



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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BABES & WIC –Supporting Breastfeeding Families Through Change

Status update after budget reductions

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Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program

A Healthy Start For Families - pregnant women, infants and children up to age 5

Did you know?

1 in 3 babies born
in SLO County is
enrolled in
WIC!

What WIC Offers:

- Free healthy foods
- Nutritional counseling
- Breastfeeding support
- Referrals
- WIC app



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Find WIC offices and grocers.

Use the WIC App to find WIC offices and WIC authorized grocers.



View your WIC Food Balance.

Check your WIC Food Balance and expiration date in the app.



Scan WIC foods as you shop.

Scan foods as you shop to find your WIC approved foods.



See upcoming appointments.

Never forget your WIC appointments with the WIC App.



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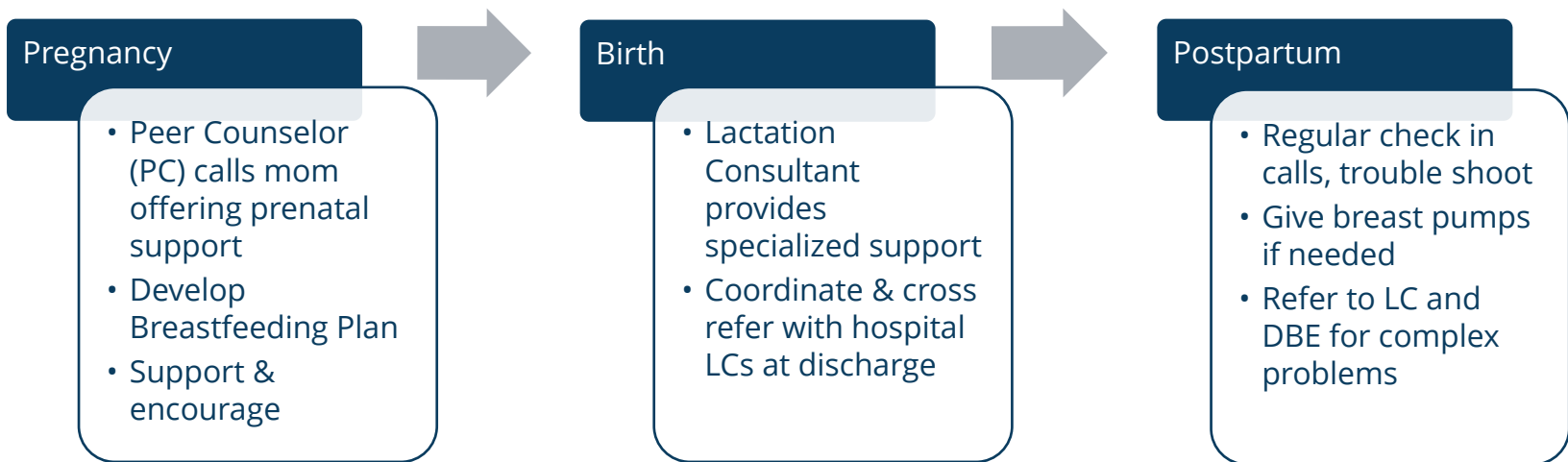
Babes at Breast Education & Support (BABES)

Funded by First 5 to Support Breastfeeding Families

Who We Are - Breastfeeding specialists:

- Lactation Consultant, IBCLC
- Peer Counselor (PC)
- Designated Breastfeeding Expert (DBE) – part time

