

What is WIC?

*An Introduction to the
WIC Program*

Module 1:

July 2010

ITCA WIC Knowledge Modules

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Instructions for Use

1. Read the Introduction.
2. Read each Section.
3. Complete the Self -Evaluation at the end of each section.
4. If you have trouble answering the questions, read the Section again until you understand or ask your director for more information.
5. Make arrangements with your director at the Skill Checks to demonstrate your ability to apply your knowledge in clinic.
6. After you complete all of the Self-Evaluations and Skill Checks, make arrangements with your director to complete the Unit Assessment.
7. Submit the original Unit Assessment to ITCA. Copies should be kept at the local agency.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the WIC program!

Now that you are working for the WIC Program, you probably have many questions about WIC.

- ◇ What is WIC?
- ◇ When did it start and why?
- ◇ Who can be on the WIC program?
- ◇ How does the program work?
- ◇ What will I be doing?



This unit will help to answer these questions. You will gain a general understanding of how the program works in your agency and what your role will be. There are three sections in this unit. They are:

Section 1-1: About the WIC Program

Section 1-2: WIC Eligibility and Services

Section 1-3: How WIC works

For each Section you will:

- ◇ Read the section
- ◇ Complete the Self-Evaluations
- ◇ Complete Skill Checks and discuss with your Director

Objectives

- ✓ The WIC staff person will be able to describe when and why the WIC Program was started.
- ✓ The WIC staff person will be able to identify who can participate in the WIC Program and what services Clients receive from WIC.
- ✓ The WIC staff person will be able to describe the different steps a WIC client goes through from screening for eligibility, through monthly participation and finally to graduation from the program.
- ✓ The WIC staff person will be able to describe what the different WIC staff persons in your agency do to provide WIC services.

1 – 1 About the WIC Program

Objectives

- ✓ The WIC staff person will be able to give a general description of the WIC Program.
- ✓ The WIC staff person will be able to describe when and why the WIC Program was started.
- ✓ The WIC staff person will be able to identify the goals and objectives of the WIC Program.
- ✓ The WIC staff person will be able to describe some benefits to clients of the WIC Program.
- ✓ The WIC staff person will be able to find the location of her/his local WIC agency on the map of the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. (ITCA) WIC agencies.

Overview

1. ITCA WIC Outreach Pamphlet, “WIC, A Healthy Part of Your Family!”
2. A map of your local WIC agency's geographic area.

What is WIC?

WIC stands for the **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children**. Read the ITCA outreach handout before going further in this section.

WIC is a temporary assistance program for:

- ◇ Pregnant women
- ◇ Women who have recently had a baby (Breastfeeding or Postpartum women)
- ◇ Infants
- ◇ Children under five years of age

The women, infants, and children must meet income guidelines and have a nutritional need for the program.

The WIC Program provides:

- ✓ Nutritious foods
- ✓ Nutrition and breastfeeding education
- ✓ Referrals to health and social services

People who receive WIC benefits are called **clients**. The people who receive benefits on behalf of children clients are called **caregivers**. The WIC Program is available to eligible clients without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

The purpose of the WIC Program is to prevent health problems and to improve the health of program clients during critical times of growth and development. WIC has a commitment to help clients improve their health status through better nutrition.



Why was the WIC Program developed?

How WIC started

In the 1960s, several nutrition programs were established to fight hunger and malnutrition in America. These programs included:

- ◇ The Food Stamp Program
- ◇ The National School Breakfast Program
- ◇ The Commodity Supplemental Food Program

Despite these programs, hunger and malnutrition still existed in our country. Several national studies showed that minorities, teens, and low-income families had poor nutrition. It also showed that iron-deficiency anemia was widespread and pregnant and breastfeeding women had low protein intakes.

The Establishment of WIC

In 1972, legislation was passed to establish the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), as an amendment to the Child Nutrition Act. The name of the program has since been changed to the Special Supplemental *Nutrition* Program for Women, Infants and Children.

In 1978, the Child Nutrition Act of 1969 was amended to further clarify the legislative intent of the WIC Program:

"Congress finds that substantial numbers of pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants and young children from families with inadequate incomes are at special risk with respect to their physical and mental health by reason of inadequate nutrition or health care or both. It is, therefore, the purpose of the program to provide supplemental foods and nutrition education...The program shall serve as an adjunct to good health care, during critical times of growth and development to prevent the occurrence of health problems and improve the health status of these persons."



