Draft Op-Ed

**As WIC Adapts, Pregnant Women and New Parents Need Congress to Act**

*Please feel free to edit, add your agency's letterhead, and share this op-ed with your state/local press. You can find submission instructions on each news outlet’s website. For additional guidance, click* [*here*](https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/2018-wic-engaging-the-media-to-promote-wic.pdf) *to read NWA’s advocacy document, “Engaging the Media to Promote WIC.”*

*If you have additional questions or feedback, please reach out to NWA’s State Public Policy Associate, Noora Kanfash, at* *nkanfash@nwica.org**.*

As nutrition and public health professionals, ***we*** see the direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on families raising young children. In this time of incredible uncertainty, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides crucial nutrition and breastfeeding support for pregnant and postpartum women, babies, and young children to age five. Since March 2020, ***[name state]*** WIC providers have adapted in record time to shift the way ***we*** serve families by transitioning from in-person to remote and safe services.

Families are not only dealing with the stress of the pandemic while caring for children but also struggling with job losses and lost income. Every day, new families turn to WIC for support, and ***our*** clinics now have the option to onboard these families by phone or other remote means. ***Insert a personal anecdote from clinic staff experiences (i.e. a new mother on the program who was grateful to WIC and clinic staff for support during the pandemic, how effective remote service is in safely serving families, etc.)* *If possible, include specific data about new numbers of families connected with WIC services.***

With the everyday concern families feel about risk of COVID-19 exposure, Congress granted the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) new authority to waive in-person requirements for WIC providers through the end of September. As infection rates continue to climb and states constantly adjust or modify their reopening plans, WIC providers need these flexibilities extended well into 2021. We should not rush to open clinics that provide nutrition, health, and social services to pregnant women and new parents, especially when doctors’ offices continue to adapt services that promote social distancing.

***[Our organization/agency]*** urges Congress to extend WIC waiver authority until at least September 30, 2021. This will ensure that WIC continues to provide safe and critical support to families without putting their health at risk. It will likewise protect essential clinic staff and their families.