

Kinship/Grandfamilies and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a federal nutrition program that protects and improves the health of nutritionally at-risk infants, children up to 5 years old, and pregnant and postpartum individuals from households with low incomes. As a grandparent or other caregiver raising children whose parents cannot, you can apply for WIC for infants and children up to age 5 in your care. If approved, your local WIC clinic will give you an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card to purchase a food package tailored to the infant or child's needs.

The terms “grandfamily,” “kinship family,” and “kinship/grandfamily” can be used interchangeably to refer to all families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so.

This document shares answers to frequently asked questions from grandfamilies and kinship families, so that you can better understand WIC and your options.

What is a WIC tailored food package?

WIC's tailored food packages are based on the infant or child's nutritional needs as prescribed by a WIC nutritionist. WIC approved foods include yogurt, eggs, milk, iron-fortified cereal, peanut butter, beans, whole-grain bread, tortillas, and rice, as well as infant formula, specialty formula, baby food, and infant cereal.

How do I get the food in the WIC food package?

Your local WIC clinic will provide you with a WIC electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. You can then use your EBT card to shop for WIC foods at authorized grocery stores and other WIC approved vendors. The fruit and vegetable benefit of WIC has a cash value, and WIC also guarantees a specific type and amount of certain identified foods. For example, [participants receive](#) a voucher for one dozen eggs, while the fruit and vegetable voucher allows participants to buy a specific dollar amount of fruits and vegetables of their choosing.

In addition to a food package, are there other services available through WIC?

WIC provides nutrition education and counseling. You can access nutritional resources and materials with strategies for both children and caregivers. Resources include fact sheets, online curricula, classes, and sometimes even an individual nutritional counselor, all meant to answer any questions you may have.

WIC also offers screening referrals to other health, welfare, and social services, including Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), counseling, and family support.

How do I apply for WIC?

WIC is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and is operated through local clinics by state WIC agencies and Indian Tribal Nations. To apply for WIC, contact your state or local WIC agency via the [state agency website or toll-free number](#).

The WIC agency will inform you about documents necessary to apply and conduct an appointment to confirm eligibility and enroll your household in WIC.

What must I show to apply for WIC?

Grandparents and other caregivers need to show their identification and proof that they live at their address, that the child lives with them, and that they are responsible for the child. A caregiver enrolling an infant or child must sign the Rights & Responsibilities document, which includes a statement that “I have legal authorization to provide eligibility information and to consent to medical treatment for the child/infant listed.” Legal authorization can include a [power of attorney or delegation of parental authority](#) from the parents or a [health care authorization form](#); it is not restricted to court-ordered legal custody. In some communities, the caregiver may be required to share these legal documents and in others, the Rights & Responsibilities statement will be enough.

What are the income requirements to qualify for WIC?

Your family is automatically income-eligible for WIC if your household or the child in your care participates in Medicaid or SNAP. You are also income-eligible for WIC if you have a moderate-to-low income (household income at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, as displayed in Table 1). For the purposes of WIC, “household income” is usually defined as the income of all members of the household.

However, there are situations in which the child could be counted as a household of one, such as when a child is in the legal custody of the child welfare system and that system placed the child with you. If you have that type of caregiving arrangement, ask your child welfare case worker for assistance accessing WIC.

Table 1. WIC Income Eligibility Guidelines (185% of the Federal Poverty Level), July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024

	Annual Income	Monthly Income
Household of 1	\$26,973	\$2,248
Household of 2	\$36,482	\$3,041
Household of 3	\$45,991	\$3,833
Household of 4	\$55,500	\$4,625
Each Additional Member Add	+ \$9,509	+ \$793

Notes: Unborn children are counted in the household total. Income limits are higher for households in Alaska and Hawaii because the poverty guidelines are higher in those states.

Source: USDA FNS. (2023). WIC Publication of the 2023-2024 Income Eligibility Guidelines. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/income-eligibility-guidelines-2023-24>.

Will my Social Security check be impacted if I enroll in WIC?

Your Social Security check will NOT be reduced if you get WIC.

Does my or the child’s immigration status impact our ability to qualify for WIC?

Infants and children are eligible for WIC regardless of their immigration status or that of their caregivers.

Can my household participate in WIC and other nutrition programs at the same time?

Yes, you and your household can participate in WIC and other food programs, including [SNAP](#), [school meals](#), [senior congregate meals](#), [home-delivered meals \(aka Meals on Wheels\)](#), the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), and the Food

Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), at the same time. You can also receive food from food banks or pantries.

This resource was authored Geri Henchy, Director, Nutrition Policy and Early Childhood Programs, and her team at the [Food Research & Action Center](#). The Network team, including Ana Beltran and Maari Weiss, provided helpful feedback, as did Gail Engel and Sarah Smalls, who are both Network subject matter experts, Network management committee members, and GRAND Voice grandparent caregivers.

The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center (Network) helps government agencies and nonprofits in states, tribes, and territories work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries to improve supports and services for families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so. For more information, please visit www.GKSNetwork.org.

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) improves the nutrition, health, and wellbeing of people struggling against poverty-related hunger in the United States through advocacy, partnerships, and by advancing bold and equitable policy solutions. For more information about FRAC, or to sign up for FRAC's e-newsletters, go to www.frac.org.

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