

RECOMMENDATIONS

JANUARY 2017 • REVIEW OF WIC FOOD PACKAGES: IMPROVING BALANCE AND CHOICE: FINAL REPORT

RECOMMENDATION 6-1

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS), should increase the dollar amount of the cash value voucher, add fish, and reduce the amounts of juice, milk, legumes, and peanut butter in all food packages for women and children (IV, V-A, V-B, and VII), to improve the balance of food groups in alignment with the 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These changes also apply to food package VI, except that the amounts of milk are unchanged and the amounts of legumes are increased.

RECOMMENDATION 6-2

USDA-FNS should support the cultural food preferences and special dietary needs of WIC participants by requiring states to offer additional options for the WIC food categories, including substitution of a CVV in place of juice, additional forms and varieties of vegetables and fruits, both canned and dried legumes, and a range of options and sizes for grains and yogurt. A substitution of legumes for peanut butter or for eggs should be allowed for individuals who have a peanut allergy, or that are following a vegan diet, respectively.

RECOMMENDATION 6-3

USDA-FNS, as a means of supporting breastfeeding of any duration and intensity, should allow individual tailoring of the infant food packages to best meet the needs of the mother-infant dyad.

RECOMMENDATION 6-4

USDA-FNS should reduce the amounts of infant cereal across food package II for all infants, and reduce the amounts of jarred infant food vegetables and fruits and jarred infant food meats provided in food package II for fully breastfed infants. Caregivers should be permitted to substitute all or part of the jarred infant food vegetables and fruits with a cash value voucher, and a portion of jarred infant food meat with canned fish.

RECOMMENDATION 6-5

USDA-FNS should no longer require provision of a WIC formula to all participants that are issued food package III. Participants should be permitted access to the foods in the package appropriate for their age, physiological state, and medical condition. The health care provider may refer to the WIC registered dietitian and/or qualified nutritionist for identifying appropriate foods (excluding WIC formula) and their prescribed amounts as well as the length of time the participant requires the foods.

RECOMMENDATION 6-6

USDA-FNS should issue food package V-B to women who are pregnant with multiple fetuses and food package VII to women who are partially breastfeeding multiple infants.

RECOMMENDATION 6-7

USDA-FNS should modify required specifications for some WIC foods to improve their alignment with dietary guidance.

RECOMMENDATION 11-1

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS) should develop the tools and strategies needed to assist state agencies, local agencies, and vendors to inform participants about and support them to make the best use of the expanded options of the revised food packages.

RECOMMENDATION 11-2

USDA-FNS should maximize the extent to which the revised food packages motivate the choice to initiate and continue breastfeeding among all racial and ethnic groups by enhancing and stabilizing the funding available (independent of the food packages) for peer counseling and other lactation support staff in WIC sites.

RECOMMENDATION 11-3

USDA-FNS should fund research to evaluate the effects of the recommended revisions to the WIC food packages on participant satisfaction, participation in the program, redemption of WIC foods, and participants' diets and health.

11-3a. USDA-FNS should collect WIC state agency policies on an annual basis and establish a national database of EBT expenditures by program participants.

11-3b. USDA-FNS and the Department of Health and Human Services should collaborate to achieve expansion of nationally representative collection of data on the dietary intakes for pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women and breastfed infants in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. USDA-FNS should request that the data on breastfeeding women include an indicator on the intensity of breastfeeding (i.e., exclusive or partial).

RECOMMENDATION 11-4

USDA-FNS should fund data collection and analysis of that data toward optimizing support for breastfeeding and increasing the proportion of WIC participants who choose to initiate and continue breastfeeding, and tailoring food package options to best meet the needs and goals of the breastfeeding dyad. USDA-FNS should examine how breastfeeding outcome data are captured in WIC Management Information Systems and work toward a set of universal breastfeeding indicators that can be captured across systems.

RECOMMENDATION 11-5

USDA-FNS should fund research to assess how inclusion of the cash value voucher as a component of WIC food packages affects: food package redemption rates; participant choice of vegetable and fruit varieties; overall diet quality; and vendor stocking practices.

RECOMMENDATION 11-6

USDA-FNS should fund research to evaluate the feasibility of adjusting the value of the cash value voucher in high-cost states and territories (Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).

RECOMMENDATION 11-7

The committee recommends that in the case that USDA-FNS has funding above cost-neutrality, the value of the CVV should be increased for all children on the program.

RECOMMENDATION 11-8

The committee recommends that in the case that USDA-FNS has funding below cost-neutrality, provision of juice should be further reduced or eliminated across food packages.

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