



## Tips for Talking with Your Legislator

Keeping in mind that your goal is to develop an ongoing personal relationship with your elected representatives so that they are familiar and knowledgeable about the WIC program when it comes time to make decisions. Here are a few things to remember when speaking to them:

- Know who your legislator is before making initial contact on an issue.
- Find out what legislative committees your legislator serves on.
- Do not be intimidated. Legislators will view you as the expert on the issue.
- Share your personal story if it helps to make your point.
- Do not assume that your legislator understands exactly what WIC provides, what determines eligibility, or the differences between WIC and other nutrition programs. Take the time to educate him/her. Do not use jargon.
- Know your issue. Provide facts and figures to back up your position. Refer to the talking points and any materials provided.
- Know your opposition. Be able to address the objectionable part(s) of the opposition stance directly and effectively, using verifiable examples and statistics – for instance, be prepared to address questions about WIC fraud, block granting, etc.
- Put the legislator at ease by convincing him/her that you are there to serve as an educational resource. Act like a partner, not an adversary.
- Put broad policy issues in a local perspective with information about exactly what WIC does in their community, and for how many people. Legislators who know how issues will impact local voters tend to grasp ideas more easily and are generally more receptive.
- Be a good listener and hear out what your legislator has to say on the issue.
- Be sure to thank the legislator for taking the time to hear your position.
- Once a legislator gives you a commitment (for instance, to make a site visit), it is all right to check back with him/her later.
- Do not be disappointed if your legislator sends an aide. Aides are critical to the process.
- Spend your time working with legislators from all parties – WIC has historically enjoyed bipartisan support.
- Always follow up with a thank you note, and amplify your main points.
- When your legislator goes the extra mile, you may consider acknowledging his or her efforts by writing a letter to the editor in your local paper.