Congress thus created the WIC Program with the goals of:

- ◇ Reducing complications of pregnancy;
- ◇ Reducing iron-deficiency anemia in women, infants and children;
- ◇ Decreasing the prevalence of low birth weight infants;
- ◇ Promoting optimum growth and development of infants and young children;
- ◇ Promoting breastfeeding initiation and duration.

The objectives, which were established to help the WIC Program reach its goals, were:

- ◇ The provision of supplemental foods and nutrition and breastfeeding education to eligible persons;
- ◇ The provision of benefits as an adjunct to good health care during critical times of growth and development.

Initially WIC was a small two-year pilot project. The first WIC agency opened in 1974 in Pineville, Kentucky. In 1975, Congress converted what had been a small experiment into a major program, expanding the WIC Program to serve other areas. Nationally, WIC serves nearly 5 million women, infants and children in all 50 states as well as Guam, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa. There is also a WIC program for military personnel stationed overseas.

WIC with Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc.

The Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administer the WIC Program. USDA provides grants to state health departments and to American Indian tribal organizations. State health departments and tribal organizations then distribute these funds to their local agencies who are responsible for providing WIC services to clients.

In Arizona there are three WIC Programs

1. Arizona Department of Health Services
2. Inter Tribal Council of Arizona
3. Navajo Nation

The state programs are responsible for:

- ◇ Developing contracts with and distributing funds to local agencies (tribes, counties or health agencies)
- ◇ Developing plans for how the WIC program is administered in the local agencies
- ◇ Monitoring the local agencies to ensure they are meeting all rules and regulations

