



WIC Vendor Newsletter

Volume 13 Issue 4 February 2012

Articles

- The WIC Program
- WIC EBT Food Benefit Delivery
- How does WIC EBT work
- Positive Outcomes of EBT
- WIC Contacts

WIC In State toll-free 800-532-1579

The WIC Program

The WIC Program is America's premier public health nutrition program serving over 9 million mothers and young children (over half of all America's infants and one-quarter of its young children 1-5 years of age) through 12,200 service provider agencies nationwide. WIC has improved the nutrition status and health of at-risk women and children and prevented the future development of nutrition related health problems for over 35 years. The primary nutrition goals of the WIC Program are to provide nutritious foods, improve dietary intake and feeding practices, improve birth outcomes, increase breastfeeding rates, and prevent obesity in the population WIC serves. In addition to providing healthy foods, and critical health and social service referrals, the program works intensively with WIC families to help them form healthy eating habits. The foods included in the WIC food packages are specifically selected for their nutritional value to supplement the nutrients found lacking in the diets of low-income populations. The food packages are prescribed based upon the participant's life cycle stage and the foods are selected for the food list based upon the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and recommendations by professional organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). WIC food benefits are redeemed in retail grocery settings and special purpose vendor settings. The benefits are accessed with paper based food instruments or electronically, through Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards provided in two (2) or three (3) month issuance.

Building a Healthier Iowa

In 1972, the U.S. Congress legislated the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). Beginning as a two-year pilot project under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the WIC Program linked health care and food assistance for pregnant women, nursing mothers, infants and children considered at health risk because of malnutrition and low income. After a two-year trial, the WIC Program (later renamed the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) officially began in Iowa with the first clinic opening in Davenport on March 12, 1974. In 1975, the Davenport program served approximately 1,050 at-risk women, infants and children up to the age of five years.

The Iowa WIC Program has been successful because it recognizes the far-reaching implications of proper maternal and early childhood nutrition. The individuals who originally planned the program had the foresight to combine nutrition education, nutritious foods, and healthcare referrals in a program that provided not just immediate food benefits, but education to influence eating habits for a lifetime. Dedication and hard work have brought WIC from a two-year pilot project to the premier public health nutrition program in the nation. The Iowa WIC Program ensures that children in Iowa are ready to learn and, in turn, makes an investment in a future productive work force. As WIC continues to provide quality services to Iowa families, it is with the mission of building a stronger and healthier Iowa, and protecting and nurturing the next generation of Iowa leaders.

WIC EBT Food Benefit Delivery

Information Provided by the National WIC Association

Detailed information available at <http://www.paramountcommunication.com/nwica/DeliveringWICFoodBenefitsviaEBT.pdf>

The National WIC Association (NWA) seeks to ensure the most efficient method for each State to deliver benefits of nutritious foods that are supplied by the WIC Program. While the majority of states are currently utilizing paper based systems for benefit delivery, NWA promoted the legislative provisions and plan included in the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 that directs States to move towards issuing food benefits through EBT by 2020. NWA is neutral with respect to the technology—online or offline—WIC State Agencies select for EBT service delivery. NWA recognizes that each state must evaluate and seek the best method of delivering program benefits through EBT for their State Agency, participants and partners. In January 2003, FNS in partnership with NWA developed a five (5) year plan for EBT. The overall goals of this plan remain current and NWA fully supports these goals. In line with current trends and the overall acceptance of doing business electronically, NWA encourages WIC State Agencies to continue to migrate from paper-based food delivery systems to EBT.

The five (5) year WIC EBT goals are:

- WIC will be an integral part of modernizing and streamlining business practices towards electronic solutions.
- WIC will deliver benefits and reconcile payments through an EBT system that is affordable within a state's NSA grant.
- WIC will enhance client services by improving the client's shopping experience, access to prescribed foods and simplifying the point of sale experience
- Accountability and program monitoring will be improved for State Agencies.
- The retailer's experience will be enhanced through more efficient redemption and payment.

