



United States Department of Agriculture

2017

# SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC)

## GUIDE TO COORDINATING WIC SERVICES DURING DISASTERS



## WIC DISASTER GUIDANCE

This guidance contains information to help WIC State agencies plan for meeting the needs of WIC participants and potential, newly-eligible WIC applicants prior to and during a disaster response. It can also be used to plan for continued WIC operations during emergencies or other situations of distress. The information is designed to assist Headquarters and Regional Office staff, as well as WIC State and local agency staff in their development of an executable WIC disaster plan.

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION ..... 5

    WIC PROGRAM OVERVIEW ..... 5

CHAPTER 2 – DISASTERS ..... 6

    NATURAL DISASTERS ..... 6

    HUMAN PANDEMIC..... 6

    BIOLOGICAL..... 7

CHAPTER 3 – WIC’S DISASTER ROLE ..... 8

    WIC DURING A DISASTER..... 8

    WIC DISASTER PLANNING..... 9

CHAPTER 4 – WIC & DISASTER EVACUEES ..... 13

    WIC CERTIFICATION DURING A DISASTER ..... 13

    INCOME, RESIDENCY, AND IDENTIFICATION ..... 14

CHAPTER 5 – FOOD INSTRUMENTS..... 17

    REPLACING UNREDEEMED FOOD INSTRUMENTS ..... 17

    REPLACING FOOD BENEFITS..... 17

    ISSUING FOOD INSTRUMENTS..... 18

CHAPTER 6 – INFORMATION FOR VENDORS..... 20

    OUT-OF-STATE FOOD INSTRUMENTS ..... 20

CHAPTER 7 – NUTRITION CONCERNS ..... 21

    ENCOURAGING BREASTFEEDING ..... 21

    FORMULA ..... 21

    MEDICALLY-FRAGILE PARTICIPANTS ..... 22

    STATE AGENCY OPTIONS ..... 22

CHAPTER 8 - ALLOWABLE COSTS ..... 24

CHAPTER 9 – FNS DISASTER RESPONSE ..... 26

    FNS DISASTER RESPONSE OVERVIEW ..... 26

## WIC DISASTER GUIDANCE

OTHER FNS PROGRAMS .....	26
CHAPTER 10 – ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.....	27
HELPFUL LINKS.....	27

## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

## WIC PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides supplemental nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to health and other social services for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk.

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the WIC Program at the Federal level. WIC is not an entitlement program; i.e., Congress does not set aside funds to allow every eligible individual to participate in the program. Instead, each year Congress authorizes a specific amount of funding for program operations which is distributed to State agencies (State health departments or comparable agencies) via a Federal grant. FNS provides these funds to WIC State agencies to pay for WIC foods redeemed via food instruments (FIs) [vouchers, checks and/or Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards], nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, and administrative costs.

WIC State agencies provide FIs for participants to use at authorized retailers, usually a grocery store, to purchase foods specifically targeted to improve or maintain their nutritional health at critical periods of growth and development

The WIC Program operates in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, 5 United States Territories, and 34 Indian Tribal Organizations (ITO). The 90 WIC State agencies make program services available through an estimated 1,800 local agencies and 10,000 clinic sites.



## CHAPTER 2 – DISASTERS

Agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and organizations such as the American Red Cross (ARC) define a disaster as a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community's or society's ability to cope using its own resources. Though often caused by nature, disasters can have human origins.

## NATURAL DISASTERS

Natural disasters take different forms, such as a hurricane, flood, fire, etc. A natural disaster has the potential to disrupt WIC operations and cause the relocation of WIC participants.

Regardless of the disaster, WIC State agencies are expected to take reasonable measures to continue providing WIC benefits to WIC participants during a disaster. The next chapter of this guide includes WIC program flexibilities with regard to WIC operations for participants and/or newly-eligible applicants.

## HUMAN PANDEMIC

During a pandemic event, the key public health intervention to slow the spread of the disease may be social distancing. Schools and day care centers may be closed for extended periods of time, leaving a large number of parents absent from work to care for their children.

State agencies may not be able to certify applicants for WIC at application/issuance sites or at local WIC clinics due to restrictions on social gathering, and will need to operate under alternate procedures. In addition, staff may face an increased workload as many State, local, and clinic employees and their families may also be impacted by the pandemic and unable to work.

See the Department of Health & Human Services and the Department of Homeland Security's websites for more information on effective strategies to [reduce the spread of a pandemic, ways to prepare](#), and [FNS Program Human Pandemic Response](#)

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BIOLOGICAL

Bioterrorism is the intentional release or dissemination of biological agents. These agents are bacteria, viruses, or toxins, and may be in a naturally occurring or a human-modified form.

