

SECTION: FOOD DELIVERY SYSTEM

SUBJECT: Overview

ITEM: Authorized Foods

Policy

The authorized foods for program distribution shall contain designated amounts of specific nutrients that promote the health of the population served by WIC as indicated by relevant nutrition science, public health concerns, and cultural preferences. Criteria for authorizing products for inclusion in the WIC food packages are based on federal and state regulations and requirements, cultural acceptability, nutritive value, and cost containment.

Authority

7 CFR 246.10 (c), 22 CCR Section 40715

Nutrients

The WIC Program is designed to increase the consumption of foods that provide specific nutrients determined to be lacking in the diets of pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women and infants and children at nutrition risk. The specific nutrients are: protein, iron, calcium, and Vitamins C and A.

State responsibility

The State of California, Department of Health Services (DHS) WIC Program identifies the specific food items authorized in California, which meet USDA's nutrient requirements, and are available within the food groups determined by USDA. Federal regulations allow State agencies flexibility in establishing additional requirements for authorizing WIC foods. States are not required to authorize all foods which meet program requirements for each food group listed in the federal regulations.

Criteria for selection

Program participants shall purchase only the items/brands specified on the food instruments. Substitutions are *not* allowed. The specific foods authorized are determined by the State agency based on federal minimum nutrient requirements specified for the particular food group, the needs of the program, financial constraints, and space limitations on the face of the check. The State agency makes every effort to minimize the number of foods authorized in order to avoid confusion and difficulty in

complying with program rules for food instrument usage by program participants and authorized vendors. The State agency may authorize up to, but not more than, ten food types or ten food items with specific brand names on individual food instruments. The following criteria may be used by the State agency to designate the specific foods authorized:

1. nutrient content,
2. cost of the food;
3. appropriateness of the foods to the participant's category;
4. packaging;
5. participant preferences (including cultural eating habits);
6. variety;
7. statewide availability;
8. consistency with the nutrition message of the WIC Program;
9. ease of participant and grocer education; and
10. limitations of the WIC food instrument.

The authorized foods offered in California are listed in the "Shopping Guide, California WIC Authorized Foods" and the "California WIC Program Authorized Food List."

Special provisions

I. Product rebates

Infant Formula and Infant Cereal:

The WIC Program receives rebate income through contracts with food manufacturers. Therefore, the choice of some foods may be limited to only those for which the State has a sole source contract.

Similar foods produced by non-contract manufacturers which meet federal and state requirements (e.g. infant formulas) may be authorized, if medically indicated. Please refer to WPM Section 390-10, "Distribution of Formula for Medical Conditions."

II. Lactose-Reduced Milk

1. The low lactose food package will be issued to women and children identified by the WIC Nutrition Assistant (WNA) or Registered Dietitian (RD) as lactose intolerant. A doctor's prescription is not required.
2. When staff identifies a child between one and two years of age as lactose intolerant, the parent/guardian shall be advised to feed lactose-reduced or lactose-free whole milk.

3. Infants with lactose intolerance should receive the authorized contract soy formula or lactose-free formula.
4. The agency shall inform pregnant or lactating participants with lactose intolerance that they have the option either to:
 - (a) receive the lactose-reduced milk in the low-lactose food package from WIC;
or
 - (b) obtain the lactase enzyme through Medi-Cal via the TAR process to make their own lactose-reduced milk.

If the participant chooses the lactase enzyme, the local agency shall then issue the regular food package appropriate to the participant's category.