

Perceived barriers limit WIC CVV use in Arizona

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Low-income and minority communities and people participating in food assistance programs are more likely to consume fewer fruits and vegetables, depriving them of the health benefits of those foods. However, the government provides assistance, such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), designed to improve the dietary quality of at-risk women and children and improve their ability to purchase nutrient-dense foods.

To help promote the purchase of nutrient-dense foods, WIC provides cash value vouchers (CVV) to participants specifically for fruit and vegetable products. However, researchers discovered that some barriers to purchasing nutrient-dense foods still exist for WIC participants in a recent study of WIC participants in Arizona.

"Barriers that emerged from participant discussions included negative interactions with either the cashier or other shoppers, issues with lack of training of store cashiers, difficulty keeping up with changes in the WIC rules, and embarrassment and judgment in relation to using WIC," said lead author Farryl M.W. Bertmann, PhD, RD, Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, Omaha, NE. "Benefits were also discussed by participants, such as comparative ease of use of CVV and inclusion of fresh and processed [fruits and vegetables](#) to maximize convenience."

The study took place in the form of focus groups in areas of metro Phoenix with high WIC enrollment. Participants were recruited from current WIC participant lists. Of 192 women recruited for the study, 41

participated across the focus groups: 11 currently pregnant, eight up to six months postpartum, nine breastfeeding, and 13 who were not enrolled in WIC, but had children enrolled. Nearly all participants were White (97.5%) and 36.5% were Hispanic; the average age was 29.9 years.

During the focus groups, participants shared experiences, facilitators, and barriers in the store while redeeming WIC, as well as how CVV use resulted in positive and negative experiences. Participants also shared ways to make efficient use of CVV, maximize their value, and recommendations to improve the program.

More information: "WIC Cash Value Voucher (CVV) Use in Arizona: A Qualitative Exploration of Barriers and Strategies Related to Fruit and Vegetable Purchases," by Farryl M.W. Bertmann, PhD, RD; Cristina Barroso, PhD, MPH; Punam Ohri-Vachaspati, PhD, RD; Jeffrey S Hampl, PhD, RD; Karen Sell, RD; Christopher Mack Wharton, PhD ([DOI: 10.1016/j.jneb.2014.02.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2014.02.003)), *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, Volume 46/Supplement 3S (WIC Supplement), May/June

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