

Impact on the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children During a Government Shutdown

What is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)?

WIC is a federal nutrition program that provides nutritious foods to nearly 7 million pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to five years old. Nearly 40 percent of all infants in the United States benefit from WIC. It also provides education, counseling, and referrals to health care and social services.

WIC is administered by states, Indian Tribal Organizations, the District of Columbia, and the five territories (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).

How does a government shutdown affect WIC?

During a government shutdown, WIC remains open as long as funding is available. **Historically, WIC services have never lapsed due to a government shutdown.** WIC has been able to temporarily maintain services for participants during shutdowns by drawing on specific types of funding. However, a shutdown at the start of a fiscal year presents additional challenges as states do not have as much funding on hand.

Unless told otherwise, WIC participants should continue to use their benefits and attend scheduled appointments, while eligible people should continue to apply.

Can WIC stay open during a shutdown?

Yes. States can spend 3 percent of a prior fiscal year's funding to support services provided in the following year. In addition to that flexibility, states may use their own funding to cover costs, which the federal government has reimbursed in prior shutdowns. States can also use rebates received during this month to pay for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 food costs.

There are also various tools the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has to ensure WIC continues to operate. Education and Workforce Committee Ranking Member Robert C. Scott (VA-03) and Early Childhood and Elementary and Secondary Subcommittee Ranking Member Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01) **pressed** USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to issue guidance to states on maintaining services and to commit to reimbursing states for money spent on keeping WIC open during the shutdown. Since then, the USDA has released approximately \$173 billion in contingency funds for WIC services. On October 6, USDA notified states that expenses during the shutdown *will be eligible* for federal reimbursement and began a recovery process to reallocate unspent funds from FY 2025. As the shutdown persists, Committee Democrats will continue to push the Administration to issue additional guidance to states about maintaining services.

What can states do to maintain WIC funding?

USDA and states should utilize all available means to provide WIC funding during a shutdown. If needed, states can allocate additional general funds to WIC to keep the program operational. Some [states](#) have already taken action and have committed to providing the funding necessary to protect WIC services during a shutdown.

States should prioritize continuing WIC before, during, and after a government shutdown, given how critical the nutritional supports offered by the program are for the short- and long-term health and well-being of pregnant and postpartum women and their infants and young children.

If the government can keep WIC open, why might it be interrupted?

WIC services could be interrupted during the government shutdown if President Trump and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Russ Vought [direct](#) USDA to stop supporting states. Additionally, some state budgets are already stretched thin, particularly in light of the Republican and Trump Administration's harmful [cuts](#) to other health and nutrition programs.

Is WIC a bipartisan program?

WIC has generally enjoyed bipartisan support. However, Republicans' regard for the program was notably absent over the past year. For example, the House's FY 2026 Agriculture appropriations bill, passed out of Committee with every Republican Member voting in favor, [fails to fully fund](#) the WIC program and ensure all eligible participants receive services by not considering increased program participation.

Moreover, the '[Big Ugly Law](#)', passed by Congressional Republicans and signed by President Trump, made drastic cuts to both SNAP and Medicaid, making it more difficult for eligible participants to seamlessly enroll in WIC. Over [3 million](#) women and children could lose their automatic eligibility for WIC due to the Medicaid cuts alone.

Where can you find information about WIC in your state?

WIC state agencies will share public messages about WIC remaining open through their websites or apps. It is important to get information about WIC operations from official sources. Since each state's situation may vary, Members are encouraged to contact their state agency directly.