

## IV. Organization and Management

### 4.1.060 Emergency and Disaster Preparedness for Local Agencies

Authority 2019 7 CFR 246.7(c)(2)(i); 246.7(g)(3); WIC Policy Memo 95-9A Revision of WIC Disaster Policy and Coordination; 95-9B Clarification of WIC PM 95-9A; 2017 Guide to Coordinating WIC Services During Disasters

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**POLICY:** The local agency (LA) shall make every reasonable effort to maintain or re-establish WIC services during periods of emergency or disaster, to continue issuance of benefits to participants. When adverse circumstances persist, the state agency (SA) will assist the LA with coordination efforts.

The LA will be guided by the plan or procedures developed by their parent agency for emergency response and disaster preparedness.

#### PROCEDURES:

- A. If an emergency prevents or limits the LA's ability to carry out normal clinic operations, the LA should contact their SA technical assistance staff for guidance on how to minimize interruptions to WIC services.
1. If an emergency or disaster has occurred, the LA shall contact the SA as soon as possible and provide the SA with a LA contact person and phone number. If the LA is unable to contact the SA, the LA should contact the Department of Health and Senior Services, Emergency Response Center (ERC) at 1-800-392-0272.
  2. If the emergency or disaster is localized, the affected LA has primary responsibility to coordinate emergency response efforts. If SA technical assistance is needed, the LA shall contact the SA.
  3. If a situation occurs and the LA must make changes to WIC operations due to the emergency or disaster, the LA must provide the SA with information regarding impact to the surrounding area or community.
  4. If SA services are interrupted or there is a state office closure in Jefferson City due to an emergency situation, the SA will notify the LA by email or telephone. The specific affected services and the approximate length of time for the closure will be noted.
  5. Dependent upon the extent of the emergency or disaster, the SA will contact affected authorized WIC retailers. If the LA is aware of authorized WIC retailers that are affected, LA staff can report the information to the SA.
  6. If a power outage affects the LA site for more than twenty-four hours, the LA should utilize other sites or make arrangements with neighboring agencies to assist with certification of participants and issuing food benefits for the affected local site(s).

B. Certification and Issuance of Food Benefits

1. If an applicant or participant does not have access to proof of eligibility due to the disaster, refer to policies [8.1.120](#), [8.1.130](#), and [8.1.210](#).
2. If the LA is experiencing a shortage of competent professional authorities (CPA) to perform certification functions due to the disaster, the LA may be approved to modify the food benefit issuance or certification process.
3. If the participant has foods that were spoiled or lost due to the emergency or disaster, the LA may issue food benefits to replace foods. Issuance of the replacement food benefits shall be documented in the participant's folder in the Missouri WIC Information Network System (MOWINS).
4. If a participant has lost their food instrument, refer to policy [9.1.030](#).
5. If retailers are affected by the disaster and infant formula is not readily available, the LA shall assess the need for infant formula and contact the SA for guidance.
  - a. If services are disrupted and formula is not available through the normal retailers or pharmacies, the SA will contact the rebate formula manufacturer to have infant formula direct shipped to the LA.
  - b. Storage and security of infant formula will be the responsibility of the LA. The LA should work with their parent agency to identify other community entities such as their local Red Cross, schools, etc., for storage of supplies of formula when retailers are unavailable.

C. Breastfeeding

1. LA staff will encourage mothers to continue breastfeeding their infants during emergency situations.
2. In the event that formula is unavailable or limited, or cannot be safely prepared, LA staff will encourage and offer assistance to WIC women who had previously weaned to re-lactate or to induce lactation if they have never breastfed.
3. Basic strategies for re-lactation and induced lactation education should be a cooperative effort by the State WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator, the LA Breastfeeding Coordinator, and the community/area International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC).

D. WIC Service Delivery during an Emergency or Disaster

1. The USDA may grant waiver authority to allow the SA and the LA to continue providing services during an emergency situation.
2. Flexibilities which are currently authorized in regulation and may be exercised at the discretion of the SA to ensure WIC participants are provided services include the following:
  - a. Remote nutrition education may be done on any currently certified participant.
  - b. Bloodwork may be deferred for up to 90 days after the date of certification or mid-certification assessment (MCA) if the participant has another

qualifying risk factor.

- c. Certification periods may be extended for up to 30 days.
- d. Physical presence requirements (anthropometric data and proof of eligibility must be available) may be waived in the following situations:
  - i. Infants under 8 weeks of age for whom all necessary data from birth is provided.
  - ii. Infants or children present for certification/MCA at least once within the prior 12 months and are under the care of one or more working parents or caretakers whose working status presents a barrier to bringing the infant or child into the LA.
  - iii. Infants or children present for initial WIC certification and receiving ongoing healthcare.
  - iiii. Applicants, participants, parents, or guardians who have a disability that makes it difficult to come to a clinic for certification/MCA. The applicant or participant may be certified or assessed without being physically present. Only those disabilities that create a current barrier to the physical presence requirement may serve as a basis for an exception. Healthcare provider documentation is required for this exemption.
- e. Electronic proof of income and health data may be accepted by the LA. The means used to transmit data must be secure to protect participant confidentiality.
- f. EWIC cards may be mailed if in-person pick up is not possible.

The SA will inform the LAs in writing if any of the flexibilities above may be implemented. Designation of an emergency or disaster does not automatically put these flexibilities into effect.

### 3. Waivers

- a. Waiver authority for any regulatory or policy provision for WIC may be provided by congressional order. States may request individual waivers that are relevant and responsive to their current situation when waiver authority is provided to the USDA.
- b. The SA will provide process documentation to all LAs, retailers, and interested parties to describe implementation of approved waivers.