See the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website for more information on [emergency preparedness](#).

Since the response to a biological disaster will be coordinated at a higher level than the WIC Program, State agencies should consult with their Departments of Health on what, if any, biological procedures should be incorporated in their disaster plans. In such situations, external agencies, mainly the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will focus on the identification and containment of the outbreak. Please refer to the "emergency preparedness" link above for further information.

## CHAPTER 3 – WIC’S DISASTER ROLE

## WIC DURING A DISASTER



Ensuring access to nutrition assistance is a critical and immediate focus for disaster response teams. USDA Foods and the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) are the primary methods that FNS uses to respond to the nutrition needs of disaster survivors. Unlike USDA Foods and D-SNAP, WIC’s role in responding to disasters is minimal, as the Program is neither designed

nor funded to meet the basic nutritional needs of disaster survivors who would not otherwise be eligible to receive WIC benefits. Since there is no additional funding designated for WIC disaster relief, WIC programs must operate within its current program context and funding level even in disaster circumstances.

However, there are many ways WIC State agency personnel can contribute to a disaster relief effort by minimizing disruptions to WIC operations and ensuring that eligible, nutritionally at-risk women, infants, and children continue to receive benefits. WIC regulations provide flexibility with regard to physical presence, certification periods and mailing food instruments and/or issuing EBT cards, including:

- Persons with a serious illness that may be exacerbated by coming in to the WIC clinic may be exempt from the physical presence requirement (this would also apply if applicants/family members are under a voluntary quarantine)<sup>1</sup>;
- State agencies may extend the certification period for breastfeeding women, infants and children, up to 30 days, to accommodate difficulty in scheduling appointments<sup>2</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> [WIC Regulations §246.7\(o\)\(2\)\(i\)\(C\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [WIC Regulations §246.7\(g\)\(3\)](#)

- State agencies may mail food instruments or issue electronic benefits to persons who are not scheduled for nutrition education or a second or subsequent certification;<sup>3</sup>
- When WIC participants are unable to use their food instruments because they or another family member are under quarantine (voluntary or involuntary), they have the option to designate a proxy to redeem WIC benefits on their behalf<sup>4</sup>.

In a disaster, WIC Programs should work to maintain regular benefit delivery to participants. WIC staff can also focus on program outreach to potentially eligible individuals, some of whom may be newly income eligible if their employment was affected by the disaster or if they are now D-SNAP recipients. Receipt of D-SNAP confers adjunctive income eligibility for WIC.

To help a community prepare for disasters, WIC local agency staff can educate participants on food preparation and food safety concerns during disaster conditions as part of routine nutrition education services. WIC State agencies can also contribute to the overall disaster relief preparation and response by sharing information and participating in advance planning activities with State or ITO disaster relief agencies.

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### WIC DISASTER PLANNING

Advance disaster planning within a WIC State agency helps promote a coordinated assistance effort. Thorough planning efforts made well in advance of an actual disaster event, helps to ensure program continuity.

There are many aspects to planning for program continuation and outreach in disasters. Since the issuance of [WIC Policy Memorandum 95-9, "WIC Disaster Policy and Coordination"](#), FNS has encouraged WIC State agencies to develop a disaster plan for incorporation into or attachment to their overarching WIC State Plan. FNS Regional Office staff should review each component of a State agency's disaster plan and provide technical assistance to ensure that basic WIC Program operations are met.

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<sup>3</sup> [WIC Regulations §246.12\(r\)\(4\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [WIC Regulations §246.12\(r\)\(1\)](#)

