

Media Relations

Carsey Institute: Proposed WIC Cuts To Hit Rural, Urban Residents Hardest

Program Funding Uncertain As Washington Budget Talks Continue

July 19, 2011

DURHAM, N.H. – Proposed cuts to one of the nation’s most successful nutrition programs for low-income women and children could hit hard millions of families in rural and urban areas that depend on the program, according to new research from the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire.

In 2011, nearly nine million women and children relied on the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), a nutrition program that serves pregnant or postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five by providing them with nutrition education and checks or vouchers for food purchases. Foods eligible for WIC are high in certain nutrients and are designed to meet the special nutritional needs of low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, or postpartum women, as well as infants and children who are at risk for poor nutrition.

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed a bill setting a WIC funding level for FY 2012 that is significantly lower than anticipated need and will leave between 300,000 and 450,000 women, infants and children unserved, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. The Senate has not yet passed its version of this bill. The final level for FY 2012 and for years to come will likely be influenced by the results of negotiations to reduce the budget deficit.

“Programs like WIC become particularly important for vulnerable families in a struggling economy against a background of other financial challenges,” said Jessica Bean, vulnerable families research associate with the Carsey Institute.

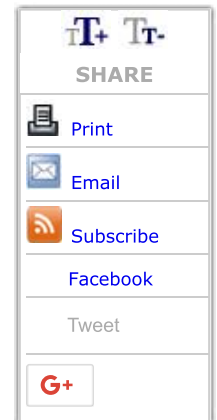
More than three-quarters of those who benefited from the program last year were infants and children. And when it comes to who relies on the program, a higher percentage of people in rural and urban areas receive WIC assistance in comparison to their suburban neighbors.

The key findings of this research show:

- Equal shares of rural and central city respondents report household Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) receipt (approximately 4 percent each), nearly double the rate of reported receipt among suburban households.
- Reported receipt is similar across the Midwest, South, and West, and just slightly lower in the Northeast.
- Individuals who reported that someone in their house received WIC were disproportionately young, less educated, nonwhite, and unemployed.
- Individuals who live with a cohabiting partner are more likely than single or married respondents to report WIC receipt across all places.
- Reported receipt among households with more than one child is high; about one-third of two-child households in rural and central city areas reported receiving WIC, compared with 17 percent of similar suburban households.

“As nutrition education and a quality diet have lifelong benefits, cuts to WIC funding could result in higher societal costs in the future,” Bean said.

This research relies on the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey’s (CPS) Annual Social and



Economic Supplement conducted in March 2007 and March 2010. The CPS provides a nationally representative sample of approximately 50,000 households and the individuals in those households, and collects demographic, economic, and employment information, as well as participation in select government assistance programs.

The complete report about this research, "Rural and Central City Residents with Multiple Children Likely to Be Hardest Hit by Proposed WIC Cuts," is available at <http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/CarseySearch/search.php?id=167>.

The Carsey Institute conducts policy research on vulnerable children, youth, and families and on sustainable community development. The institute gives policy makers and practitioners the timely, independent resources they need to effect change in their communities. For more information about the Carsey Institute, go to www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu.

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