

SOLANO COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

2024-2025

SOLANO COUNTY WIC

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Solano County Civil Grand Jury 2024-2025

I. SUMMARY

The Solano County Civil Grand Jury (Jury) elected to investigate how the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition Program operates on a day-to-day basis. While the Solano County WIC Program sites are organized and welcoming, the Jury found procedural discrepancies in four of the five locations visited. The Jury used WIC's Policy and Procedure Manual (WPPM) to check whether the offices were in compliance with this manual which is published by their regulatory agency, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). Out of the five program sites in Solano County, Vacaville was the most compliant while Rio Vista (a part-time satellite office, connected to Fairfield) presented the most non-compliance issues. We also looked at the daily business at each Program site and whether they were operating under current regulations and guidance.

II. INTRODUCTION

Several issues led us toward the WIC program in the beginning of our investigation. In looking through past Grand Jury Reports, we did not find any that had investigated the WIC program in Solano County. During our preliminary investigation, we found several online complaints on the Nutrition Services Customer Satisfaction Survey concerning how participants felt they were treated rudely when visiting WIC Program sites in Solano County. Since this program is important as a healthy foundation for a child's life, we wanted to be sure that the facilities were welcoming to the participants. If these mothers and caregivers are comfortable in working with those employed at the WIC facility, they would be more likely to continue to use its benefits for as long as possible.

The WPPM is a very well-written manual explaining the requirements for day-to-day operations at the Program sites. We also examined the Solano County Public Health Division WIC Program Policy and Procedures Manual (SCWPPM) and measured our experiences in the five Solano WIC program sites against these two written policies. This report will discuss the use of our methodology in arriving at our findings. We will then add recommendations that will hopefully help to change those areas which are not consistent with the WPPM and SCWPPM.

III. STATEMENT OF FACTS

The WIC Program started nationally in 1974 with its first office in Kentucky. California has, by far, the largest WIC program in the nation. It is a program of CDPH which administers contracts with 84 local WIC agencies.


WIC is the Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program for income-eligible pregnant, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding women and children under the age of five who have a nutritional need. Eligible families include low income families who have incomes at 185% or less of the Federal poverty level.

The WIC program is administered by the Health and Social Services Department in Solano County and is a federally mandated program of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) which oversees the CDPH. Participants come by way of community outreach, advertising, or referrals. The program provides benefit cards that enable participants to buy healthy foods at local grocery stores. WIC also provides nutrition education to the mother or

caregiver, breastfeeding education and support, including the loan of breast pumps, and overall assistance to families in developing healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

The State of California WIC breastfeeding vision:

A. Breastfeeding is the norm for WIC mothers and their infants up to age one year and beyond.
B. WIC is known in the community as a source for breastfeeding assistance and information

A circular inset image showing a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a pink long-sleeved shirt, breastfeeding her infant. The infant is wrapped in a light-colored blanket. The woman is looking down at the baby with a gentle expression.

WIC provides benefit cards for nutritious foods such as:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Milk, cheese, eggs
- Soy milk and tofu
- Juice, cereal
- Whole grain
- Dried beans and peas, peanut butter
- Infant formula with iron and infant cereal

WIC provides referrals to many government agencies for services including:

- Health care
- Substance abuse counseling and treatment
- Support services for food, income, and housing
- Domestic violence services

- Dental health services
- Child support services

You must be a resident of California to qualify for WIC, but US citizenship is not required.

Solano County WIC manages approximately 10,000 participants in five sites.

At this time, in person contact is optional, but available to those who want it. Online or telephone contact is acceptable instead of personal contact. Furthermore, there is no requirement for completion of nutrition education in order to stay in the program. No participants or children were seen in any Program site that we visited except Rio Vista. One of the big surprises we found at the sites was the lack of mothers and their children. The waiting rooms, classrooms, and breastfeeding areas were empty. We visited five sites and only saw three participants at one site: Rio Vista. Four other sites had no participants or children in the site during the 90 minutes that we were there. The offices were quiet with just the telephone conversations of employees breaking the silence.