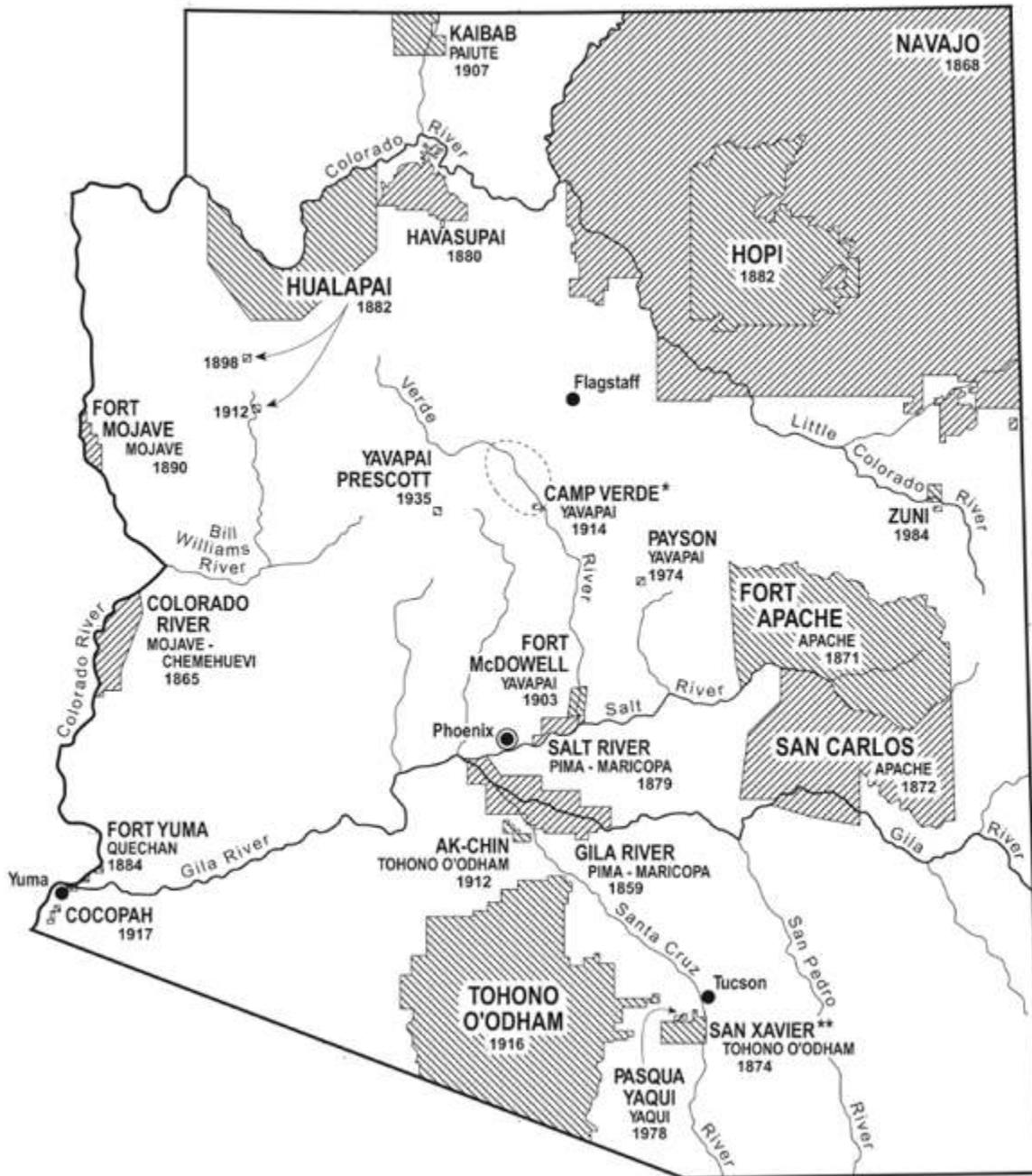
Facts about the ITCA WIC Program

- ✓ Year program started: 1985
- ✓ Number of local agencies: 12
- ✓ Number of participants served: 11,500

On the next page is a map of the Indian reservations in Arizona. Names and addresses of the local WIC agencies can be found in the ITCA WIC ID Folders.

Your Local WIC Agency

Ask your WIC Director for a map of your agency's geographic area. Each agency operates sites where WIC services are delivered. These locations are called clinics. Your agency's clinics and the number of clients your WIC agency serves every month should also be available from your WIC director.



The Benefits of WIC

Numerous studies have been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the WIC program. Their findings have shown a positive effect on the pregnancy outcomes, growth and development of infants and children, and the overall health and nutrition status of WIC families.

The studies have shown:

- ✓ WIC participation by pregnant women resulted in significantly increased head size of their infants. Head size is related to brain growth.
- ✓ Birth weights of infants born to WIC mothers were greater than those born to non-WIC mothers. There was also a decrease in the incidence of low birth weight (LBW) infants.
- ✓ Four and five year old children whose mothers participated in WIC during pregnancy had better vocabulary scores. Children who participated in WIC after their first birthday had better number memory.
- ✓ Children enrolled in WIC are better immunized and more likely to have a regular source of medical care.
- ✓ Women who participate in WIC while pregnant enroll in medical care earlier in their pregnancies and receive more prenatal care.
- ✓ WIC families buy more nutritious foods than non-WIC families. WIC improves the diets of infants and children by increasing their average intake of iron and Vitamin C. Women enrolled on WIC have improved intakes of many nutrients, including protein, iron, calcium and Vitamin C.

In terms of dollar savings, the following was shown:

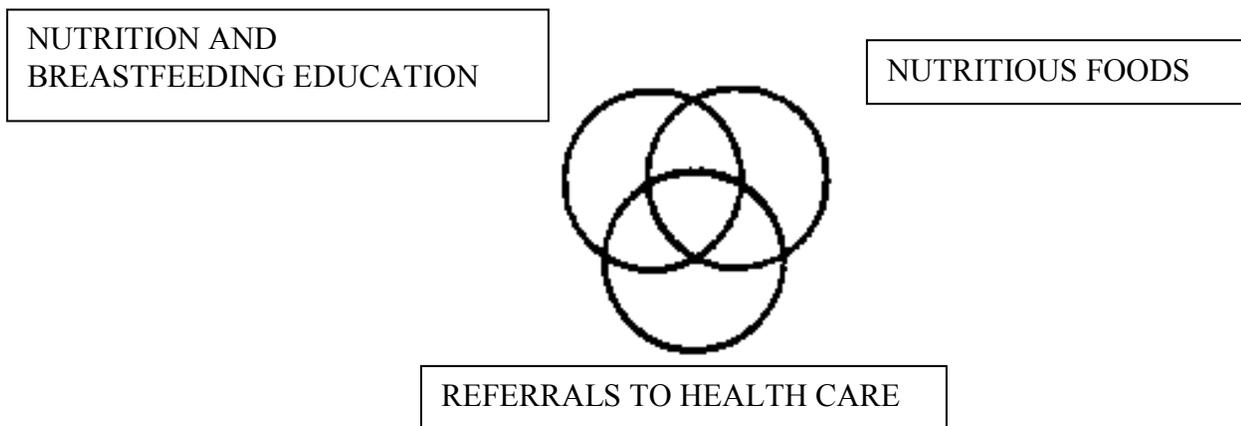
- ◇ For every dollar spent on a WIC pregnant woman, there was a savings of approximately three dollars in avoided medical costs for hospitalization of low birth weight infants. (Harvard School of Public Health, 1979)
- ◇ For every \$1.00 spent to serve a pregnant woman in the WIC Program, the associated savings in Medicaid costs during the first 60 days after birth ranged from \$1.77 (Florida) to \$3.13 (North Carolina) for newborns and mothers, and from \$2.84 (Texas) to \$3.90 (North Carolina) for newborns only. (USDA WIC/Medicaid Study, 1987-88)



