



National WIC Association  
WIC for a Healthier America



## The Role of WIC in Stopping and Preventing Child Abuse

As the nation's premier public health nutrition program, WIC is a cost-effective, sound investment—insuring the health of our children.

### NWA'S MISSION

Providing leadership to promote quality nutrition services; advocating for services for all eligible women, infants, and children; and assuring the sound and responsive management of WIC.

### The Problem

Child abuse encompasses neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological maltreatment, and medical neglect. Although little talked about, it is a major problem in the U.S. that can have devastating and long lasting consequences for families and society.

#### CHILD ABUSE IS AN EPIDEMIC IN THE UNITED STATES

- ➔ Every year, there are more than three million reports of child abuse made in the U.S.
- ➔ Every five hours a child dies from child abuse in the U.S.
- ➔ Of the sixty-six children that die each week from abuse in the industrialized world, twenty seven die in the U.S., the worst rate in the industrialized world
- ➔ One-third to two-thirds of child abuse cases involve some level of substance abuse

#### CHILD ABUSE IS COSTLY TO SOCIETY

- ➔ In 2007, the estimated annual cost of child abuse in the U.S. was \$104 billion
- ➔ Abusive behavior is cyclical if not stopped: abused children are six times more likely to abuse their own children
- ➔ Many incarcerated and substance abusers report being abused as a child; 14% of men in prison, 36% of women in prison, and as much as two-thirds of those being treated for substance abuse
- ➔ Being abused as a child increases risk for social deviance. Abused children are 74 times more likely to commit crimes against others, 50 times more likely to abuse alcohol or drugs, 53% more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, and 38% more likely to be arrested as an adult

### WIC is a “Gateway to Health Care and Social Services Systems”

WIC provides nutrition and breastfeeding education, nutritious foods, and medical and social services referrals for low and moderate-income women and children with, or at risk of developing, nutrition-related health problems.

WIC plays a critical public health role in stopping child abuse by screening for health risks and referring participants to domestic violence and substance abuse social service programs when necessary.

### Participation in WIC Has Been Shown to Reduce the Risk of Child Abuse

WIC has been shown to reduce the risk of child abuse or neglect. WIC also plays a critical role in counseling mothers about how to nourish and care for their young children, providing emotional support and alleviating economic worry by providing nutritious food packages. Additionally, breastfeeding has been shown to reduce the risk for child maltreatment. WIC's increased investments in breastfeeding promotion and support initiatives have been associated with increased rates of breastfeeding within the WIC population.