ARE WE, REALLY?



# WHO ARE WE, REALLY?





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# IMAGINE...

As you come to a stop at a red light, you see a car on the other side of the street go right through the light. What might you think about this person?

- They have no patience
- They are a bad driver
- They don't care about the safety others
- They have a pregnant woman going into labor in the back seat

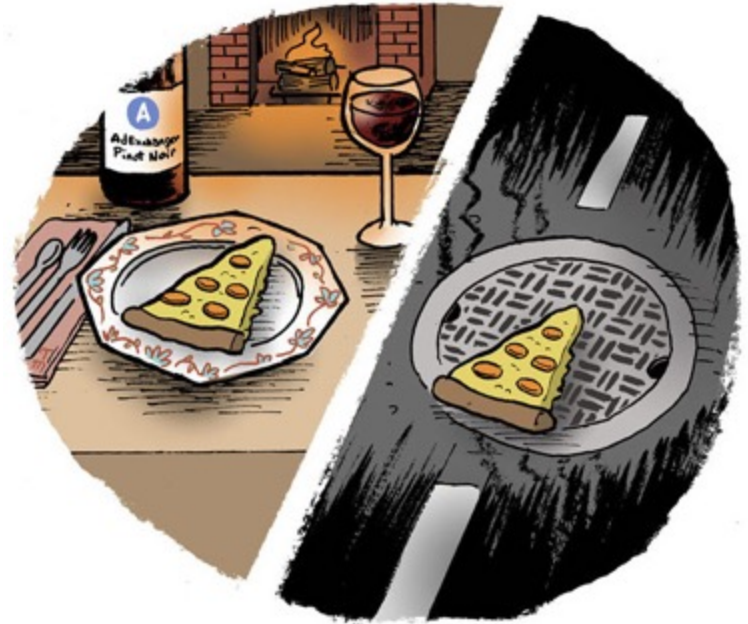


## Fundamental Attribution Error

# WHAT'S THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO HELP?



# Our unofficial motto: *Context Matters*



# CONTEXT HAS MULTIPLE MEANINGS



# KEY INSIGHT: LIVING IN POVERTY = LIVING IN CHRONIC SCARCITY

When we're **short** on a resource...



...we tend to **tunnel** on our most urgent task.



Can be helpful in the **short term!**



But dangerous when **chronic.**

# THE TUNNEL



# MEASURING SCARCITY'S IMPACT ON THE BRAIN



D4

●	▲	◉
×	▲	◉
○	▲	◻

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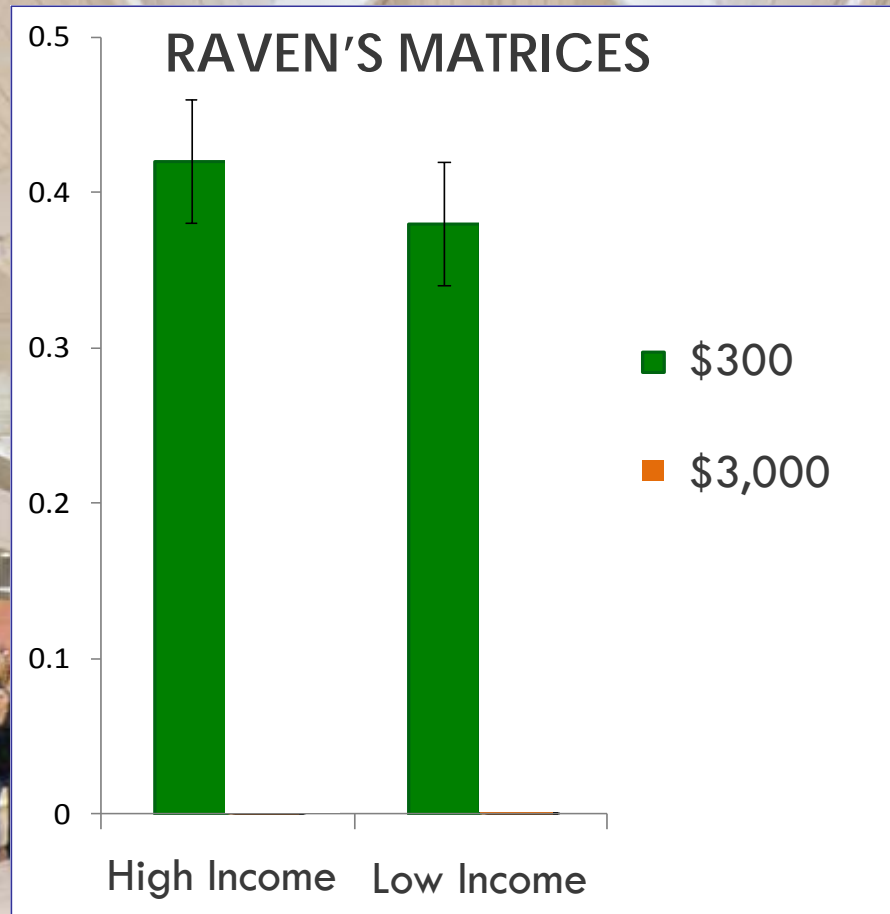
8



