



WIC TO 6: ADDRESSING NUTRITION GAPS

NWA'S MISSION

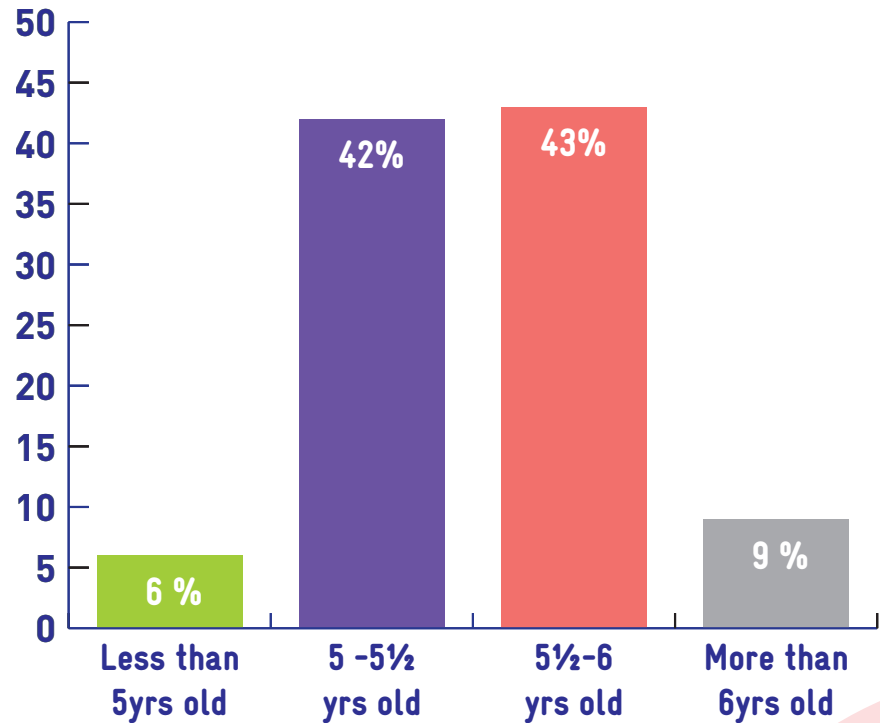
The National WIC Association (NWA) provides its members with tools and leadership to expand and sustain effective nutrition services for mothers and young children.

For 46 years, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) has contributed to positive health outcomes throughout early childhood. WIC's healthy child food package reduces childhood obesity and provides children with a healthy start to life. WIC services currently end on a child's fifth birthday, at which point it is understood that the child will start kindergarten and qualify for school meals programs that continue to supplement their intake of healthy foods.

NWA RECOMMENDS EXTENDING CHILD ELIGIBILITY TO AGE SIX.

As children are entering kindergarten at a later age, there is an emerging nutrition gap of children who qualify for neither WIC nor school meals. Extended child eligibility is a necessary step to continue WIC's successful nutrition support until the child enters school.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS, BY AGE AT THE TIME CHILD FIRST STARTED KINDERGARTEN: FALL 2010¹



WIC ADVANCES HEALTHY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

WIC's child food package is tailored to support the child's healthy development during a crucial period of growth. Positive nutrition can impact the success of key developmental milestones, including language skills, communication skills, and physical growth and strength.² As a result of the healthy foods available on WIC, children participating in WIC have higher-quality diets than WIC-eligible children whose households do not receive WIC benefits.³ WIC's nutrition education empowers parents

to incorporate healthy eating into a family's routine, leading to increased consumption of fiber, lower-fat milk, and fruit among WIC families.⁴

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that WIC's nutrition intervention for young children is contributing to a reduction in childhood obesity⁵ and severe childhood obesity.⁶ Children who start kindergarten overweight are four times as likely as normal-weight children to become obese as teenagers and adults⁷, increasing the risk of life-threatening diseases such as coronary heart disease, some types of cancers, type II diabetes, and hypertension.⁸ WIC's preventative nutrition support plays a



significant role in setting healthy habits early in life and preventing costly long-term conditions in adulthood.

