



NWA Key Messages and Talking Points 2012

This year is a particularly challenging year for federal domestic discretionary programs like WIC. Using strong, consistent messaging about the value of WIC is key to weathering the current political and fiscal environment and achieving strong support for the Program.

The following seven key messages and talking points are intended to guide NWA's WIC advocacy communications in 2012. When speaking with members of Congress or to their staff, talking to the media, bringing up a WIC issue at a town hall meeting, or promoting WIC to the general public, NWA encourages you to incorporate these messages and talking points into your advocacy communications.

Consistently communicating these messages will help mitigate misconceptions about WIC and hopefully integrate them into the political discourse about WIC.

This document lists key messages and talking points with supporting details for NWA members to use in meetings, interviews and any other conversations about the importance of WIC. It is not intended to be distributed. Under each talking point, there are corresponding NWA documents listed for distribution purposes.

3 KEY MESSAGES FOR SPEAKING WITH MEDIA

#1: WIC is a national, mission-driven preventive public health nutrition program serving 9 million Americans, benefiting local communities and the nation

#2: WIC is effective, efficient and entrepreneurial providing significant returns on investment

#3: The WIC program is admired across political, ideological, ethnic and socio-economic groups, and voters overwhelmingly oppose cutting funding for WIC

TALKING POINTS FOR SPEAKING WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, THEIR STAFF, AND OTHERS

WIC is a national, mission-driven preventive public health nutrition program

- WIC is targeted at low income women, infants, and children with, or at risk for developing nutrition-related health problems
- WIC provides nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, medical and social services referrals, and nutritious food prescriptions (packages)
- WIC serves approximately 9 million participants per month in all 50 states, U.S. territories, and Indian Tribal Organizations
- WIC participants are not permitted to purchase just any foods. They must purchase the foods that are listed on their food prescriptions (packages), which are healthy foods designed to meet the nutrition needs of pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and young children
- WIC is a gateway to health care and social services

**** See NWA document *WIC for a Healthier, Stronger America***

WIC is effective, efficient and entrepreneurial

- Participation in WIC improves nutrition and health behaviors, resulting in overall healthier pregnancies, healthier birth outcomes, better growth and development of young children, and improved health status of participants.
- Nationally, program management costs are low at just 9.09% of total program costs.
- The WIC Program has many measures in place to maintain program integrity.
- Cost containment measures save taxpayer dollars In FY 2010, the formula manufacturers' rebate program generated \$1.69 billion to cover approximately 25% of program costs

****See NWA document *WIC: Solid Returns on Investment while Reducing the Deficit; WIC Program Costs*; see talking points document on WIC Program integrity.**

WIC provides significant returns on investment and is a deficit reduction strategy that works

- Participation in WIC results in overall positive health outcomes for participants
- WIC provides significant health care cost savings by improving breastfeeding rates, birth outcomes, and other health outcomes
- Prenatal participation in WIC has been demonstrated to save health care dollars
 - Preterm births cost the U.S. over \$26 billion a year
 - The average first year medical costs for premature/low birth-weight baby is \$49,033 compared to \$4,551 for a baby without complications
 - For very low birth-weight babies, a shift of one pound at birth saves approximately \$28,000 in first year medical costs
 - Medicaid costs are reduced on average between \$12,000 and \$15,000 for every very low birth-weight incident prevented
 - It costs approximately \$743 a year for a pregnant woman to participate in WIC
 - WIC prenatal care benefits reduce the rate of low birth-weight babies by 25% and very low birth-weight babies by 44%
 - Prenatal WIC participation is associated with an increase of 6.6 oz. for low birth-weight babies
 - Every dollar spent on pregnant women in WIC produces \$1.92 to \$4.21 in Medicaid savings for newborns and their mothers
- Breastfeeding saves health care dollars
 - It has been estimated that \$13 billion per year could be saved if 90% of US infants were breastfed exclusively for six months
 - Participation in WIC's prenatal counseling program is associated with an increased rate of breastfeeding initiation
 - In PC2010, 63.1 percent of WIC mothers initiated breastfeeding, up from 41.3 percent in PC1998.
 - Women who attend WIC breastfeeding support groups are twice as likely to plan to breastfeed as those who do not

****See NWA document *WIC: Solid Returns on Investment while Reducing the Deficit***

WIC is a well-liked program that elicits support across political, ideological, ethnic and socio-economic groups, and voters overwhelmingly oppose cutting funding for WIC