Why has the WIC Program shown such success?

The success of the WIC Program is due to the unique combination and integration of services it offers to WIC clients.

- ◇ Healthy foods to supplement the client’s diet
- ◇ Practical nutrition and breastfeeding education to accompany these foods
- ◇ Access to good health care during crucial times of growth and development



By receiving WIC benefits, clients improve their diets and their health. They also learn cost-effective ways to select and prepare nutritious foods and healthy eating patterns which will continue providing positive health benefits to themselves and their families long after they graduate from the WIC Program.



Self-Evaluation

1. Describe the WIC Program to a friend or family member. Explain when and why it was started and the goals of the program. Include a description of who is eligible and what services are provided.

2. Find your local WIC agency on the state map. List all the clinics your local agency operates.

3. Name three reasons why the WIC program has been shown to be successful.

1 – 2 WIC Eligibility and Services

Objectives

- ✓ The Community Nutrition Worker (CNW) will be able to list the 4 criteria used to screen applicants for WIC Program eligibility.
- ✓ The CNW will be able to identify the 3 basic services of the WIC Program.
- ✓ The CNW will be able to describe the goals of nutrition education in the WIC Program.
- ✓ The CNW will be able to identify some of the foods provided by WIC checks to clients.

Overview

1. ITCA WIC Policy and Procedure Manual (State Plan)
2. AZ WIC Programs Food List

Who is eligible to participate in the WIC Program?

Applicants for participation in the WIC Program are screened for eligibility on the following criteria:

1. **Category:**
Does the applicant fall into a category served by the WIC Program?
 - ✓ Pregnant (prenatal) woman,
 - ✓ Breastfeeding woman for up to 1 year after delivery,
 - ✓ Non-breastfeeding woman for up to 6 months after termination of pregnancy (i.e., live birth, still birth, fetal death, therapeutic abortion, spontaneous abortion/miscarriage),
 - ✓ Infant (child under 1 year of age),
 - ✓ Child 1 up to 5 years of age.

2. **Residency/service population:**
Is the applicant's current address in the correct area to be served by this particular WIC agency?

3. **Income:**
Is the applicant a member of a family whose income falls within the WIC income guidelines?

4. **Nutritional need:**
Does the applicant have a nutritional and/or medical problem that indicates nutritional need and could be improved by participation in the WIC Program?

All four criteria must be met and entered into the computer for the individual to receive program benefits. The certification procedure is performed at no cost to the applicant.

What services does the WIC Program provide participants?

WIC provides three specific services:

1. Nutrition and breastfeeding education
2. Supplemental foods
3. Referrals to health care



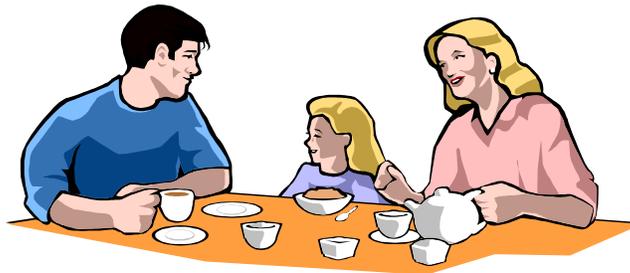
1. Nutrition and Breastfeeding Education

Nutrition and breastfeeding education is:

- ◇ Available to all adult WIC clients and to the parents/caretakers of infant and child clients
- ◇ Designed to be easily understood
- ◇ Practical for clients, considering their nutritional needs, lifestyles and cultural preferences

The goals of nutrition and breastfeeding education in WIC are to:

- ✓ Emphasize the relationship between a good prenatal diet and a positive pregnancy outcome for both the mother and the infant;
- ✓ Encourage more women to choose to breastfeed and to provide support so that the women can successfully breastfeed for as long as they want;
- ✓ Promote good infant health by following the infant feeding recommendations;
- ✓ Emphasize the role of proper nutrition in the promotion of good health;
- ✓ Help the clients who is at nutritional risk develop better food habits and help prevent nutrition-related problems;
- ✓ Provide counseling by a nutritionist for those clients with special risk conditions.



