

City & County of San Francisco WIC Program Breastfeeding Promotion Policy

The San Francisco Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition Program recognizes breastmilk as the ideal food for infants. “Exclusive breastfeeding is the normative model against which all alternative feeding methods must be measured with regard to growth, health, development, and all other short- and long-term outcomes” (AAP Policy Statement, 2005). WIC encourages exclusive breastfeeding for the initial 6 months of life and to continue breastfeeding through the first year and beyond as is mutually desired by the infant and the mother. The vast advantages of breastfeeding for the infant, mother, and community have been well researched and documented. They include nutritional, immunologic, developmental, psychological, economic, and environmental benefits. It is WIC’s goal to promote breastfeeding as a cultural norm and encourage families and society to support the breastfeeding mother in all settings; at home, work, school, or wherever life may take her and her baby.

The San Francisco WIC Program offers breastfeeding support, education, individual counseling, a special food package, and referrals for nursing mothers. The WIC staff are committed to continuous staff development on breastfeeding and participate in regular trainings on current research, trends, and breastfeeding practices. Furthermore, the WIC staff offer learner-centered breastfeeding education, allowing the participant to explore their own motivations to making a decision to breastfeed. Exclusive breastfeeding participants also receive a special food package specifically designed for their increased nutritional needs. WIC’s Electric Breast Pump Loan Program allows exclusively breastfeeding participants to borrow hospital grade breast pumps, especially helpful for mothers whose infants are ill, have uncoordinated suck or latching problems, or have special needs and for mothers who are returning to work or school. WIC works in partnership with the Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health department and other health care providers to equip Bay Area parents with breastfeeding resources to help them make informed choices about how to feed their babies and to get the information and support they need to breastfeed successfully.