Solano WIC is not fully staffed. According to the Organizational chart, there is an opening in Dixon for a Health Assistant. The Dixon office is now staffed remotely except for 8 hours on Wednesday when staff from Vacaville cover the vacant position at the Dixon location.

During the program site interviews, we found the following:

A. Rio Vista Program Site

There was no sign on the front door of either the building or the inner office door stating that a WIC facility was inside. Furthermore, no hours of operation were posted on either door. Rio

Vista WIC is sharing a room with another community program. This violates the privacy of each participant because there is no telehealth confidentiality and privacy, and there is no private room where mothers can breastfeed. Also, Rio Vista did not have the following required posters:

- “WIC doesn’t routinely provide formula for the first 30 days after delivery.”
- “No Smoking”
- CA WIC BreastFeeding Vision Statement

B. Fairfield Program Site

This site was compliant except it was missing one required poster:

- “WIC doesn’t routinely provide formula for the first 30 days after delivery.”

C. Dixon Program Site

This site was compliant except for:

- Has been without regular onsite staff since December 2024
- The following required signs were not posted:
 - “No Smoking”
 - CA WIC BreastFeeding Vision Statement.

D. Vallejo Program Site

This site was compliant except for:

- Has a display marketing Similac™ formula in the facility which is against regulations.
- Has not posted the required sign: “No Smoking.”

E. Vacaville Program Site

- No deficiencies noted

All findings are mandated in the WPPM and SCWPPM. Discrepancies found are listed in the Findings and Recommendations Section of this report, followed by recommendations for changes that should be made to remedy the situation.

IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDING 1: Telehealth Confidentiality and Privacy requirements are not met in the Rio Vista Program site where the WIC program shares a room with another Rio Vista agency. WPPM 2024 Section 220-30 states: “Set up an appropriate workspace where staff can conduct telehealth services without confidential participant information being overheard or seen by others.” WIC personnel must work in a secure room where conversations are not overheard.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Set up an appropriate workspace in Rio Vista so that the staff can conduct telehealth and in person services where confidential participant information is not being overheard or seen by others.

FINDING 2: At the Rio Vista Program site, there is no private room where employees or participants can breastfeed. Per the Policy and Procedure Manual WPPM 2024 section 600-30, IV Employee Support, “a room with a door is necessary for facilities to have for breastfeeding mothers and staff.”

RECOMMENDATION 2: Provide a room at the Rio Vista site with a door which can be locked to enable privacy for breastfeeding mothers.

FINDING 3: The Rio Vista program site does not have Hours of Operation displayed. Per Policy and Procedure Manual WPPM 2024 section 530-10, signage is required at the entrance to the facility.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Display Hours of Operation at the entrance to the site in Rio Vista.

FINDING 4: Fairfield and Rio Vista program sites do not have the poster “WIC doesn’t routinely provide formula for the first 30 days after delivery” sign posted. Per SCWPPM WIC Policy Number 2-8 Breastfeeding Promotion and Support in WIC, signage is required.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Install required signs at the Fairfield and Rio Vista sites.

FINDING 5: Rio Vista, Dixon, and Vallejo program sites do not have “No Smoking” signs at the entrances to their facilities. Per Policy and Procedure Manual WPPM 2024 section 160-10, “WIC sites and administrative offices must prominently display "No Smoking" signs during WIC operating hours in any area occupied by the WIC program.”

RECOMMENDATION 5: Install “No Smoking” signs at the entrance to Rio Vista, Dixon, and Vallejo sites.

FINDING 6: Dixon, Vallejo, and Rio Vista sites do not have a “CA WIC BreastFeeding Vision Statement” sign posted. Per Policy and Procedure Manual WPPM 2024 section 600-30, “the site

must include a display of the WIC Program's Breastfeeding Vision Statement in areas visible to employees and participants."