Who provides the nutrition and breastfeeding education?

Trained nutrition paraprofessionals (CNWs) provide nutrition and breastfeeding education and counseling.

Registered Dietitians (R.D.) or nutritionists are employed by WIC to coordinate the nutrition education activities and to counsel clients with special needs.

How often does the participant get nutrition education?

Each WIC client is provided individual nutrition counseling and/or group education at least two times during a six-month certification.

2. Supplemental Foods

WIC foods are:

- ✓ Selected to meet some of the specific nutritional needs of pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants and young children.
- ✓ Provided to clients at no cost.
- ✓ Meant to supplement an individual's diet, not provide the total nutrient needs for that individual.

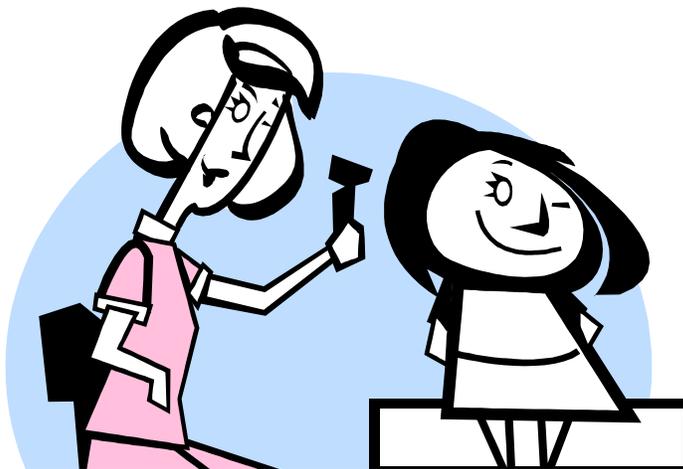
The specific foods provided by the ITCA WIC Program are shown in the Arizona WIC Programs Food List.

3. Linkages to Health Care

A major benefit of the WIC Program is the linkage to health care for families who might otherwise have little contact with medical services. WIC encourages all clients to obtain complete preventive care, and WIC staff often work closely with staff from the local Indian Health Services Prenatal Program and the Well Child Program to assist applicants and clients in obtaining this ongoing preventive care.

If an applicant for WIC is having problems locating a health care provider, WIC staff can make referrals to local health care providers and service agencies.

Studies have shown that WIC clients are more likely to visit health clinics for early prenatal care and periodic health exams for their children.





Self-Evaluation

1. Name the 4 criteria used to screen applicants for WIC Program eligibility.

2. The 3 basic services of the WIC Program are:

3. List one nutrition education goal of the WIC Program.

4. Circle foods listed below which are provided by the ITCA WIC Program:

Bread	Eggs	Cereal	Milk
Broccoli	Orange Juice	Hamburger	Peanut Butter
Dried beans	White Rice	Yogurt	Cheese
Infant Formula	Tortillas	Tuna	Carrots
Canned Chicken	Frozen Peas	Canned Beans	Pasta

1-3 How WIC Works

Objectives

- ✓ The Community Nutrition Worker (CNW) will be able to describe the stages of participation for WIC clients from screening through disqualification.
- ✓ The CNW will be able to give a description of the steps followed at an appointment to screen for eligibility.

Materials and Supplies

1. Local agency policy and procedure manual
2. ITCA WIC Policy and Procedure Manual

The WIC Process

WIC agencies normally conduct outreach activities in their communities to educate the public about the WIC Program and to encourage potential WIC clients to apply. When a person inquires about the program, they are given application information and a screening appointment for the applicant.

At this appointment the applicant will be screened for WIC eligibility using the 4 criteria of **category, residency, income and nutritional need**. After applicants have gone through the certification process and have been found eligible for the program, they are enrolled in the program. They receive an orientation to the WIC program, checks for the WIC foods, referrals to health and social services and nutrition education and breastfeeding support.

The client is given monthly, bi-monthly or tri-monthly follow-up WIC appointments during which they will receive their WIC checks as well as nutrition education. Each WIC client is eligible to participate for a limited period of time. This is called the client's certification (eligibility) period. At the end of the client's certification period, they are given a re-certification (recheck of eligibility) appointment. At this re-certification appointment, the client is either found eligible to continue to participate in the WIC Program, or found ineligible and disqualified (graduated) from the program.

