

# *WIC Participation Patterns: An Investigation of Delayed Entry and Early Exit*

## *Highlighting Opportunities*

An Economic Research Service (ERS) Report

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# What are the Study Issues??



- Pregnant women delay enrollment until after having a child

- Many households leave WIC when a child turns one year old.



# Study Findings

Among eligible WIC households:

- 79.1% participated between birth and when the child turned 1 year old. (postnatal-infant period)
  - » Of these, 82.4% enrolled only after child was born
  - » 22.9% left the program when child turned one year old



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# What This Means

Of 1000 households eligible for WIC

- 791 enrolled in WIC
- 652 enrolled after child is born
- 181 left the program when child turned one year old



# Who delays enrollment until after birth?

Households that have:

- Higher income
- Private insurance
- College degree
- Employed the year prior to delivery,
- Residency in the Northeast
- Residency in urban areas with a population of at least 50,000



# Who Exits WIC at One-year

Households with:

- Mothers who did not breastfeed or breastfed less than 6 months
- Higher income
- Mothers that are more educated
- Mothers that are employed after child's birth



# Why?

- 33% reported they believed they were no longer eligible once the child turned 1 year old
- 27.8% reported they no longer needed food benefits (i.e. do not value what they are receiving from WIC)



# Why?

- 26.2% reported program requires too much effort and benefits not worth their time
- 10% have scheduling and transportation problems



# Who Enrolls Prior to Birth?

Prenatal Medicaid (AHCCCS) patients

# Who Stays After One Year ?

Prenatal Medicaid (AHCCCS) patients



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# AZ Interns Test Survey

Interviewed ~ 60 in DES offices

- Some families that no longer participated in WIC did not think they still qualified for WIC when their infant turned one year old



# AZ Baby Steps Information

- Training OB nurses on the “5 Steps to Breastfeeding Success”
- Contain a component to inform them about WIC
- Many nurses reported not realizing what the income guidelines were, and that a mom can be eligible just for the time she is off work postpartum



# Things out of our control

- Decrease in birth rate
- Population moving out of state
- Other issues within Arizona
- Increase in food stamps benefits
- Earned Income Tax Credit (this time of year)



# Opportunities

- Using all of this data of delayed entry and early exit from WIC, we know there are missed opportunities, especially:
  - Pregnant Women
  - Breastfeeding and Postpartum women while off from work
  - Toddlers



# Opportunity Brainstorming

Think about your ideas for the following:

- Targeting outreach to pregnant women, BF/PP women on maternity leave, and toddlers
- Making the WIC foods valuable to families
- Removing barriers to accessing services
- Specific wording we say at the initial infant enrollment to ensure that caregivers understand WIC eligibility doesn't end at one year of age



# Idea Sharing

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