



2023 FARM BILL: BUILDING WIC/SNAP LINKAGES TO STRENGTHEN NUTRITION SECURITY

NWA RECOMMENDS:

Bipartisan efforts to advance a Farm Bill must leverage the partnership between SNAP and WIC to improve service delivery and enhance access to nutrition assistance.

WIC'S ROLE IN THE FARM BILL

With the current Farm Bill set to expire in September 2023, Congress is poised to review the comprehensive legislation that reauthorizes critical food assistance programs and farm subsidies. **The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is not typically considered in the Farm Bill.** WIC policy is incorporated into the Child Nutrition Reauthorization process, which hasn't been concluded since 2010.

WIC families are still impacted by decisions in the Farm Bill. Many WIC families also rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to round out a full basket of foods for the household. Tribal programs look to the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) to complement the WIC benefit in addressing Indigenous nutritional needs. Developments in the Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program can affect program administration for WIC at farmers markets and the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program, which is likewise considered in Child Nutrition Reauthorization.

As the Farm Bill seeks to address high rates of hunger, particularly child hunger, program linkages between WIC and SNAP can strategically leverage federal programs to enhance overall access to nutrition assistance.



BUILDING NUTRITION SECURITY

Especially as families navigate higher food costs, the limited resources made available through SNAP and WIC only address a fraction of typical household grocery expenditures. As part of its review of the Thrifty Food Plan, USDA assessed that limited household resources were one of the greatest barriers to consistent purchasing of nutritious foods. NWA is strongly in support of the Thrifty Food Plan adjustments to reflect the modern grocery costs of a healthy diet pattern.

With overall SNAP resources declining this spring with the end of emergency allotments, NWA encourages greater investment to connect SNAP and WIC computer systems. When connected, automated referrals between the programs can ensure eligible families are accessing all available nutrition support. Recent State models, once implemented, demonstrated promise in generating thousands of new referrals that enhanced access to WIC's targeted nutrition support.

MODERNIZING RETAIL SHOPPING

As retailers and technology vendors innovate to improve the grocery shopping experience, SNAP and WIC participants deserve access to equitable and affordable options. Policymakers working on the Farm Bill should include WIC when funding new shopping technologies, including online platforms and mobile payments. As SNAP and WIC eligible families often overlap, interoperable payment systems can reduce burdens on shoppers, State agencies, and retail partners. Policymakers should proactively address equitable access, particularly as delivery fees could price families out of online shopping platforms.

To promote further efficiencies, USDA could streamline vendor authorization, especially as online platforms go live. When approving new SNAP vendors, USDA could automatically send relevant data to State WIC agencies to simplify the process and assure broader access to retail vendors.