If the client is found eligible to continue WIC participation, the same process of monthly, bimonthly or tri-monthly appointments for nutrition education and check pick-up continues until the next re-certification appointment.

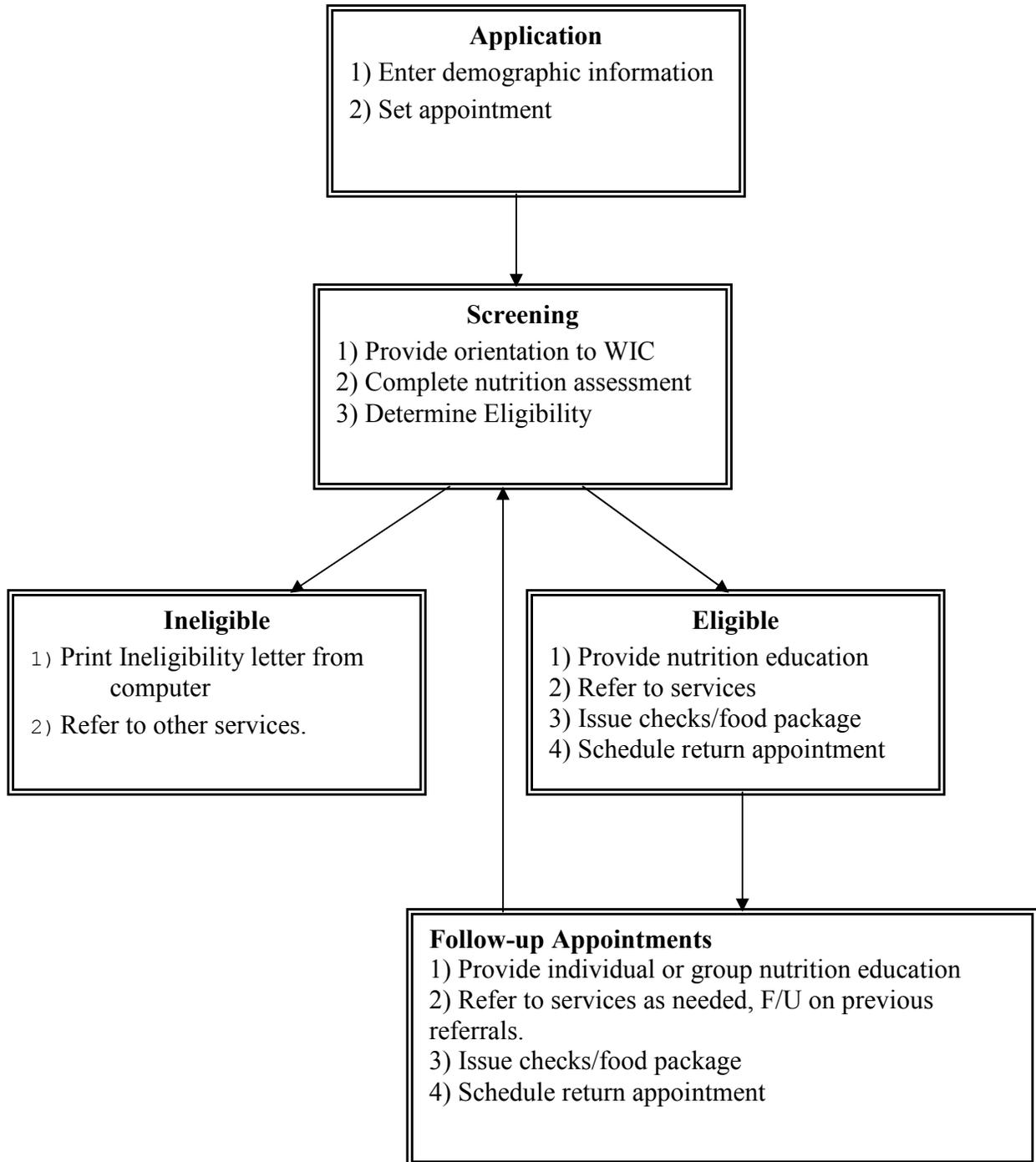
Eligibility and Certification Periods

The eligibility and certification periods vary depending on the client. They are listed below:

Category	Eligibility Period	Length of Certification
Pregnant Women	Conception to 6 weeks postpartum	same
Postpartum Women (not breastfeeding)	Delivery to 6 months postpartum (until infant is 6 months)	6 months
Breastfeeding Women	Delivery to 1 year postpartum (until infant turns 1 year)	12 months
Infants	Birth to 1 year of age	1 year
Children	1 to 5 years of age	6 months

Below is a simple diagram of the schedule of activities for WIC participation.

