Highlighting the impact of multi-state research-to-policy efforts during COVID-19: Understanding perspectives and utilization of WIC adaptions in California and beyond

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Background

- The federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants and Children—also known as WIC—serves over 6.2 million low-income pregnant and postpartum women, infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk.
- WIC is administered across the U.S. by 89 State WIC Agencies.
- WIC is a critical source of nutrition support for young children up to age 5, pregnant and postpartum women, infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk.
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Methods

California-based study:
- Design: Longitudinal study of WIC participants (n=1770) from 7 WIC sites in California with ≥1 child ages 1-4 in May 2021 and ≥1 follow-up survey in Sep 2021 or May 2022.

Multi-state study in Connecticut, Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Nevada, New Hampshire and New Mexico:
- Design: Repeat cross-sectional surveys of WIC participants from 5 states with ≥1 child ages 1-4 before (Mar-Apr 2021, n=3,590) and during (Sep-Oct 2021, n=6,449) the CVB increase.

Results

California-based study:
- The increased CVB was associated with significantly greater satisfaction and household food security.
- Total FV intake decreased by 0.03 cups/day in the overall sample but increased by 0.23 cups/day among children with the lowest baseline intake.

Multi-state study:
- 84% were satisfied with the CVB increase to $35/month.
- 68% viewed the increase to $35/month as adequate, compared to 13% when the value was $9/month.
- After 3 months of change, household food security increased insignificantly by 1.6%.
- Child FV intake increased significantly by 0.27 cups/day.

Conclusions

- Studies documented benefits of increases to the WIC CVB for children.
- WIC policy increasing the value of WIC food packages to increase access to FV had the intended effects, lending support to making the increased CVB permanent.

References


A mother and son shopping for produce at a grocery store. Photo credit: Shutterstock.