Mani, A., Mullainathan, S., Shafir, E., and Zhao, J. (2013) Poverty Impedes Cognitive Function. Science, 341 (6149)



# MEASURING SCARCITY'S IMPACT ON THE BRAIN



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**POVERTY  $\neq$  PERSONAL FAILING**

**POVERTY  $\neq$  CULTURAL PATHOLOGY**

**POVERTY = CHRONIC SCARCITY**

# HOW TO ALLEVIATE THE CONTEXT OF SCARCITY

## Poverty Interrupted

Applying Behavioral Science to  
the Context of Chronic Scarcity

ideas<sup>42</sup>



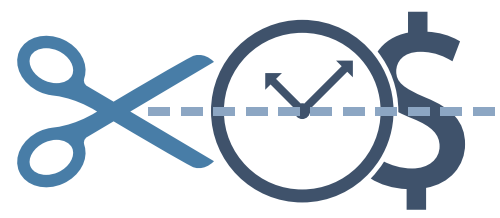
**3 design principles**

and

**15 recommendations**

for reducing the bandwidth  
tax and addressing the  
context of poverty

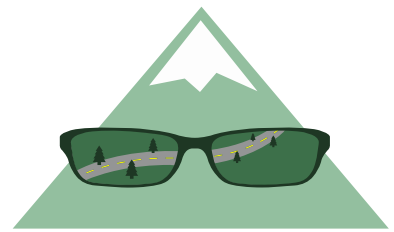
# THE THREE DESIGN PRINCIPLES



Cut the Costs



Create Slack



Reframe and Empower

# WIC NATURALLY SUPPORTS FAMILIES LIVING IN CHRONIC SCARCITY...

## Families living with many scarce resources need to:

- Figure out which foods are good for a growing child
- Find the money to purchase these healthy items
- Discover (and potential pay for) a trusted source for nutrition and breastfeeding information

## WIC provides invaluable support by:

- Reducing the burden of selecting and buying health food
- Providing free expert nutrition and breastfeeding support
- Giving information about and referrals to other local services

# BUT MANY ELIGIBLE FAMILIES STILL MISS OUT ON ALL THE BENEFITS WIC HAS TO OFFER

- Fewer than 65% of eligible families access the program
- Many families exit WIC while they are still eligible
- Participants don't use all the resources WIC offers (like breastfeeding support)



Carlson, S., Neuberger, Z., Rosenbaum, D. (2015) WIC Participation and Costs are Stable. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Jacknowitz, A., Tiehen, L. (2010) WIC Participation Patterns: An Investigation of Delayed Entry and Early Exit. ERS Report Summary.

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# PHASE 1: UNDERSTANDING WIC THROUGH THE LENS OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE


the David &  
Lucile Packard  
FOUNDATION



- 3 WIC agencies in San Jose, CA
- Over 60 interviews with staff, current and past participants
- Expert interviews with over a dozen people in government, academia, nutrition and community outreach
- Site visit observations



# PHASE 1: UNDERSTANDING WIC THROUGH THE LENS OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE



**Using Behavioral Science to Improve the WIC Experience**  
Lessons for the field from San Jose, California

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**Authors:**  
Dani Grodsky, Antonia Violante, Anthony Barrows; ideas42  
Wendi Gosliner; Nutrition Policy Institute

May 2017

# PHASE 1: RECOMMENDING 40+ DESIGN IDEAS

Baby's Age	Wet Diapers	Dirty Diapers
1 Day Old		
2 Days Old		
3 Days Old		
4 Days Old		
5 Days Old		
6 Days Old		
7 Days Old		