## WIC DISASTER GUIDANCE

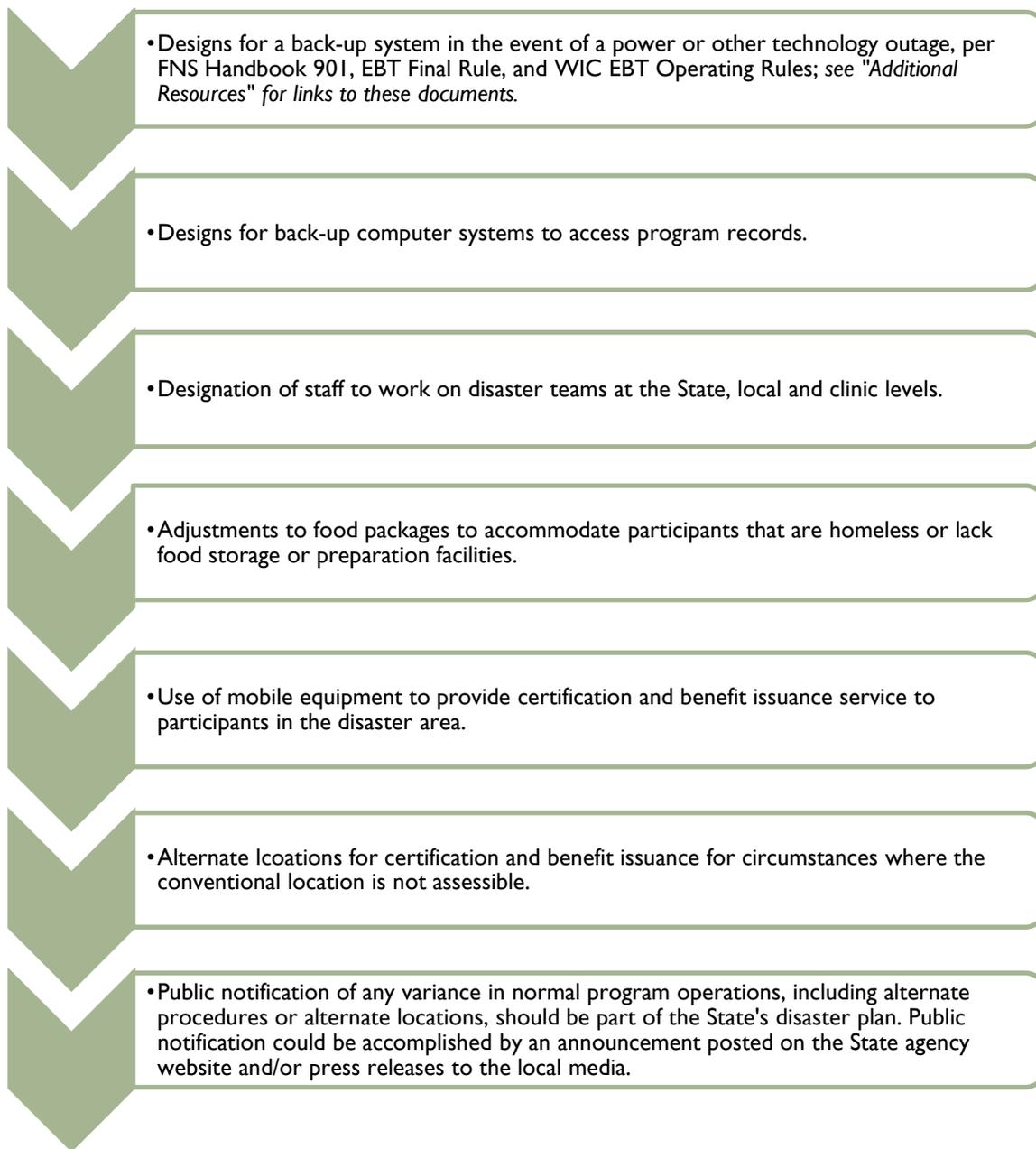
Disaster plans should address operation of basic program areas including access to program records, certification and benefit issuance sites, food package adjustments, and food delivery systems. It is important to note that WIC benefit redemption cannot occur until authorized retailers have resumed normal operations. The chart on this page outlines best practices in WIC disaster planning, while the following paragraphs discuss these steps in more detail.

First, WIC State agencies should designate a staff disaster contact person who will establish a working relationship with the State/ITO disaster agency responsible for coordinating and planning disaster relief. WIC State agencies should discuss ways they can contribute to a relief effort, such as sharing staff expertise about the nutritional needs of the WIC-eligible population and learning how the State/ITO disaster agency plans to provide food to the general population. From these discussions, the State/ITO disaster agency and the WIC State agency can determine how WIC can appropriately assist the State/ITO response to disasters or emergencies and how the State/ITO disaster agency can help meet the needs of the WIC-eligible population following a disaster.

After the appropriate working relationship is established between the State/ITO disaster agency, the WIC State agency should prepare its own disaster plan, which may be incorporated into or attached to the overarching WIC State Plan. The disaster plan should also incorporate applicable State agency manuals on alternate procedures.

