

INFORMATION SHEET

Evaluation of the Changes to the WIC Food Packages on Breastfeeding Practices

Overview

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has awarded a contract to Abt Associates, Inc. to study the implementation of the Interim Rule governing WIC food packages and its effect on breastfeeding outcomes for WIC recipients across the country. This study will determine how the Interim Rule has been implemented and its affect on mothers' decisions about breastfeeding. This will be achieved through interviews with State and local WIC agency (LWA) staff, interviews with WIC recipients, and an examination of administrative data. The study will focus on a randomly selected subset of 16 LWAs.

Study Methods and Estimated Timeframe

Sixteen LWAs will be selected randomly with variation across geographic regions of the country, breastfeeding characteristics, and racial/ethnic composition of the primary population served. Data collection will occur both pre- and post-implementation of the Interim Rule to be able to determine what effect, if any, the Interim Rule has on food package choices. Administrative data extracts will be collected monthly for each LWA to obtain information about the food package choices of WIC participants. This will begin three months prior to when a State implements the Interim Rule and will continue for twelve months.

Phone interviews with staff from the 16 selected LWAs as well as staff from the corresponding State WIC agencies will collect important site characteristics. These interviews are expected to begin three months prior to when a State will implement the Interim Rule. In-person interviews will be conducted approximately three months after implementing the new Rule in the same agencies to obtain details about the implementation process at the State and local level and to hear early perceptions of the impact of the Interim Rule on breastfeeding practices.

Finally, interviews with WIC participants will provide information on breastfeeding duration and intensity, how women make their breastfeeding and food package choices, and a host of other factors that might influence their decisions. A sample of WIC participants from the 16 LWAs will be interviewed two months before the Interim Rule and another sample of participants from the same agencies will be drawn approximately four months after the Interim Rule.

How You Can Help

As someone who works at the State or LWA, you may be asked to participate in the interview process. Your participation and support of this effort will ensure that we obtain the most accurate and comprehensive information to help understand the implications, if any, of the Interim Rule on breastfeeding practices.

Who to Contact for More Information

Ted Macaluso
Office of Research & Analysis
Food and Nutrition Service
(703) 305-2121
Ted.Macaluso@fns.usda.gov