What We Do -



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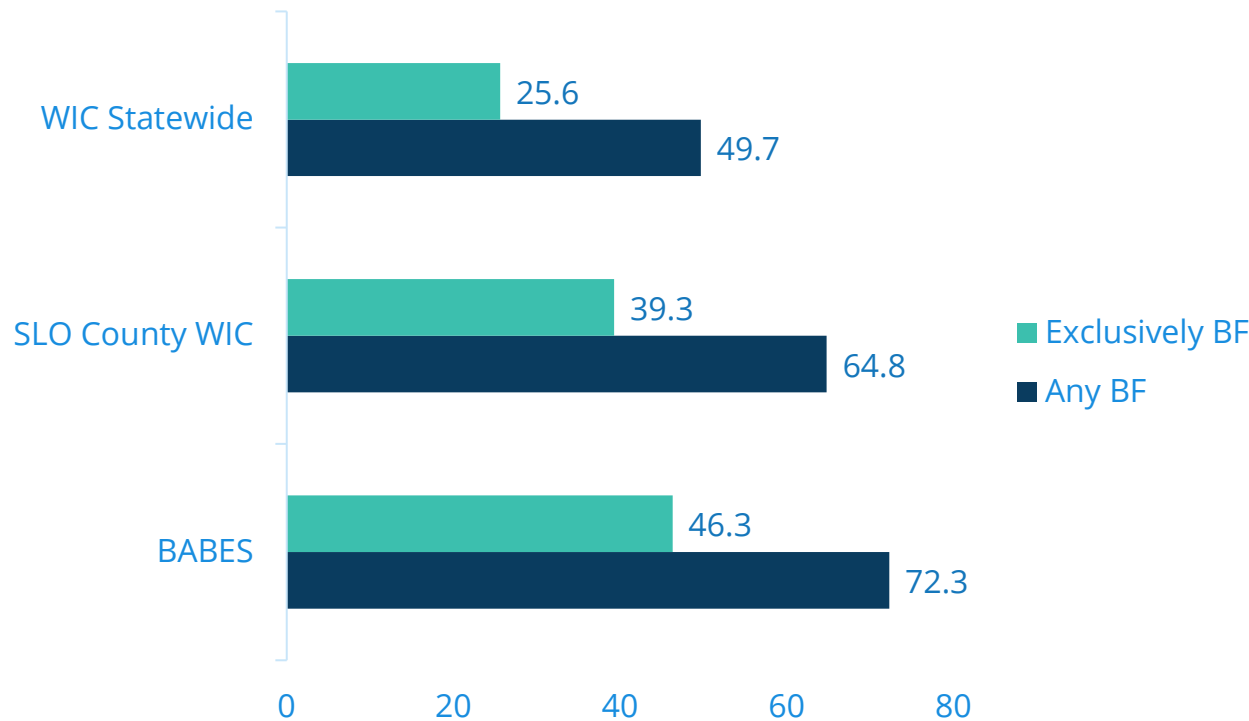


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Did you know?
BABES families' breastfeeding rates exceed the state rate by more than 20%

Why It Matters

Breast Feeding Rates at 6 Months



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The Challenge: Budget Reductions

SLO County WIC program relies on General Fund support.
PH was tasked to cut \$5M in GFS in FY 25/26. WIC reduction \$150K

What Changed

- Closed 4 clinics: Nipomo, Morro Bay, Cambria and Paso Robles
- Consolidated services in Grover Beach, SLO & Atascadero
- Paso was the busiest and most costly site (\$108K/year)

Our Response

- Telehealth now accounts for more than 90% of appointments
- Launching mobile & pop-up clinics in partnership with local libraries & SLO Food Bank