Create Slack



# PHASE 2: APPLYING BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE TO PRIORITY ISSUES

**Northern California:  
Santa Clara County WIC**

**Southern California:  
Watts Healthcare  
Corporation WIC**



**Appointment  
attendance**



**Retention past  
first birthday**



**Breastfeeding  
continuation**

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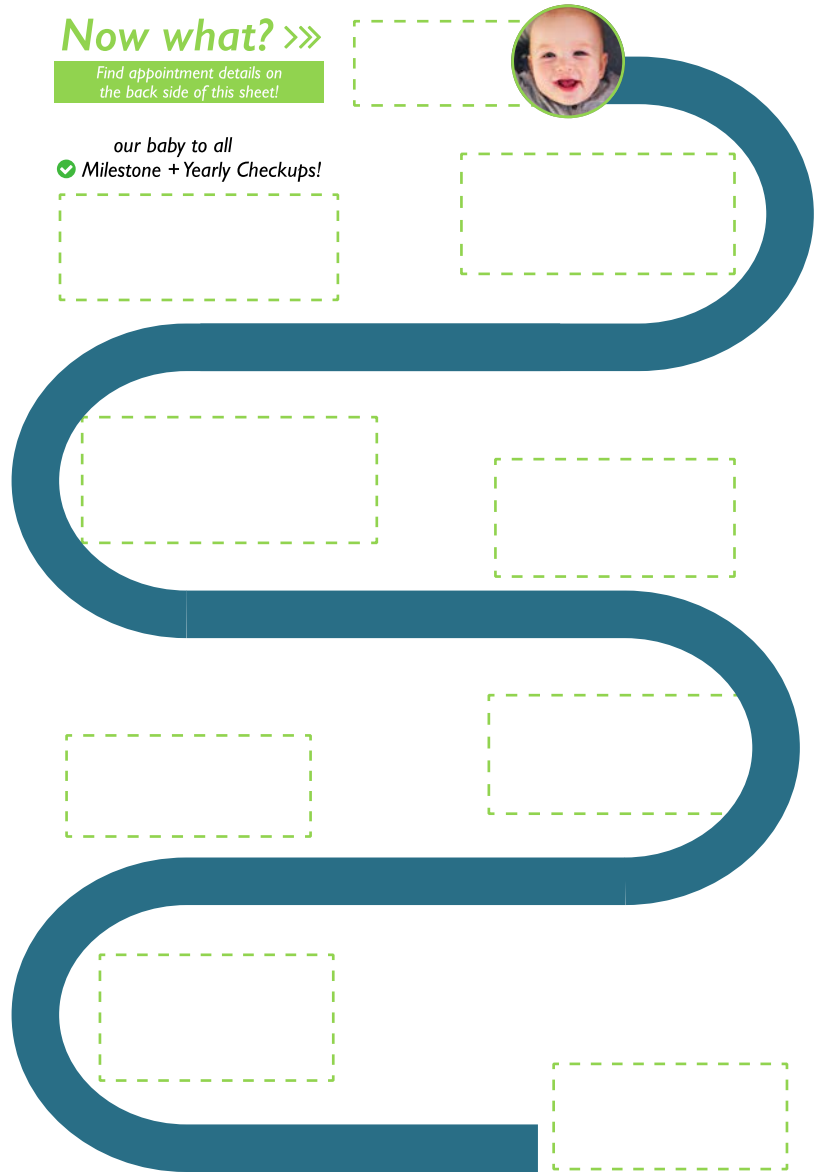
**Breastfeeding  
continuation**

## Now what? >>>

Find appointment details on the back side of this sheet!



our baby to all  
✔ Milestone + Yearly Checkups!



USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.


## >> YOUR WIC JOURNEY


Your family deserves the healthiest start as you welcome a new member!


At WIC, we provide:


- ✔ Free sessions with trained nutritionists, registered dietitians, and breastfeeding experts.
- ✔ More than \$3,000 in nutritious food per child if you are enrolled from the start of your pregnancy until your child turns five (over half of this is in years 2-5!)

**What could you do with the money you'll save?**

  
Rent

  
Car Payments

  
Savings

  
Clothes

  
Other

## >> WIC APPOINTMENT TYPES

Appointment	Brief Description	What should you bring?
Nutrition Chat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Expert nutrition tips for you and your growing baby!</li> <li>▶ Pick up your voucher for free healthy food</li> </ul>	▶ Just your WIC folder
Breastfeeding Chat	▶ Meet with a WIC breastfeeding expert one on one	▶ Your WIC folder and your baby
Growth Check-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Find out how your baby is growing!</li> <li>▶ Pick up your voucher for free healthy food</li> </ul>	▶ Your WIC folder and your baby
Birthday Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Renew your participation in the program for the next year</li> <li>▶ Pick up your voucher for free healthy food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Your WIC folder and your baby</li> <li>▶ See checklist below</li> </ul>

## >> WHAT DO I NEED FOR THE BIRTHDAY UPDATE?

Most people bring:

- Current Photo ID with Current Address: (as proof of address and identification)
- Medi-Cal Card OR Pay Check Stubs: (as proof of income)
- Health Information:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Remember to also bring your child!**



*Ask a WIC staff member if you need an alternative to the documents suggested!*

If you forget a document, you will need to return to the WIC office to bring it within the next month.

**Avoid this by bringing everything you need the first time!**

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

# PHASE 3: HOW WILL WE KNOW IF THESE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

TESTING



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# NEXT STEPS FOR BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE AND WIC

## The WIC Shopping Experience

- Adoption and use of EBT
- Easier and more consistent purchase of WIC eligible items

## Making Education Stick

- Environment and tools most conducive to learning
- Adoption and use of online or mobile education

## Addressing Individual Risk

- Effective and personalized support for those at high risk of early drop out



# BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE RESOURCES

**ideas<sup>42</sup>**

## Using Behavioral Science to Improve the WIC Experience

Lessons for the field from San Jose, California

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## Poverty Interrupted

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**THE NEW SCIENCE OF HAVING LESS AND HOW IT DEFINES OUR LIVES**

**SCARCITY**

SENDHIL MULLAINATHAN ELDAR SHAFIR

*change the way you think* — STEVEN B. LEVITT, coauthor of *Freakonomics*

**B - HUB**

BEHAVIORAL EVIDENCE HUB



# Questions

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**Antonia Violante- [antonia@ideas42.org](mailto:antonia@ideas42.org)**