

# Appendix

## Ongoing WIC-Related Research Funded by the Economic Research Service and the Food and Nutrition Service

Since 1998, USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) has had responsibility for conducting studies and evaluations of the Nation's domestic food and nutrition assistance programs, including WIC. ERS established the Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP) to carry out this responsibility. FANRP projects utilize the capabilities of both external researchers and ERS staff and are designed to meet the critical information needs of program managers, policy officials, the research community, and the public at large. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), the agency responsible for administering USDA's food and nutrition assistance programs, also sponsors studies and analyses that inform policymaking and management of FNS programs, and coordinates program-related nutrition policy and services. Some of the ongoing WIC-related research projects at ERS and FNS are summarized below. More information on ERS's WIC-related research can be found at the ERS website at <http://www.ers.usda.gov>. Information about the status of ongoing WIC-related studies funded by FNS can be found at the FNS website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns>.

### ERS Studies:

#### **Report to Congress on WIC Program Cost-Containment Practices and their Impacts**

Objective: to assess the effects of cost-containment practices by WIC State agencies—such as limiting brand-named products in the WIC food package—on program participation, access to and availability of prescribed foods, voucher redemption rates, actual food selections by participants, participants on special diets or with specific food allergies, participant use of and satisfaction with prescribed foods, achievement of positive health outcomes, and program costs. Awarded

to Abt Associates. An interim report to Congress was released in February 2001 (Kirlin and Cole, 2001); the final report is due summer 2002.

#### **Report to Congress on Infant Formula Prices and Availability**

Objective: to determine the number of suppliers of infant formula in each State or major marketing area, and to compare the cost of formula that is included in the WIC rebate program versus the cost of formula that is not included in the WIC rebate program. Conducted by ERS. An interim report to Congress was released in April 2001 (Oliveira et al., 2001). The final report may be found on the ERS website at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan02001>.

#### **Obesity in Low-Income Mothers and Children**

Objective: using a data set that links WIC administrative data with birth certificate data on approximately 35,000 mother-child pairs, the study will examine factors that may influence the probability that by age 4 a WIC child with an obese mother will also be obese. Awarded to the Children's Hospital Medical Center, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. The final report is due winter 2002/2003.

#### **Economic Benefits of a Breastfeeding Promotion: A Controlled Clinical Trial**

Objective: to evaluate the benefits of a breastfeeding promotion intervention campaign among low-income women. A randomized controlled clinical trial will examine the effects on breastfeeding prevalence and duration, infant health, and infant medical costs of providing the mother with personalized breastfeeding counseling. Awarded to the Montefiore Medical Center, Albert Einstein College of Medicine. The final report is due winter 2002/2003.

### **Expert Review of Methodology for Estimating Number of Individuals Eligible for WIC**

Objective: to review the methodology that USDA uses in preparing estimates for how many individuals are eligible for, and likely to participate in, the WIC program. The project is being conducted in two phases. During Phase I, the National Research Council reviewed the current eligibility and participation estimation methodology and pertinent literature, conducted a workshop, and issued a report that provides an assessment of the methodology (National Research Council, 2001). The objective of Phase II will be to achieve consensus on recommendations concerning a methodology for estimating eligibility for, and participation in, the WIC program. This phase of the work may also include preparing and critiquing test estimates produced using different methodologies under consideration by the panel. The final report is due summer 2003.

### **Identify and Evaluate Methods to Prevent Fraud and Abuse Among Staff and Participants in WIC**

Objective: to identify and evaluate the best tools for detecting fraud and abuse by WIC staff or participants. This study will review existing tools and data systems presently in use by some WIC State agencies for detecting fraud and abuse among WIC vendors. Awarded to Applied Techno-Management Systems, Inc. The final report, in two volumes, was posted on the ERS website in early 2002 at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan01011> and <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan01012>.

### **Factors Associated with Iron Status Among WIC Infants in Rural West Virginia**

Objective: to collect primary data on WIC infants and toddlers, ages 6 to 24 months, in West Virginia counties that are known to have high rates of iron-deficiency anemia, to identify dietary factors that are associated with poor iron status, and to provide data that can be used to design and implement effective nutrition education and intervention programs. Awarded to West Virginia University Research Corporation. The final report is due spring 2003.