HOW WIC WORKS



At each visit, the WIC staff should let the client know what to expect and the approximate length of time for the appointment. Clients are encouraged to take part in WIC counseling and education activities.

Eligibility Screening

At the appointments for initial certification and re-certification, certain procedures must be followed. Below is a general description of the steps followed in eligibility screening. The order may vary from agency to agency.

New Certifications or Re-certifications

Greeting

1. The WIC Staff person greets the applicant and gives a brief overview of what to expect during the appointment.

Screening

2. The applicant provides current medical information from a qualified health care provider or the WIC staff completes the height, weight and hemoglobin measurements.
3. The applicant provides information to the WIC staff which is entered into the computer regarding:
 - ✓ Name and address
 - ✓ Ethnicity and tribal affiliation
 - ✓ Income and Household size
 - ✓ Pregnancy and Breastfeeding history
 - ✓ Smoking and alcohol use
 - ✓ Dietary intake and vitamin use
4. The WIC staff person verifies that the applicant's address and income meet current program requirements. If the applicant's income or residence does not meet the current program requirements, the WIC staff person will print the Ineligibility Letter from the computer and give to the client.
5. If the applicant's residency and income meet the current requirements, the WIC staff person reviews the applicant's medical information and questionnaire to assign applicable nutritional risks.

Certification

6. If the applicant meets all 4 criteria for eligibility, the applicant is eligible to participate in the WIC Program and is certified for the WIC program. The applicant is now called a client in the WIC program.

Food Package

7. The client is given a food package (checks) with specially selected foods that provide the optimal nutrition for the client's category, preference and nutrition risk.

Counseling

8. From the nutritional risks identified, the WIC staff person develops a plan for nutrition education during the certification.
9. The WIC staff person provides information to the client in an organized, easily understood manner. The staff person helps the client choose a nutrition goal and behavior change to improve their diet or habits. This may or may not be done at the certification visit depending on the local agency and time constraints.

Orientation

10. The WIC staff person will explain rights and responsibilities of the client, describes what to expect at subsequent visits, and how to use the checks. For all new clients, substance abuse education will be provided.

Referrals

11. The WIC staff person makes referrals to the WIC nutritionist and to other agencies and services as appropriate.

Scheduling Next Appointment

12. The client is given a return WIC appointment.

Follow Up Appointments

At the WIC appointments that fall in the months between certification appointments, the client may receive individual counseling, attend a nutrition education class, and/or pick up checks. At these appointments, the following steps are generally followed:

Greeting

1. The client is greeted and informed as to what to expect at this appointment.

Nutrition Education

2. At most appointments, the client receives an individual counseling session, attends a nutrition education class, or receives nutrition information in other ways.

Food Package Issuance

3. The client is provided with the appropriate food package (checks). Client questions concerning the food package (checks) use can be addressed at this time.

Scheduling Next Appointment

4. The client is provided with a return appointment.

Documentation

5. The WIC staff person documents contact and all other information in the computer.

Documentation of Eligibility Criteria

Documentation is an important aspect of eligibility certification, food package issuance, and nutrition education. It serves as a record of information assessed and services provided, and as a communication tool to let others know what took place at the WIC appointment. Documentation can provide:

- ◇ Proof that the client met all four criteria for WIC Program eligibility;
- ◇ The staff person's assessment of the client's nutritional status;
- ◇ A summary of the steps the WIC staff person and the client completed to promote positive change;
- ◇ A history of the nutritional services provided to the client, so there will be continuity and reinforcement rather than a duplication of efforts;
- ◇ Protection for the educator should it need to be shown that appropriate information was provided to the client;
- ◇ A record of food package issuance.

Where is documentation stored?

Almost all documentation is entered into the STARS computer system. STARS stands for Shared Tribal Automated Reporting System. There are some forms that need to be kept in weekly files, monthly files, or annual files (depending on agency) or binders at your local agency.