THE 5-YEAR OLD GAP

WIC provides nutrition services to children up to their fifth birthday, when it is presumed that the school meals programs will meet the child's nutrition needs. However, a majority of children are entering kindergarten after the age of 5½, with a sizeable fraction of children entering school after the age of six.⁹ Some families may be advised to delay kindergarten entry until age six, irrespective of the child's nutrition needs.

Approximately 600,000 children are affected by this gap,¹⁰ and the effects are clear: children that no longer qualify for WIC and do not qualify for school meals face increased food insecurity.¹¹ As families search for alternate sources of food, this often results in meals that do not account for the child's nutritional needs or the family even skipping meals all together.¹² The new stressors can inhibit a child's growth at the onset of education, an unfortunate outcome given WIC's sustained role in improving cognitive development and academic performance among children.¹³

Extended child eligibility to age six will ensure that children have a healthy start to their education and streamline the child nutrition programs to more holistically meet the needs of America's next generation.

WIC: EMPOWERING FAMILIES, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

Please direct all questions to Brian Dittmeier, Senior Public Policy Council, at bdittmeier@nwica.org or 202-232-5492.

¹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010–11 [ECLS-K:2011], Preliminary Restricted-Use Data File. See Digest of Education Statistics 2012, table 136. Fact sheet available online: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_tea.pdf.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015) Developmental Milestones. Available online: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>.

³ Zimmer CZ, Vernarelli JA (2017) WIC Works! Positive Influence of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) on Diet Quality of Low Income Children. The FASEB Journal, Vol. 31, No. 1 Supplement. Accessed online: http://www.fasebj.org/doi/abs/10.1096/fasebj.31.1_supplement.lb461.

⁴ Richie L, Whaley S, Spector P, Gomez J and Crawford P (2010) 'Favorable Impact of Nutrition Education on California WIC Families', Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior vol. 42 no.3: S7-S10.

⁵ Daepp M, Gortmaker S, Wang YC, Long MW, Kenney EL (2019) WIC Food Package Changes: Trends in Childhood Obesity Prevalence, Pediatrics vol. 143 is.5. Available online: <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/143/5/e20182841>.

⁶ Pan L, Park S, Scanlon K, Slayton R, Goodma A, & Blanck H (2017), 'Trends in Severe Obesity Among 23 Million U.S. Children Aged 2–4 Years Who Enrolled in WIC — United States, 2000–2014', Annals Of Epidemiology. Vol. 27, 8, p. 528.

⁷ Cunningham S, Kramer M, and Venkat Narayan K (2014) 'Incidents of Childhood Obesity in the United States', New England Journal of Medicine vol. 370: 403-411 DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa1309753.

⁸ National Institute of Health, NHLBI Obesity Education Initiative (1998) 'Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults', NIH publication no. 98-4083 Available online: http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/ob_gdlns.pdf.

⁹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010–11 [ECLS-K:2011], Preliminary Restricted-Use Data File. See Digest of Education Statistics 2012, table 136. Fact sheet available online: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_tea.pdf.

¹⁰ Thorn B, Kline N, Tadler C, Budge E, Wilcox-Cook E, Michaels J, Mendelson M, Patlan KL, & Tran V. (2018). WIC Participant and Program Characteristics 2016. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Available online: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-participant-and-program-characteristics-2016>

¹¹ Arteaga I, Heflin C, Gable S (2016) The impact of aging out of WIC on food security in households with children, Children and Youth Services Review vol. 69, p. 82-96. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.07.015>.

¹² Heflin C, London AS, Scott E (2011) Mitigating Material Hardship: The Strategies Low-Income Families Employ to Reduce the Consequences of Poverty, Sociological Inquiry vol. 81, is. 2. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682X.2011.00369.x>.

¹³ Jackson M (2015) Early childhood WIC participation, cognitive development and academic achievement, Social Science & Medicine, vol. 126, p. 145-153. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.12.018>.