Examples of alternate procedures include, but are not limited to:

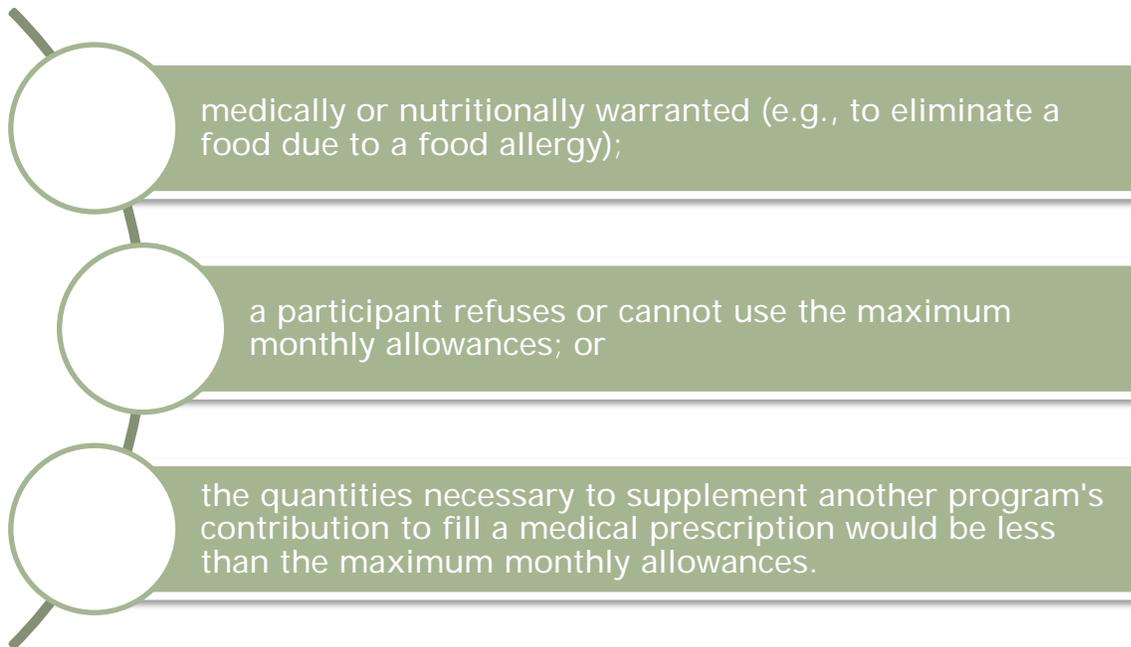




While developing a disaster plan for continued program operations, a key point for WIC State agencies to remember is that the full maximum monthly allowances of all supplemental foods, in all food packages, must be made available to participants if medically or nutritionally warranted. A State agency cannot tailor food packages and maximum monthly allowances for entire categories, groups, or subgroups of WIC participants, even in response to disaster situations. Similarly, reductions in these amounts cannot be made for

cost-savings, administrative convenience, caseload management or to control vendor abuse.

The only type of food package tailoring that is authorized by Federal WIC regulations is individual tailoring<sup>5</sup>. The provision of less than the maximum monthly allowances of supplemental foods to an individual WIC participant in all food packages is appropriate only when:



To ensure the validity of a WIC State agency's disaster plan, to include, but not be limited to such situations as mentioned above, the WIC State agency may seek technical assistance from the appropriate FNS Regional Office. This is generally accomplished through the standard WIC State Plan amendment process.

Once the disaster plan has been reviewed and it is ready to be executed, the WIC State agency should train State, local agency, and clinic staff on the disaster plan and alternate procedures to help ensure successful program operations during a disaster. The State agency should consider periodically testing its readiness by conducting practice runs of disaster operations.

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<sup>5</sup> [WIC Regulations, § 246.10\(c\)](#)

## CHAPTER 4 – WIC &amp; DISASTER EVACUEES

*NOTE: The following chapter represents a summary of WIC policy and regulatory citations that are specifically relevant to WIC Program operations during disaster situations, in which WIC participants have been evacuated from their homes and relocated to other areas within their home State, or to another State.*

## WIC CERTIFICATION DURING A DISASTER

Disaster-related evacuees who seek WIC benefits may be considered special nutritional risk applicants and, as such, receive expedited certification processing. These applicants must be notified of their eligibility or ineligibility within 10 days of the date of the first request for Program benefits.<sup>6</sup> Although Federal WIC Regulations allow the State agency to extend the notification period to a maximum of 15 days, every effort should be made under disaster circumstances to certify these individuals immediately and within a maximum of 10 days of their request (whether by phone or visit to the local WIC agency) for WIC benefits.