These forms must be kept in weekly files, monthly files, or annual files:

- ◇ ITCA WIC Rules and Regulations/Sharing Information Release Form
- ◇ Breastfeeding Equipment User's Agreement
- ◇ Proxy Certification Forms
- ◇ Self-Declare Forms (Income, Residency and Identification)

These forms must be kept in binders:

- ◇ Special Formula Authorization Form
- ◇ Milk Alternative Request Forms
- ◇ Emergency Formula Issuance Log

***All forms must be kept for 3 years and 7 months.**

The WIC Identification Folder

The WIC ID folder is used as an identification folder at both the WIC site and at the grocery store when the checks are used. Directions for completing this folder and explaining its use to the client will be covered in further units.

How WIC Works in Your Agency

Each WIC agency in the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona serves clients in slightly different ways, depending on the number of clients served, the number of staff providing services, the geographic locations of the clinics, the quality of the work space and the clinic's schedule. As a result, the procedures used in your WIC agency may not be exactly the same as discussed earlier.



Self Evaluation

1. Meet with the director.
 - Describe your clinic observations.
 - List the steps the staff followed in certifying clients and delivering nutrition education and the food package (checks).
 - Ask questions about how WIC works at your agency.

2. Make arrangements with the director to watch the WIC staff at your agency as they:
 - Schedule screening appointments for WIC program applicants.
 - Carry out screening appointments for applicants. Observe the WIC staff:
 - ✓ Screen potential clients for eligibility based on category, residency, income and nutritional need.
 - ✓ Assess client's problem areas and provide counseling.
 - ✓ Make appropriate referrals.
 - ✓ Provide a program orientation to clients, provide food package (checks) and explain check use.
 - ✓ Provide return appointments for clients.
 - ✓ Document these client contacts.
 - Provide education at follow-up appointments through classes and through individual contacts.
 - Carry out re-certification appointments and re-certify clients.

Name: _____
Date: _____
Score: ____/25 points
Percent correct: _____

Unit 1: What is WIC? Unit Assessment

DIRECTIONS: Circle the correct answer.

(2 points each)

1. The purpose of WIC is to:
 - a. Improve the health of program clients during critical times of growth and development.
 - b. Provide nutritious foods, nutrition and breastfeeding education, and appropriate referrals to other health programs.
 - c. Both a and b.

2. WIC stands for:
 - a. Special Supplemental *Nutrition* Program for Women, Infants and Children
 - b. The Women, Infants and Children Program
 - c. Special Supplemental *Food* Program for Women, Infants and Children

3. Other nutrition programs are:
 - a. Commodity Supplemental Food Program
 - b. Food Stamp Program
 - d. National School Breakfast Program
 - e. All of the above

4. One of the goals of the WIC program is to:
 - a. Decrease the number of low birth weight infants
 - b. Provide formula to all babies
 - c. Provide nutritious foods to elderly people

5. Studies have shown that WIC:
 - a. Decreases the number of low birth weight infants
 - b. Helps children get regular medical care
 - c. Helps WIC families choose more nutritious foods
 - d. All of the above

6. Write in the 5 client categories served by WIC. **(5 pts)**

7. Write in the four criteria for eligibility for the WIC program. **(4pts.)**

8. Write in the three services provided by the WIC program. **(3 pts)**

9. Circle the foods that are provided by the WIC program **(2 pts)**

White Bread	Eggs	Cereal	Milk
Broccoli	Granola Bars	Hamburger	Peanut Butter
Dry beans	Brown Rice	Yogurt	Cheese
Infant Formula	Tortillas	Tuna	Carrots
Canned Chicken	Canned Beans	Pasta	Orange Juice

10. The form that you must explain and have the client sign and date at each new certification and re-certification is the

_____ **(1 pt)**

Answer Key for Self-Evaluations

Self-Evaluation 1-1 Answers

1. See pages 6-12 for pertinent information you should have covered.
2. Ask your WIC Director for correctness.
3. - Healthy foods to supplement the client's diet
- practical nutrition and breastfeeding education to accompany these foods
- access to good health care during crucial times of growth and development

Self-Evaluation 1-2 Answers

1. Residence, category, income, nutrition risk
2. Supplemental foods, nutrition and breastfeeding education, referrals to health and social services
3. Any of those listed on page 17
4. Eggs, cereal, milk, broccoli, orange juice, peanut butter, dry beans, brown rice, cheese, infant formula, tortillas, tuna, carrots and canned beans.

Self-Evaluation 1-3 Answers

Discuss with your WIC Director.