



The Role of WIC in Public Health

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

NWA'S MISSION
NWA provides its members with tools and leadership to expand and sustain effective nutrition services for mothers and young children.

Overview

WIC is a preventive public health nutrition program that provides nutrition and breastfeeding education, nutritious foods, and improved access to regular health care and social services to low and moderate-income women and young children with, or at risk of developing, nutrition related health problems.

What is Public Health?

Public Health is the art and science dealing with the protection and improvement of community health by organized community effort and including preventive medicine and sanitary science.¹

Public health aims to prevent health-related problems from developing or progressing in entire populations. Public health professionals study how the health of a population is affected by genetics, the environment and personal choice. They also develop and implement educational programs, service-based programs like vaccine administration, and policies for specific target populations based on the assessed health problems and risk factors of the target populations. Target populations can range in size from the number of students in a classroom to all residents of a country.²

It is Important for the American Population to Be Healthy

A healthy population...

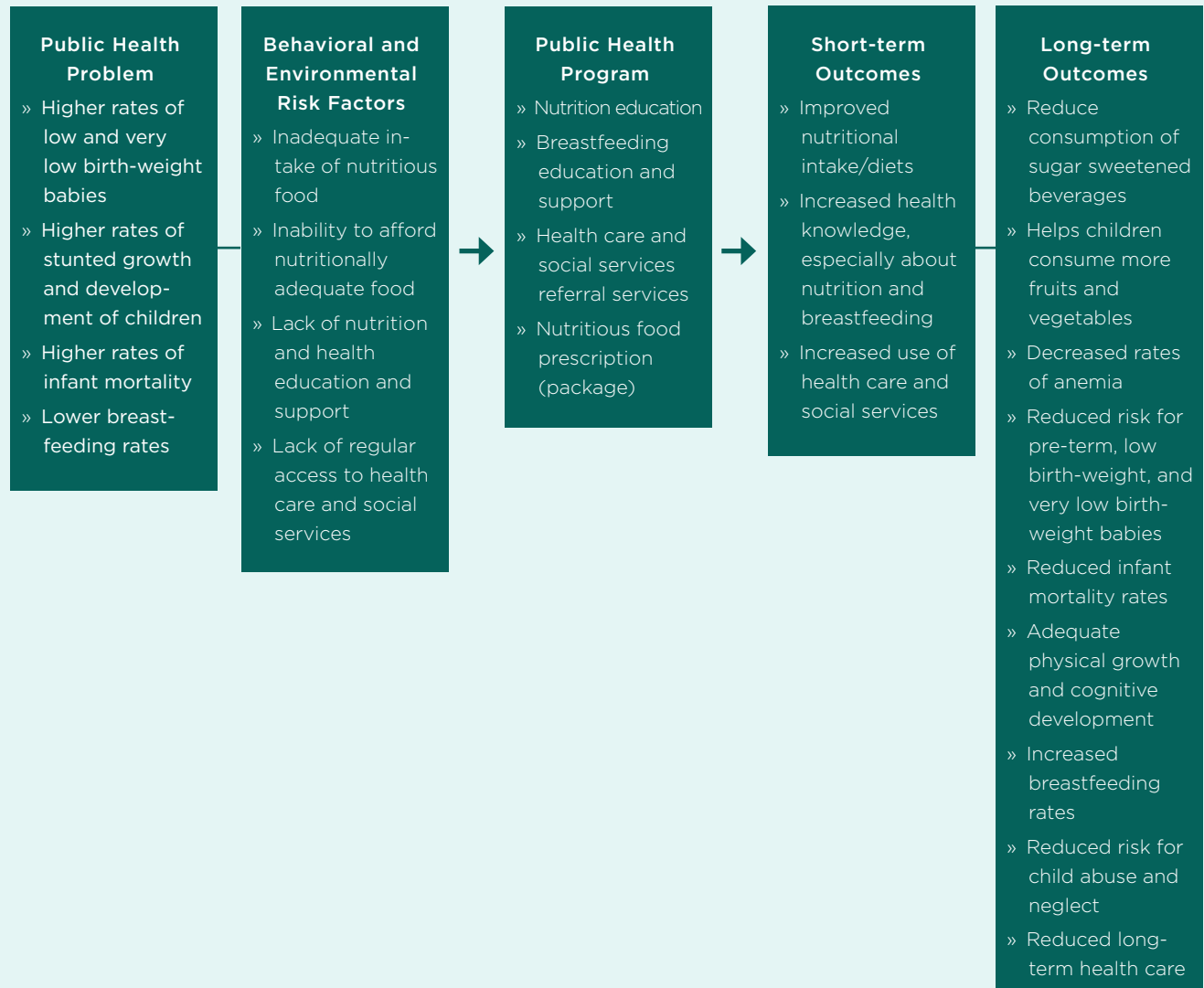
- » Ensures a productive and globally competitive workforce.
- » Enhances national security by providing a strong pool of young people physically and mentally capable of serving in the military.
- » Reduces health care costs by preventing diseases and injuries that are expensive to treat.
- » Enables citizens to pursue their American Dreams without hindrance by poor health.

The WIC Public Health Model

The WIC Program model was developed and modified over the years to target behavioral and environmental risk factors that contribute to pre-term and low birth-weight pregnancies, stunted childhood growth and development, infant mortality, and low breastfeeding rates in the United States. For over 40 years, WIC has been effective in reducing the burden of these public health problems for millions of families and the general population.

The WIC Public Health Model: Low-income Women, Infants, and Children

WIC has a number of short- and long-term health outcomes. The WIC Public Health Model illustrates WIC's impact.



WIC is an Important Piece of the Local Public Health System

WIC is housed within the state departments of health and operates inter-dependently with other public health programs. Providing referral services to health care and social services, WIC is a "gateway to the health care and social service systems," which enables more comprehensive health promotion and disease prevention in the WIC population.³

For more information on how WIC supports public health nutrition, see our fact sheet *WIC for a Stronger, Healthier America*.

References

1. Public health. 2012. In Merriam-Webster.com. Retrieved January 5 2012, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/publichealth>
2. What is Public Health? Retrieved January 5, 2012 from whatispublichealth.org
3. Devaney, B. (2007). WIC turns 35: Program effectiveness and future directions. Mathematica Policy Research.