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May 1, 2024

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Shapiro Administration Celebrates 50th Anniversary of WIC Program

Pennsylvania's first WIC program was established in Allegheny County in 1974.

Harrisburg, PA – May marks the 50th anniversary of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children — better known as WIC — which has been serving Pennsylvania women and children since May 1974. In the past year alone, PA WIC has helped 284,642 individuals. The month-long celebration starts today in Allegheny County where Pennsylvania's first WIC clinic opened.

"As a pediatrician, I have seen firsthand the benefits of the WIC program for children and families," said **Acting Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen**. "Every day in WIC programs across the Commonwealth, families receive support for nutritional, age and culturally diverse foods, breastfeeding and nutrition support and education, and referrals to service in their communities. Evaluations of the WIC program have consistently shown that participation results in better pregnancy and child health outcomes. I am honored to help kick off the celebration for a program that, after 50 years, continues to evolve to meet the needs of Pennsylvania women, infants, and children."

WIC is a federal program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and administered in Pennsylvania through the Department of Health. The Department provides technical support, fiscal oversight, and administrative guidance to 22 local agencies who administer the WIC program across 65 counties in the Commonwealth. [WIC provides](#) nutrition education, breastfeeding support, healthy foods, and referrals to health and social services to improve health outcomes for families.

Pennsylvanians are eligible for WIC if they are:

- women who are pregnant or had a baby in the past six months (or 12 months if breastfeeding);
- infants and children under age five; or
- fathers, grandparents, and foster parents, and are the legal guardian of a child under age five, may apply for WIC on their behalf.

Additional [information on eligibility and guidelines](#) can be found online.

Allegheny County Health Department opened the first WIC clinic in Pennsylvania and issued the first WIC voucher on May 28, 1974.

Governor Josh Shapiro [issued a proclamation](#) declaring May 2024 as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Month. To celebrate, events will take place at local health agencies across Pennsylvania.

The WIC program continues to grow in Pennsylvania, with the recent addition of five WIC mobile units currently in operation, and up to five more units expected to be in operation by September 30, 2024. Each mobile unit is customized to operate as a fully-functional WIC satellite clinic that reaches both rural and urban areas.

“Mobile WIC units help meet the needs of people facing transportation barriers by meeting them where they are,” said **Pennsylvania WIC Director Sally Zubairu-Cofield**. “The fleet of ‘clinics on wheels’ will help increase participation in the WIC program, delivering greater access and equity throughout Pennsylvania.”

Other recent innovations include:

- Self-checkout options in some stores,
- The WIC Shopper Guide, and
- Moving from hand-written appointment cards to using modern technology for text messaging appointment reminders and messages.

Pennsylvania’s WIC program serves nearly 200,000 women, infants, and children under age five each month at [more than 230 clinics](#) and 1,235 retail stores currently providing WIC-approved nutritious foods throughout the Commonwealth.

Over the decades, studies conducted by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service as well as non-government entities indicated that [WIC provides many benefits](#) including:

- Fewer premature births and infant deaths,
- Savings in health care costs,
- Improved infant feeding practices, and
- Improved cognitive development.

Find [more information about WIC](#) on the Department of Health’s website. To determine eligibility for other state assistance programs, visit www.dhs.pa.gov.

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