### **Diet Intake and Health Outcomes**

Objective: to develop and evaluate dietary assessment tools for young children that can be used in WIC program centers, recognizing that adaptations may be needed for culturally diverse populations. The tools

will serve several functions, including screening for dietary patterns that do not meet Federal dietary recommendations, facilitating the triage of patients for services, and serving as the basis for general nutrition education. Awarded to Harvard School of Public Health and Research Triangle, Inc. The final report is due winter 2001/2002.

### **Feasibility and Accuracy of Record Linkage to Estimate Multiple Program Participation**

Objective: to identify the feasibility of linking the administrative data files from food stamps, WIC, and child nutrition programs to facilitate analysis of multiple program participation and to improve program operations in such areas as one-stop shopping, adjunctive eligibility determination, program integrity, and administrative and client burden. Conducted by Abt Associates. The final report is due winter 2002/2003.

### **Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort 2001**

Objective: to support enhanced data collection necessary to examine the link between WIC participation in infancy and childhood to cognitive development, obesity, and food security by adding a bank of questions to the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. Added questions include information on WIC participation, infant feeding practices, health care, height and weight, and related information. Interagency agreement with the U.S. Department of Education.

### **FNS Studies:**

#### **Dietary Risk in the WIC Program: A Scientific Assessment**

Objective: to review the scientific basis for methods currently employed in the dietary risk assessment of individuals for eligibility to participate in WIC. In phase one, funded by FNS, the National Academy of Sciences convened an expert committee to develop a framework for assessing dietary risk among WIC Program applicants, focusing in particular on *Failure to Meet Dietary Guidelines* as a risk criterion for women and children. An interim report was released in October 2000 (Institute of Medicine, 2000). In the second phase of the study, funded by ERS, the Committee will review a variety of approaches, and recommend one or more for use in WIC. They will also recom-

mend specific cutoffs for establishing WIC eligibility of women and children using the recommended approach(es) using the decision framework developed for this project, and identify specific areas in which additional research or instrument development may be needed to fully implement the recommended approach(es). The release of the final report is scheduled for 2002.

### **Adolescent WIC Participants Study**

**Objective:** To describe WIC's benefits and services through the perception of adolescent WIC participants. This project is in light of the fact that pregnant teens and/or adolescent mothers may have different needs than other WIC participants. Program areas in which the needs of WIC adolescents may differ from those of WIC clients as a group include: Knowledge of nutrition, Adoption of healthy dietary practices, Knowledge of available health care services, and Access to available services. FNS surveyed a representative sample of pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers who were enrolled in WIC. This survey provides precise estimates of the magnitude of teen clients' needs. A concurrent survey of local WIC agencies describes activities undertaken at the local level to address needs of adolescent participants. Focus groups of eligible nonparticipating adolescents provide insight into needs of adolescents not covered by the survey.

### **WIC/CHIP Enrollment Demonstration Project**

**Objective:** to evaluate the feasibility and costs of using WIC clinics to identify and enroll eligible children in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Conducted by the Indiana Department of Health in conjunction with FNS. The Indiana Department of Health will conduct Medicaid/CHIP enrollment for approximately 2 years in about 20 WIC

clinics. Each site will receive up to \$10,000 each fiscal year for the project. The demonstration project studies the number of children enrolled in Medicaid/CHIP, income levels of families enrolled, cost of enrollment activities, effect of enrollment of activities on WIC clinic operations and caseloads, and other factors that are not yet determined by FNS.

### **Participant Characteristics Monograph Series**

Conducted by Abt Associates Inc. Monographs will be produced on two topics: Native Americans and overweight children. Each monograph will include a profile of the sociodemographic characteristics, risk profiles and health care usage patterns of the relevant group of participants. These reports will be based primarily on data available in the biennial participant characteristics data sets. The report on overweight children is available on the FNS website (Report No. WIC-01-PCOM).

### **Survey of State Public Health Nutrition Workforce**

**Objective:** to monitor trends in the education and training, work experience, areas of practice, and training needs of the public health nutrition workforce at the State and local government levels. The Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors (ASTPHND) in cooperation with FNS, is conducting a survey of public health nutritionists to monitor trends in education and training, work experience, areas of practice and training needs. ASTPHND has conducted similar surveys periodically beginning in 1985. A profile describing the workforce will assist the FNS in determining the extent to which the current and future workforces have the necessary requirements to carry out the WIC program. A final report is due to FNS in 2002.