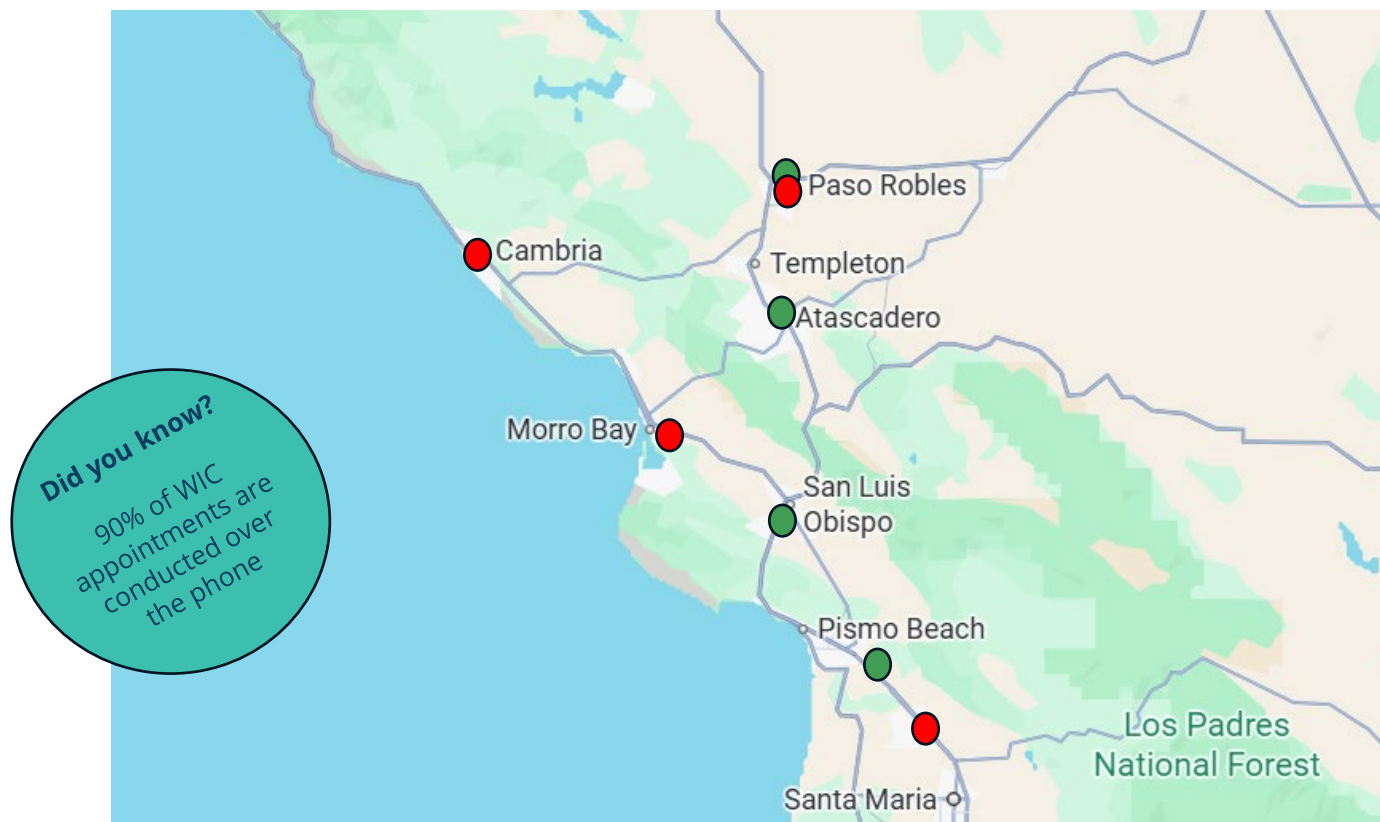


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Clinic Closures – Transition to Mobile



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What We Learned from Clinic Closures

- Paso saw the most walk-ins
- Often Mixteco-speaking, low digital literacy
- Families rely on in-person breastfeeding help
- Most breastfeeding appointments were willing to travel farther to receive services
- Caseload remained relatively consistent

