

# Secure Current Cash Value Benefit Funding for WIC Participants

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**The Cash Value Benefit (CVB)** allows WIC participants to purchase vegetables and fruits as part of their WIC food package. The monthly CVB is \$9 per child and \$11 for pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women.



## What is WIC?

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) focuses on providing supplemental foods to address malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies commonly seen in low-income pregnant women, infants, and children up to age 5. WIC provides access to a variety of nutritious foods, including fruits and vegetables, to approximately 6.3 million people in the United States (Oliveira).

## The WIC Food Package

The WIC food package has evolved and been revised by the USDA over the years to align with dietary guidance recommendations from National Academy of Medicine, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA). The National WIC Association has supported these revisions. The food packages WIC prescribes to mothers, babies, and young children today provides them with a monthly benefit of specified vegetables and fruits (in the form of cash value benefit), eggs, milk, yogurt, whole grains, legumes ("Review of WIC food packages: improving balance and choice").



## Positive Health Outcomes related to the Cash Value Benefit

In 2009, the WIC food package introduced Cash Value Benefits (CVB) that allowed for the purchase of vegetables and fruits. This change in the food package increased access to fruits and vegetables, which led to improvement in overall diet quality in WIC participants, who reported reduced intake of sodium, saturated fat, and sugar. Better health outcomes and higher scores were noted for WIC participants on the **Healthy Eating Index** after these food package changes. WIC families' food purchasing habits also became healthier ("Review of WIC food packages: improving balance and choice").

## The Current CVB is not Enough

- The current CVB does not align with NASEM or DGA recommendations or WIC participants self-identified needs.
- NASEM recommends WIC participants be provided with \$46-\$90 monthly, which is far more than the \$9-\$11 monthly normally provided ("Review of WIC food packages: improving balance and choice.").
- If funding were not a concern, top value CVB would be priority for USDA, per NASEM ("Review of WIC food packages: improving balance and choice.").
- 83% of WIC participants declared the CVB benefits (of \$9-\$11/month for fruits and vegetables) as "not enough" (Brian D.).



## Latest Policy Has Impacted the WIC CVB

On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the **American Rescue Plan Act of 2021** into law. This law allowed for temporary increases of the CVB to up to \$35 dollars per WIC participant. WIC State agencies choosing to opt-in were allowed to increase the CVB as early as April 2021 through September 2021 (Ritchie L, et. al).

Then on Sept. 30, 2021, President Biden signed the **Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act of 2022** into law. For the first quarter of FY 2022, all WIC state agencies must increase CVB amounts to **\$24 for child participants, \$43 for pregnant and postpartum participants, and \$47 for fully and partially breastfeeding participants**. These amounts more accurately align with the NASEM recommendations levels, which are adjusted for inflation. The temporary increase in the WIC Cash-Value Benefit is set to end on September 30, 2022 (Ritchie L, et. al).

"The higher cash value benefit in the WIC program is beneficial to families because it increases our chances of eating a diverse diet and instilling healthy eating patterns at a young age. It has helped me turn to healthier choices when I'm hungry while nursing and my son gets to grow up in a home where fruits and vegetables are served at every meal." 2 (NWA Monday Update 2/7/2022)  
- WIC Participant, Utah

## MAKE THE CURRENT CVB AMOUNTS PERMANENT

- **Participant Retention:** 14% of WIC participants indicated that they were unlikely to continue to access WIC services if the WIC benefit bump expired (Brian D.)
- The temporary increase to the CVB has helped to meet the requests from WIC participants for additional help securing access to fruits and vegetables, while helping to offset the inflation seen in produce ("Consumer price index summary").





# WIC Improves Health

The CVB was last updated from \$8 to \$9 for children over ten years ago. The WIC food packages need to be updated to keep pace with inflation and address increased food insecurity across the U.S. The consumer price index increased 7.5% for the 12 months ending January 2022, the highest increase in 40 years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics ("Consumer price index summary"). Coupling recommendations from the 2017 NASEM Report with inflation realities in the consumer market, the USDA needs Congress to approve an updated budget to secure current CVB funding for WIC participants ("Review of WIC food packages: improving balance and choice"). The temporary CVB increase has proven to be well-received by WIC participants, and effective in increasing fruit and vegetable consumption (Ritchie et. al).

## Secure CVB Funding

The WIC food packages advance health outcomes by addressing specific nutrient needs of infants, young children, and pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women ("Enhancing the WIC Food Package – Impacts and Recommendations to Advance Nutrition Security"). The WIC program effectively addresses food insecurity and maternal and child health outcomes for Americans. The USDA should secure current CVB funding for WIC participants, as noted in the revised WIC food package monthly allowances in Table.

Table: Revised WIC Food Package Monthly Allowances

Age Group	Monthly CVB
Fully/Mostly Breastfeeding Women (FP VII and FP V-B)	\$48
Postpartum Women (FP VI)	\$41
Pregnant Women (FP V-A)	\$48
Children Age 1-2 (FP IV-A)	\$35
Children Age 2-5 (FP IV-B)	\$38

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