

March 19, 2009

\$500 million in ARRA funds available for Women, Infant and Children programs

Food and Nutrition Programs

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides \$500 million for Women, Infant and Children (WIC) programs. Of the amount provided for in the Recovery Act, \$100 million will be used to establish, improve or administer management information systems for WIC to include changes necessary to meet new legislative or regulatory requirements. Funding will be used to advance the use of electronic benefit transfer in the WIC program.

The remaining \$400 million will be used to support the program's benefits and costs associated with exceeding budget allocations. Should the additional funding be needed for benefits, funding will be allocated outside of the normal WIC allocation procedures.

Background

The program was created in 1972 as a pilot program. WIC has operated as a permanent nutrition assistance program since 1974.

Program Description

- Provides nutritious supplemental foods, nutrition education, and health and social services referrals at no charge to low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women; and infants and children up to the age of 5 years.
- Provides participants in most States with monthly checks or vouchers to buy specific foods designed to supplement their diet with specific nutrients. A few State agencies distribute the WIC foods through warehouses or deliver the foods to participants' homes.
- Provides nutritious foods that include iron-fortified infant formula and infant cereal, iron-fortified adult cereal, vitamin C-rich fruit or vegetable juice, eggs, milk, and cheese. Soy-based beverages, tofu, fruits and vegetables, baby foods, whole-wheat bread, and other whole-grain options were recently added.
- Provides WIC services through county health departments, hospitals, mobile clinics, community centers, schools, public housing sites, Indian reservations, migrant health centers and camps, and Indian Health Service facilities.
- Operates in all 50 States, 34 Indian Tribal Organizations, American Samoa, District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. These 90 WIC State agencies administer WIC through 2,200 local agencies and 9,000 clinic sites.

Program Participants

- 8.7 million people participated in FY 2008 (monthly average).
- An applicant's family income must be at or below 185 percent of the U.S. Poverty Income Guidelines (\$39,220 for four-person household as of July 1, 2008). A

person who participates or has family members who participate in certain other benefit programs, such as the Food Stamp Program, Medicaid, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, automatically meets the income eligibility requirement.

Federal Budget

- \$5.2 billion in FY 2007 and \$6.2 billion in FY 2008.

Resource Links:

www.fns.usda.gov/wic

www.fns.usda.gov/fns/recovery/memos/WIC_022609.pdf

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