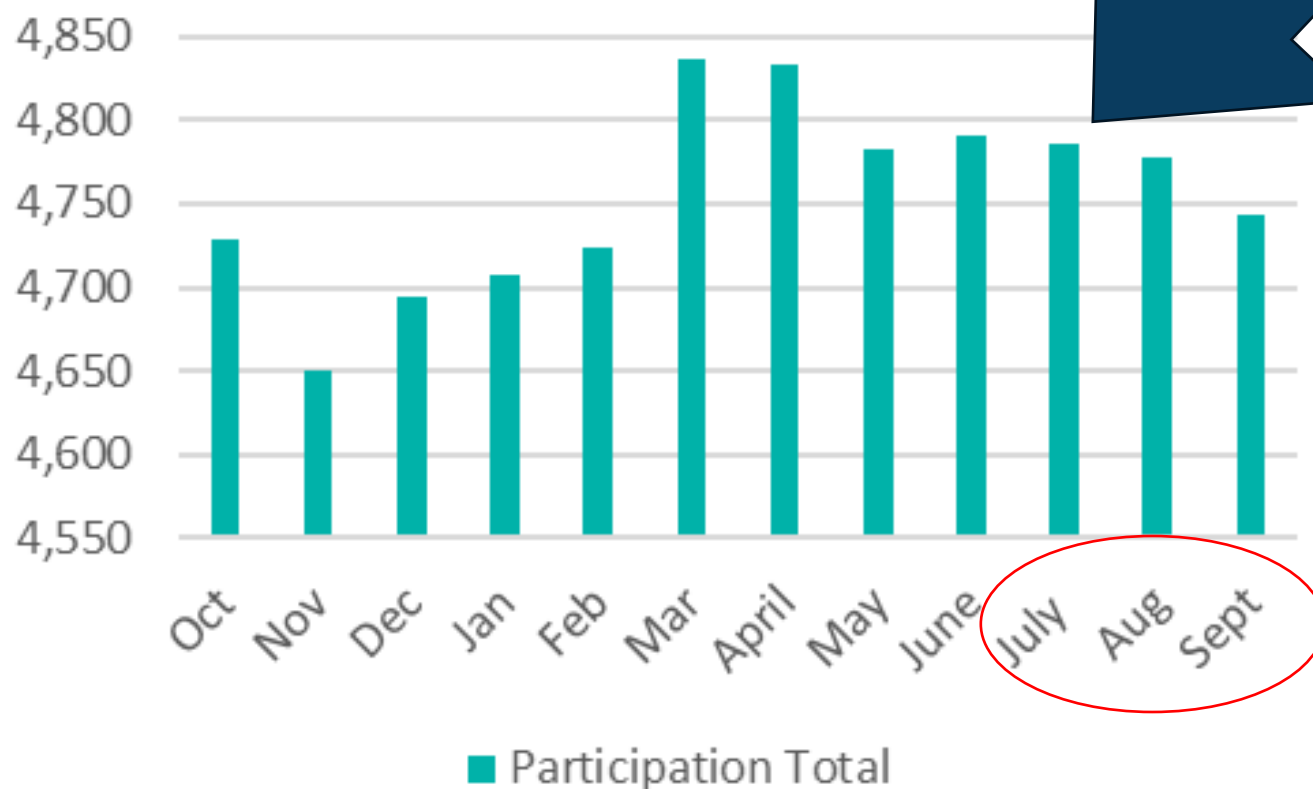


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Caseload Past 12 Months



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The Pivot: A Scaled Model

- Mobile POP-UP WIC Clinics in partnership with Libraries and Food Bank are underway
- Coming **November, 2025** – a partial reopening in Paso!
- Sqft reduced to ~12% of original footprint
- Co-located with Public Health Field Nursing team to share space and reduce costs



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Impact of the New Model

Success

- Maintained strong caseload
- Continued breastfeeding support and pump loans
- Stronger integration with MCAH and community partners
- Built a unified communications plan and partner network to share updates during clinic changes and govt shutdowns
- Reduced facility costs by nearly 90%

Challenges

- Telehealth doesn't work for all appointments, especially lactation and Mixtec families
- Staff struggle with constant change



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BABES Outcomes Amid Changes

- Maintained high breastfeeding initiation and duration rates
- Continued safety net for high-need families
- BABES staff generate Title XIX match revenue by connecting Medi-Cal families to care
- Leveraging blended funding to sustain impact



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Keeping an Eye On...

- **MODERN WIC Act** – would make telehealth permanent; without passage, telehealth ends Sept '26.
- **HR 1 Impacts** – reductions to fruit/veg benefit and loss of health coverage for some immigrant families.
- **Expanding Access to Local Foods** – supporting farmers and market managers with eWIC setup to allow year-round use of WIC benefits at farmers' markets.

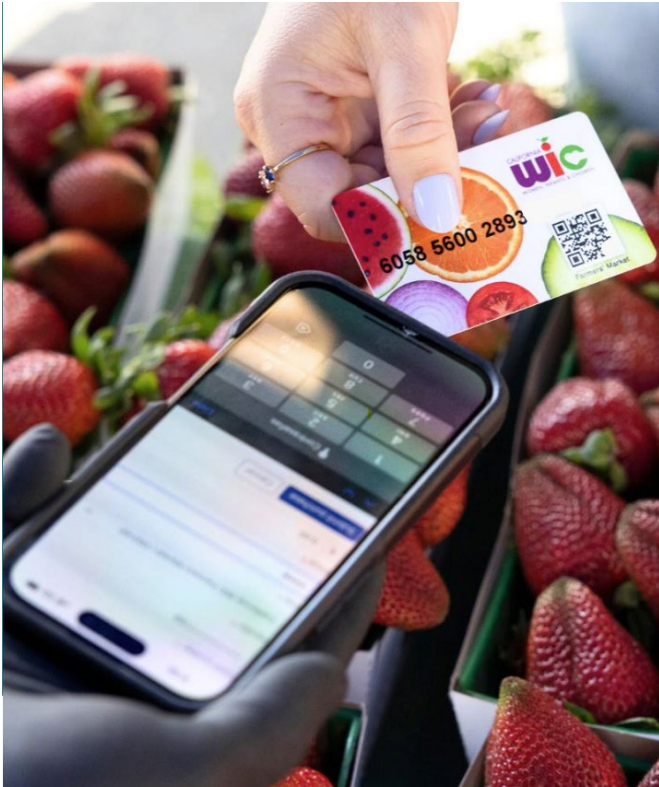


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Sneak Peak of eFarmers' Market



- **Outreach to farmers** to be able to accept WIC benefits at farmers' markets year round
- Legislation aims to **streamline and expand access to nutritious food** for vulnerable populations while supporting local farmers and markets



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Thank You First 5!



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