Food Benefit Redemption - How will WIC EBT work? Basic steps

- Food Benefit Redemption WIC food benefits are provided to participants through local clinics via an EBT card which looks similar to a debit or credit card.
- The UPC codes for a participant's prescribed foods are provided in an encoded format either on a Smart Card (Offline) or through an EBT host (Online) which only allows those food items to be redeemed by the participant.
- Those food items can only be redeemed during a specified period—usually thirty (30) days.
- When a participant is issued a card, a Personal Identification Number (PIN) is selected.
- The participant then redeems their benefits at a retail vendor authorized to provide WIC food items by presenting their selected food items along with their card in the retailer's lane.
- When the participant inserts or swipes their card at the point-of-sale (POS) device, the register then obtains the food prescription balance to match the food items through either offline or online processes.

Positive Outcomes of EBT

For the participant:

- Transactions are discreet and confidential. Both magnetic stripe cards and smart cards look similar to debit and credit cards.
- As with common shopping patterns, the WIC participant may go to the authorized retailer as often as necessary within the valid period of the benefits. Participants may buy a gallon of milk and a loaf of bread without having to make other purchases.
- WIC benefits are not required to be separated from other purchases. A WIC, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and cash purchase can be made smoothly and easily in a single transaction.
- A detailed listing of the benefits that each participant in a household are entitled is provided prior to shopping. An accurate listing of benefits remaining is provided after a shopping experience.
- Issuance of electronic benefits results in WIC clinic efficiencies allowing more time for nutrition education.
- Electronic benefits provide detailed information for the health professional to individualize nutrition education.

For the retailer:

- Common errors are averted as participants purchase only WIC authorized foods and redeem benefits within specified dates.
- Participants shop more often, resulting in additional purchases of other non-WIC items.
- Multiple checks/vouchers to complete (manually entering date redeemed, pay exactly amounts, stamping the front of the check with a vendor stamp) are a thing of the past.
- Transactions are accomplished between the card and the electronic cash register.
- Payment for transactions is timelier, through secure pathways.
- Each transaction is traceable.

Conclusion:

WIC EBT service delivery systems have positive benefits for WIC participants, retailers, and State Agencies. WIC must fully implement EBT nationwide by 2020. Whatever method of EBT service delivery that is chosen by a State Agency, whether offline or online, the selected system must be capable of responding to WIC Program changes, technology standards and industry standards. The National WIC Association (NWA) seeks to ensure the most efficient method for each State to deliver WIC's food benefits actively and fully supporting the issuance of food benefits through EBT by 2020.

Iowa WIC is currently conducting a feasibility study to determine which format (Online or Offline) best meets our participant and vendor needs. We anticipate making the format selection decision in early summer 2012.

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321 East 12th Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0075

Attn: Store Management
February 2012 WIC Newsletter Vol 13 Issue 4

Iowa Program Contacts

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| IOWA WIC PROGRAM | | 75-1248 919 | 40404501 |
|---|--|---|---|
| IOWA DEPT. OF PUBLIC HEALTH 321 EAST 12th STREET - DES MOINES, IA 50319-0075 PHONE: 1-800-532-1579 | | Acct #: 805749 | First Date to Use: 11/28/2011 Last Date to Use: 12/27/2011 |
| VOID IF ALTERED - VOID IF VENDOR DOES NOT HAVE A VALID IOWA WIC CONTRACT ONLY WIC APPROVED FOODS MAY BE PURCHASED - NO SUBSTITUTIONS ALLOWED | | PURCHASE DATE | |
| 97-97 Family ID: 284899 Name: Delaney M. Frankelhaus | | | |
| 1 Quart of Whole Milk - Unflavored Only | | | |
| 2 Gallon of Whole Milk - Unflavored Only | | | |
| 16 oz Natural Cheese - Chunk, Shredded, or Mozzarella String Cheese | | | |
| 1 Dozen Large Grade A or AA Eggs - White or Brown | | | |
| 4 Can(s) 14-16 oz. Beans (legumes)-No added fat or meat, no baked beans | | | |
| 1 Container(s) 64 oz. Fruit Juice | | | |
| 36 oz. or less Cereal | | | |
| 1 Loaf 16 oz. Whole Wheat Bread | | | |
| PAYABLE THROUGH SOLUTRAN, Citizens Alliance Bank • Howard Lake Branch • Clara City, MN 56222 | | VOID - Sample Only AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE: PARENT/GUARDIAN/PARTICIPANT | |

Check Design Changes

- **New** - blue check stock
- **New** - WIC logo
- **Reversed** location of WIC Stamp and Pay Exactly blocks