RECOMMENDATION 6: Include a display of the WIC Program's Breastfeeding Vision Statement in areas visible to employees and participants at the Dixon, Vallejo and Rio Vista sites.

FINDING 7: Vallejo has a display marketing Similac™ formula in the waiting room of the facility. Per Policy and Procedure Manual WPPM 2024 section 600-30, "Refrain from displaying or providing magazines, books, educational materials, or incentive items that promote or market formula to participants."

RECOMMENDATION 7: Remove the Similac™ display in the Vallejo waiting room.

V. COMMENTS

Overall, the WIC programs in Solano County are well managed. The public areas are clean, colorful and welcoming to all who visit there. The staff was friendly and willing to show us around and answer our questions. Several of the positive aspects we found were translation services, respect for different cultures, and a well-organized and educated staff.

The directors of each site hold Masters' degrees as well as many other certifications. The County WIC director is also highly educated and was very helpful in getting us the information that we needed and providing access to each site.

The process to fill a staff vacancy seems excessively long. The Health Assistant in Dixon retired in December 2024 and has yet to be replaced at this time (May 2025). The interviews are happening but they have not found a suitable candidate. In the past, the clinic was open Tuesday-Thursday with remote availability Monday and Friday. Today the site is open for a limited time period (eight hours a week) with remote availability the other days of the week. The staff from Vacaville covers for the missing Dixon staff.

VI. RESPONSES

REQUIRED

Health Services Manager/Nutrition Services Bureau

Solano County Health and Social Services, Public Health Division Findings 1-7

COURTESY COPY

HSS DIRECTOR

Solano County Health and Social Services, Public Health Division Findings 1-7

VII. METHODOLOGY

A. Websites:

1. California Department of Public Health/WIC/How WIC Helps

<https://myfamily.wic.ca.gov/Home/HowWICHelps>

2. Solano County [Public Health/Nutrition Services Program](#)/WIC Program

<https://www.solanocounty.com/depts/ph/nsp/wic/default.asp>

B. Documents:

1. Women, Infants and Children Program California Department of Health
WIC California Policy and Procedures Manual 2024.
2. Solano County Public Health Division WIC Program Policy and Procedure:
Breastfeeding Promotion and Support in WIC. Policy Number 2-8
3. Solano County Public Health Division WIC Program Policy and Procedure: Nutrition
Education Contacts. Policy Number 2-7
4. Solano County Public Health Division WIC Program Policy and Procedure: Security,
Inventory and Distribution of WIC Cards at the WIC clinics. Policy Number 2-1.
5. Solano County Public Health Division WIC Program Policy and Procedure: Scale
Validation and Calibration. Policy Number 1-4.
6. Solano County Public Health Division WIC Program Policy and Procedure:
Assessment of Need and Distribution of Manual/Electric Breast pumps. Policy
Number 2-9.
7. Solano County Public Health Division WIC Program Policy and Procedure: Lactation
Accommodation for WIC Employees. Policy Number 2-12.

8. Solano County Public Health Division WIC Program Policy and Procedure: WIC Online Education. Policy Number 2-23.
9. Solano County Public Health Division WIC Program Policy and Procedure: WIC Caseload Management /Outreach Activities. Policy Number 2-16.
10. State of California-Health and Human Services Agency. California Department of Public Health. Notice of Temporary Regulatory Changes. September 30, 2020.
11. Health and Human Services Agency. California Department of Public Health. WIC Information Notice No. 2024-83.

C. Interviews:

1. Solano County Public Health Department Administrative Staff
2. Administration of each WIC Program Site (5)

D. Program Site Tours:

<u>Program Site</u>	<u>Date</u>
Dixon	December 2024
Fairfield	December 2024
Rio Vista	February 2025
Vacaville	January 2025
Vallejo	January 2025



VALLEJO WAITING ROOM FORMULA BROCHURES