



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

April 2024

### **WIC 50th Anniversary**

Since its establishment in 1974, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) has been a fundamental public health investment for growing families in California and across the nation. Food insecurity is a critical social driver of health. Access to nutritious foods, as provided by programs like WIC, greatly contributes to a healthy start in life and overall well-being. Increasing access to nutritious foods is a key strategy for reducing chronic diseases and the associated health costs throughout a person's life.

Optimal nutrition during pregnancy, breastfeeding, and the first five years of life greatly influences birth outcomes and a child's ability to grow and thrive. Preparing children for success is a vision all Californians share, and WIC has been a comprehensive and cost-effective program, dedicated to improving both child and maternal health outcomes and chronic disease prevention.

WIC participation is shown to reduce fetal deaths, infant mortality, low birthweight rates, and anemia in children, as well as improving physical and cognitive growth in infants and children. Pregnant WIC participants receive prenatal care earlier and pregnant and postpartum participants both experience improved health outcomes.

In California, WIC serves nearly 1 million participants each month across 84 local agencies – half of babies born in California are enrolled in the program. WIC local agencies tailor services to the evolving needs of those they serve. The program leverages advancements in technology and nutrition science to enhance its food package and modernize services with a focus on innovation, community-based partnerships and health equity. WIC local offices were especially pivotal during the COVID-19 pandemic and disrupted global supply chains, swiftly adapting their services to ensure families continued to receive nutrition support.

Through its referral services, WIC is instrumental in connecting families to critical resources, including Medi-Cal, CalFresh, CalWORKs, immunizations, child care, domestic violence and child abuse resources, and housing, legal, vocational, and educational assistance. The WIC program also supports local businesses and economies with over \$70 million spent monthly in over 3,800 grocery stores, military commissaries, and farmers markets in the state.

On the heels of Public Health Week, I join California families, WIC staff, and program partners in celebrating the 50th anniversary of WIC's vital work to promote the health and well-being of Californians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gavin Newsom", written over a horizontal line.

Gavin Newsom