

WIC Improves Availability of Nutritious Foods

WIC — the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children — provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health care and social services for millions of low-income families. Extensive research shows that participating in WIC leads to healthier babies, more nutritious diets and better health care for children, and higher academic achievement for students.

Eating a healthy diet can be difficult for many people because nutritious options are not readily available, easily accessible, or affordable in their communities. Many low-income and underserved communities have few stores that sell healthy food, especially high-quality fruits and vegetables.

WIC helps create healthier neighborhood food environments, improving access to fruits, vegetables, and whole grains for many low-income communities. To participate in WIC, stores must meet minimum food inventory requirements established by states.

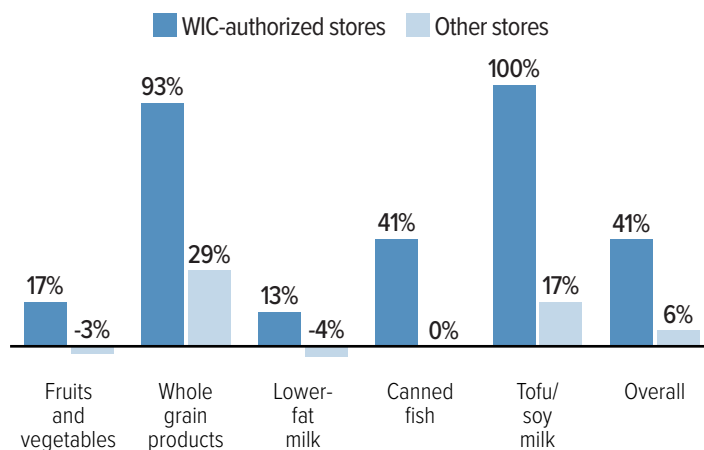
As a result of revisions to the WIC food package, all WIC-authorized grocery stores must stock at least two varieties of fruits, two varieties of vegetables, and at least one whole-grain cereal.

Studies show that the **revised requirements increased the supply of healthy foods, especially in low-income communities.** Within months of implementation, for example, WIC-approved convenience and grocery stores in Connecticut (particularly those in low-income areas) offered more and a wider variety of healthy foods, especially whole-grain products.

The requirements also improved the availability of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in small stores across Colorado, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, according to a separate study. Studies in Baltimore, Hartford, New Orleans, and Texas also found improved availability of healthier food in WIC-authorized stores.

Revised Food Packages Improved Availability and Variety of Healthy Foods in Small Grocery and Convenience Stores in Connecticut

Change in “healthy food supply” score*



*Score measures availability, variety, quality, and prices of WIC-approved foods.

For more information, visit: www.cbpp.org/wicworks