- A national survey of 1,000 likely November 2012 voters showed...
 - 69% favorable vs. 18% unfavorable view of WIC
 - Support grows when people learn more about WIC
 - Nearly two-thirds of likely November 2012 voters oppose cutting funding for WIC as a way to reduce the federal deficit
 - That after hearing arguments from both sides, opposition to WIC cuts remains strong
 - Few in any partisan group place WIC high on their list for cuts. A large majority of Americans, nearly 3 in 4 Americans (73%) want funding for WIC to remain the same or be increased
 - Nearly twice as many (32%) favor an increase as wanting a reduction (17%)
 - Only Social Security and Medicare are less likely than WIC to be nominated for cuts to help balance the federal deficit
 - A vote to cut funding for WIC offers more risk than reward for Members of Congress—Even Among strong Republicans and Republican Women
 - A vote to cut funding for WIC risks alienating independents, moderates, Hispanics, African-Americans, middle and working class voters, Republican women and moms, as well as Democrats

***See NWA document [America Supports WIC: Results from a National Public Opinion Survey about WIC](#)*

WIC benefits local communities and the nation

- WIC is a gateway to health care and social services for many families
- WIC food dollars are spent in local communities
- WIC increases demand for healthy food in local retail stores, healthy food accessibility for the community
- A healthy population...
 - Grows healthy young children, ready-to-learn
 - Ensures a productive and globally competitive workforce
 - Enhances national security by providing a strong pool of young people physically and mentally capable of service
 - Reduces health care costs by preventing/minimizing diseases and injuries that, otherwise, impose a heavy financial burden on the healthcare system
 - Means that Americans have the opportunity to pursue their dreams and achieve their life goals without hindrance by poor health

***See NWA documents: [WIC: Solid Returns on Investment while Reducing the Deficit](#); [The Role of WIC in Public Health](#); [Voices of WIC](#)*

WIC plays an important role in achieving national goals

WIC plays an important role in achieving the following national goals:

- Improving maternal and child health
- Reducing Infant Mortality
- Ending childhood hunger by 2015
- Improving breastfeeding rates

- Reducing Child Abuse
- Reducing obesity and chronic disease
- Improving access to healthy food

***See NWA documents [WIC for a Healthier, Stronger America](#); [The Role of WIC in Public Health](#); [The Role of WIC in Reducing Infant Mortality](#); [Ending Childhood Hunger by 2015](#); [The Role of WIC in Stopping and Preventing Child Abuse](#); [Preventing Maternal and Childhood Overweight and Obesity](#)*

WIC is a leader in breastfeeding promotion and support

- WIC encourages and promotes breastfeeding as the ideal form of infant feeding and enthusiastically supports the 2011 Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding
- WIC provides breastfeeding education and support that includes breastfeeding counseling and educational materials, follow-up one-on-one support through breastfeeding peer counselors
- 63.1% of WIC mothers initiated breastfeeding in 2010, up from 41.3% in 1998
- Participation in WIC's prenatal counseling program is associated with an increased rate of breastfeeding initiation; Women who participate in WIC's breastfeeding support activities have longer durations of breastfeeding and are less likely to stop breastfeeding
- WIC breastfeeding moms are eligible to participate in WIC six months longer than WIC non-breastfeeding mothers and may receive breastfeeding aids such as breast pumps
- WIC breastfeeding promotion history includes:
 - In 1992, a breastfeeding food package was established for exclusively breastfeeding mothers, which included more foods and a greater variety of foods
 - In 1997, the USDA's "Loving Support Makes Breastfeeding Work" campaign was developed to increase breastfeeding rates among WIC participants and encourage public acceptance of breastfeeding
 - In 2004, WIC initiated its highly successful breastfeeding peer counselor program
 - In 2009, additional changes to the food package provided further incentive for mothers to exclusively breastfeed, providing an enhanced food package with more food for the mother and significantly more solid food for the infant after 6 months than the other food packages. Women who report knowing about the breastfeeding food package are almost twice as likely to breastfeed as those who do not know about it
- Women who receive advice to breastfeed are more likely to breastfeed than those who do not receive advice: 64% of WIC mothers recall hearing breastfeeding advice compared to 39% of mothers who heard breastfeeding advice from their physicians
- WIC encourages infant father support of breastfeeding, engaging fathers in meaningful breastfeeding support activities

***See NWA documents: [NWA Breastfeeding Strategic Plan](#)*