



## **Breastfeeding Promotion and Support National Changes with the New WIC Food Packages**

### **Reasons for Emphasis on Breastfeeding**

On July 1, 2009, the Utah WIC Program's food packages are changing to better meet the nutritional needs of the WIC participants, to strengthen WIC's breastfeeding promotion efforts and to better support the establishment of long-term breastfeeding relationships. The new food packages align with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the infant feeding practice guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Institute of Medicine's comprehensive recommendations for breastfeeding mothers and their infants. The IOM recommendations are based on thorough consideration of scientific research and public comments on how to promote and support breastfeeding in WIC. Breastfeeding objectives are part of Healthy People 2010; WIC participants lag behind the general population in progress toward meeting those objectives. The Surgeon General issued the U.S. Health and Human Services Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding in 2000, introducing it with the statement, "Breastfeeding is one of the most important contributors to infant health..." Federal mandates require WIC to promote breastfeeding as the best method of infant nutrition and encourage women to breastfeed through offering appropriate support. These provisions include breastfeeding education provided to pregnant women and for breastfeeding moms, peer counseling support, access to lactation professionals, and offering breastfeeding aids such as breast pumps. The new food packages compliment and support these mandates.



Breastfeeding provides substantial short- and long-term health benefits for the infant and the mother. WIC is committed to assist mothers in establishing lactation in the critical weeks after birth and continuing to breastfeed during the first year and beyond. A significant part of this success depends on how well WIC staff members convey these changes to the WIC participants, and how the changes are implemented. Most staff members are already familiar with these changes and have been educated on what to expect. Because change requires a departure from the old system, issuing the new food packages for breastfeeding dyads will require some effort. During this transition time, staffs need to capitalize on the wonderful opportunity that is taking place across the nation, another step towards truly promoting and supporting breastfeeding!

## Promote and Support Breastfeeding

### Women can successfully breastfeed without formula!

WIC's focus is to support exclusive breastfeeding as the normal and accepted way to feed infants. Nationally, WIC is moving away from the current pattern of routine issuance of formula to partially breastfed infants; during the first month, WIC will no longer provide formula for most partially breastfed babies. The first few weeks is the most important time for establishing milk supply and for a woman to gain confidence in feeding her infant. By eliminating routine issuance of formula to partially breastfed infants, mothers' efforts to establish a healthy milk supply will be supported. Introducing formula because of perceived low milk supply is one of the most common reasons reported for early weaning.

### A greater variety of food for breastfeeding dyads!

WIC staff members are already educating pregnant women about how WIC can support their breastfeeding goals. To add to the current services provided, there are new incentives in the food packages for all breastfeeding mothers and infants. The breastfeeding dyad will receive a greater variety and amount of foods. Exclusive or "Fully Breastfeeding" mothers and infants receive the most food benefits; partially breastfeeding dyads receive more food benefits than post partum. It is important for staff to convey that this is an *incentive* or benefit for breastfeeding participants. The entire nation is truly behind this effort in breastfeeding. Many national breastfeeding campaigns have been recently launched; WIC wants to capitalize on this momentum to better promote and support breastfeeding.



### Foods Consistent with Nutritional Guidelines

The new food packages are consistent with current nutrition guidelines. In order to reduce the amount of saturated fat in the diet, the food packages emphasize low fat milk and limit amounts of cheese and eggs. The addition of new categories of foods such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables provide fiber and other important nutrients to participants. Promoting and supporting breastfeeding, delaying solids until about six months of age, eliminating juice for infants, and providing baby foods are all changes supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Institute of Medicine. Also, in response to the need for cultural diversity, the new food packages include a greater variety of foods. Most exemplary of this is in the choice of whole grain products that includes whole wheat bread (when available), brown rice and corn and whole wheat tortillas.

**The changes to the food packages help WIC actively promote and support breastfeeding**



## Your Enthusiasm and Support are Essential!

WIC staff is needed to support women to *exclusively* breastfeed by:

- ♥ Focusing on the importance of not offering formula during the first 4-6 weeks while milk supply is being established. Start prenatally at certification, with breastfeeding contacts and classes. Have delaying introduction of formula be a key theme.
- ♥ Utilizing Peer Counselors in the third trimester and the first 6 weeks postpartum to emphasize exclusivity and discussing milk production, “How do I know I have enough milk?” issues. Peer counselors should build on a mother’s confidence.
- ♥ Calling mothers soon after delivery to assess how breastfeeding is going and offer breastfeeding mothers early appointments. Follow up contacts during the first 10 days may make a difference in breastfeeding success.
- ♥ Attempting to solve problems and offer information to breastfeeding mothers who request formula during their baby’s first 4-6 weeks of life.
- ♥ Helping moms fix the problem that may prevent her from successfully breastfeeding. For most non medical problems, offering formula is not the answer.
- ♥ Offering mothers anticipatory guidance to overcome breastfeeding barriers or challenges
- ♥ Providing breast pumps when appropriate
- ♥ Discussing with staff how to effectively assess breastfeeding to determine appropriate food package issuance. It is not appropriate to base food package issuance solely on quantity of formula used.
- ♥ Helping staff feel comfortable redirecting a women’s request for formula and to support and build confidence in her initial decision to breastfeeding

Consistent messages to mothers and families about breastfeeding and about the changes to the new food packages are important. This approach will help make this new change positive and successful by resulting in more healthy breastfeeding infants and children.

**Your collaboration and support are needed!**  
**You can make a difference in families’ lives.**