
In order to work together for children, it is helpful to understand all of the things we do together through our state budget to support kids. The KIDS COUNT project of the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center (MassBudget) has a new online resource—a Children's Budget—that can help you do exactly that.

In this session, we will discuss to what extent the Commonwealth’s annual budget—the single largest piece of state legislation each year—reflects our values about the government's role in helping educate our kids, or providing them with access to affordable health care, or offering support to low-income families. But since finding your way through hundreds of pages of legislation is confusing, complicated and time-consuming, the Children's Budget will help make sense of what the state budget does, how different programs might work together, and how support has changed over time.

To prepare for this session, the best way to learn about the Children's Budget is to use it. As you click through the Children's Budget, think about how you might use this resource in your own work, and how it might help you think about new ways to make connections across policy silos, or build influence in your community, or engage and empower a constituency.

Here's an example. Follow the instructions below so you can answer the questions.

Go to children.massbudget.org.
Click on Health.

Click on Maternal & Early Childhood Health.

Click on Women, Infants, and Children's (WIC)

Here you will see a Description of the WIC Program.

How many women and children in Massachusetts received WIC benefits in 2012?

Click on the Funding tab. Adjusted for inflation (real dollars), has state funding for the WIC program increased or decreased since 2001?

Click on the Proposals tab. How does the Governor’s funding proposal for FY 2014 compare to funding in FY 2013?

Click on the Expert Commentary tab. Note that some programs include citations from research or other expert commentary.

Note the Government Resources and Other Resources listings. These are online informational or advocacy links related to the program.
Note that the WIC Program is included in the "Common Thread" on Food & Nutrition programs across the budget.

There are Common Threads on Tax Spending, Children with Disabilities, Children's Mental Health, Domestic Violence, Food & Nutrition, and Youth Empowerment.

You can also Browse by Age or search by budget line item number or keyword.

Try another program. What have you learned?