

AGN. NO. \_\_\_\_\_

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS LINDSEY P. HORVATH  
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December 9, 2025

**Increasing WIC Utilization**

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides vital nutrition and family supports to low-income people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have children under the age of five. WIC serves all eligible primary caregivers who are responsible for raising young children, including fathers, grandparents, guardians, and other non-birthing parents. WIC participants can access fresh fruits and vegetables, baby food and formula, dairy and protein staples, and other essential, nutritious foods. WIC also provides access to health screenings, nutrition and breastfeeding counseling, immunization screenings, and other services.

WIC is one of the most effective programs in the nation for improving health and stability for families with young children<sup>1</sup>. Research consistently demonstrates WIC's

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/helps>

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positive impact<sup>2</sup>, including healthier birth outcomes, greater access to healthcare, increased food and nutrition security, improved cognitive development and academic achievement in children, and improved neighborhood food access. Based on U.S. Census data along with the American Community Survey (ACS), WIC served 45% of all Los Angeles County children under age 5 in 2023, the majority of whom were infants under the age of one<sup>3</sup>.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is another federal food program and provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks to children in home-based child care, child care centers, emergency shelters, after-school programs, and to older or functionally impaired adults at adult day care centers. CACFP contributes to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of young children and adults, and is associated with reduced food insecurity among program participants<sup>4</sup>. Importantly, home-based child care providers, who are most at need and often pay out of pocket for these meals and snacks, are included among the eligible providers for CACFP reimbursement.

Despite WIC and CACFP's proven effectiveness, they are vastly underutilized. Nationally, only about half of eligible people enroll in WIC<sup>5</sup>. In Los Angeles County, only 9% of food insecure households are enrolled<sup>6</sup>. Although Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollees typically meet the eligibility requirements ("adjunctively eligible") for WIC, and clients can be enrolled in more than one of these

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/wic-works-a-cost-effective-investment-in-improving-low-income-families>

<sup>3</sup> "Los Angeles County Overview." L.A. County WIC Data. Los Angeles County Overview. Accessed 2025.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cacfp.org/2023/11/15/cacfp-underutilized-and-unequally-accessed/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/wics-critical-benefits-reach-only-half-of-those-eligible>

<sup>6</sup> <https://dornsife.usc.edu/news/stories/food-and-nutrition-insecurity-linger-in-la-county/>

programs at the same time, fewer than half of WIC-eligible families enrolled in Medicaid and/or SNAP utilize the program<sup>7</sup>. While underutilization predates recent federal developments, the current environment of reduced federal funding and increased administrative barriers makes maximizing access to existing benefits even more critical.

The delay of SNAP benefits in November 2025 created an immediate and profound hardship for more than 1.5 million Los Angeles County residents who depend on these funds for basic groceries. Families already struggling with food insecurity faced sudden gaps in their monthly food budgets, increasing reliance on emergency food banks, school meal programs, and community-based support. This emphasizes the urgency of the County's efforts to strengthen and expand access to existing nutrition programs, particularly WIC and CACFP, which remain fully funded and are proven to improve child and family health outcomes. By maximizing WIC enrollment, standardizing referrals across County systems, and promoting dual participation in both WIC and CalFresh, this motion positions Los Angeles County to help mitigate the harmful effects of federal SNAP delays and upcoming changes to eligibility. The coordinated County response outlined in the motion is critical to ensuring families with young children do not fall deeper into food insecurity during this period of heightened need.

Los Angeles County's family-serving departments like the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Department of Public Health (DPH), and others already conduct eligibility screenings and refer families to County and external services. For example, the Los Angeles County

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/wic-coordination-with-medicaid-and-snap-1>

Linkages Partnership between DCFS and DPSS (Linkages) centers around offering CalWORKs to families involved with DCFS, and can include eligibility determinations for additional DPSS programs. Through standardizing and expanding these existing referral processes, the County can further promote utilization of WIC alongside other supports.

In December 2024, the Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted the motion [\*Enhancing Linkages for DCFS Impacted Families\*](#) which directed a report back on County practices to improve food security for families with children aged 0-5, including how departments and external stakeholders work together, and strategies for improving the County's Linkages Program. Recommendations in the [report back](#) included increasing knowledge and awareness of food-related resources; implementing universal enrollment forms; standardizing screening tools; and strengthening the referral processes in family-serving County departments and natural community touchpoints.

The County has an opportunity to implement these recommendations and build on this work to ensure that every family interacting with County systems is informed about and referred to WIC and other relevant food resources. In a landscape of federal cuts to food programs and threats to our larger social safety net, it is vital that we maximize the use of effective and funded programs like WIC and CACFP.

**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct – as part of the Community Pathway – the Department of Public Health and Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education, Department of Public Social Services, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Mental Health, Department of Health Services, in collaboration with the Executive Office, Chief Executive Office-Poverty

Alleviation Initiative, Los Angeles County Office of Food Systems, Office of Child Protection, Los Angeles County Office of Education, and other relevant family-serving County departments and external stakeholders including First 5 LA and the WIC sites in Los Angeles County:

1. Create a “LA County Families with Young Children toolkit” for family-serving departments. The toolkit should include a comprehensive list of resources and services including WIC, home visiting, etc.
2. Share WIC information and promotional materials (and the entire toolkit once it is developed) with families during key touchpoints, including referrals for County and non-County services, such as home visits, early childhood programming, and other client interactions across family-serving systems.
3. Explore options for co-locating WIC staff at relevant County offices.
4. Identify strategies for increasing utilization of CACFP in the County.
5. Develop a “Better Together” campaign to promote awareness of WIC and CalFresh, promoting that people can enroll in both programs, and that utilizing both programs together can help to mitigate food insecurity.
6. Increase knowledge and awareness of food-related resources, including WIC and CACFP, at natural touchpoints such as early education centers, child care providers, healthcare settings, and other family-serving organizations.
7. Provide regular updates at the Family and Social Services Cluster meetings on the progress of the above directives.

**WE, FURTHER, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office, in collaboration with County Counsel, the Department of Public Social Services, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Public Health, Department of Mental Health, Department of Health Services, Executive Office, and other relevant family-serving County departments, report back in writing in 60 days on the feasibility of implementing relevant recommendations from the *“Report Back on the December 3, 2024 Enhancing Linkages for DCFS-Impacted Families Board of Supervisors Motion,”* including:

- 1) Developing and implementing Countywide standardized screening tools and referral processes for all County-administered services and programs.
- 2) Developing and implementing universal enrollment forms and expanding existing enrollment processes to streamline completion and reduce barriers for families who qualify for multiple County services, where feasible and regulatorily permissible.

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