

# National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity

## The WIC Program

- ❖ **Recommendation:** Urge USDA to update and improve the nutritional quality of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) food packages.

- **Rationale**

- Scientific understanding about nutrition has advanced considerably since the WIC Program began in 1974. Yet, six out of the seven WIC food packages have never been significantly changed or updated. (A WIC food package is a set of foods for which a particular category of participants, such as "pregnant and breastfeeding women," receive vouchers.) The food packages are no longer in alignment with nutrition recommendations for promoting the health and well-being of program participants.
- In April 2000, the USDA announced that it would publish proposed regulations regarding updating the WIC food packages in September 2000 and a final rule in September 2001, with the intent that the final rule would take effect in September 2002.<sup>1</sup> To date, the USDA has failed to publish even a proposed rule.
- The USDA should publish the proposed rule to allow a public dialogue regarding which foods should be included in the WIC food packages.

- ❖ **Recommendation:** Require that the food package, target nutrients and nutrient needs of participants be re-evaluated at least every 10 years and revised to reflect current nutrition science.

- **Rationale**

- Nutrition science evolves over time. Advances should be applied to the WIC food packages within a reasonable timeframe.
- Re-evaluation of the WIC food packages should include a review of target nutrients and participants' nutrient needs.

- ❖ **Recommendation:** Maintain the nutrition and health mission of WIC. Increase Nutrition Services and Administration funding to assure quality nutrition education services. Provide adequate funding to accompany additional related administrative and client service requirements, such as substance abuse education, immunization screening, etc.

- **Rationale**

- The WIC Program's mission is: "To safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care."<sup>2</sup>

- Given the success and reach of the WIC Program, it has been assigned additional tasks that have reduced the time and resources dedicated to its principal mission of promoting nutrition and health.
  - In order to continue to be successful with its core mission, the WIC Program needs sufficient funding for all additional services. Additional services add to program costs and take resources away from nutrition and health services.
- **Cost:** WIC programs need \$22 million annually for the CDC National Immunization Program to screen and assess child immunization status followed by education and referral to providers.

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Register. "Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): Revisions in the WIC Food Packages." April 24, 2000, vol. 65, pp. 22545-22546.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. WIC Program home page. Accessed at <<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/>> on January 14, 2003.