In cases where disaster-related evacuees move in with another household, the displaced individuals should be considered homeless and treated as a separate economic unit (separate family living under the same roof). The income documentation requirement does not apply to a homeless woman or child for whom the agency determines the requirement would present an *unreasonable* barrier to participation. In this case, the applicant must sign a statement specifying why he/she cannot provide documentation of income. Most displaced categorically eligible individuals are likely to be determined income eligible for WIC benefits due to loss of a job or adjunctively income eligible for SNAP.

Every effort should be made to provide a full assessment at the time the individual seeks WIC services, to ensure the participant is linked to the health and social service network in the State. This helps to ensure that WIC continues to serve as an adjunct to health care, even in a disaster situation.

<sup>6</sup> [WIC Regulations, § 246.7\(f\)\(2\)\(iii\)\(A\)](#)

As part of the nutritional risk assessment, WIC regulations require at a minimum, height or length and weight measurements and a blood test for anemia.<sup>7</sup> WIC Regulations allow the blood test to be deferred for up to 90 days for persons with a documented nutritional risk.<sup>8</sup> Disaster-related evacuees are considered homeless and therefore can be assigned the nutritional risk of homelessness.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, pregnant women that are income eligible, may be considered presumptively eligible to participate in the program, and may be certified immediately without an evaluation of nutritional risk for up to 60 days.<sup>8</sup>

As a general rule, and to expedite the certification process, Verification of Certification (VOC) should be provided by the local WIC office to WIC



participants when a disaster-related evacuation is anticipated. However, if a VOC has not been issued, participants in disaster-prone areas should be reminded during their certification visits that their WIC folders (i.e., WIC certification document(s)) contain important information and in the event of an evacuation, they should take their WIC folders with them.

In addition, State agencies certifying disaster-related evacuees should issue a VOC to these participants. This will help to assure continuation of benefits when she/he returns to her/his home State. A person with a VOC card cannot be denied participation in another State because she/he does not meet that State's particular eligibility criteria. For more information on VOC, please refer to [WIC Policy Memorandum 2016-4, "Verification of Certification"](#).

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## INCOME, RESIDENCY, AND IDENTIFICATION

Federal WIC regulations state that the income documentation requirement does not apply to an individual for whom the necessary documentation is not

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<sup>7</sup> [WIC Regulations, § 246.7\(e\)\(1\)\(ii\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [WIC Regulations, § 246.7\(e\)\(1\)\(v\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> [WIC Regulations, 7\(e\)\(1\)\(ii\)](#)

available or to an individual such as a homeless person for whom the agency determines the income documentation requirement would present an *unreasonable* barrier to participation.<sup>10</sup> When using these exceptions for disaster evacuees, the State or local agency must require the applicant to sign a statement specifying why she/he cannot provide documentation of income. Such a statement is not required when there is no income<sup>11</sup>.

Federal WIC regulations also allow the State agency to authorize the certification of applicants when no proof of residency or identity exists (such as when an applicant or an applicant's parent is: a victim of theft, loss, *or disaster*; a homeless individual; or a migrant farm worker).<sup>12</sup> In these cases, the State or local agency must require the applicant to confirm in writing his/her residency and/or identity.

Note: there is no durational residency requirement, i.e., length of residency cannot be a prerequisite to receiving WIC benefits. Thus, a WIC participant who relocates in response to a disaster situation cannot be required to live in the new location for a minimum time before she/he is eligible to receive WIC benefits.

When the income, residency, and identification requirements are met, a State agency has the option to establish a shorter certification period for categorically eligible participants.<sup>13</sup> This should be done on a case-by-case basis as appropriate. In most cases, upon completion of the disaster situation, there is a reasonable expectation that participants will return to their previous living situations. With this in mind, the State agency should consider shortening the certification period in an effort to provide the best disaster-related service to participants that are temporarily residing within its jurisdiction.

When there is difficulty in scheduling appointments, the certification period may be extended by a period not to exceed 30 days for the following categories: breastfeeding women, infants and children.<sup>14</sup> This policy is available for clinics that are experiencing a shortage of WIC staff to perform certifications. In such cases, one month of food benefits can be issued to those participants until an appointment can be scheduled.

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<sup>10</sup> [WIC Regulations § 246.7\(d\)\(2\)\(v\)\(C\)](#)

<sup>11</sup> [WIC Regulations § 246.7\(d\)\(2\)\(v\)\(C\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [WIC Regulations § 246.7\(c\)\(2\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [WIC Regulations § 246.7\(g\)\(2\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> [WIC Regulations § 246.7\(g\)\(3\)](#)

## WIC DISASTER GUIDANCE

The State or local agency must require all applicants to be physically present at each WIC certification, unless the applicant meets its exception criteria.<sup>15</sup> In this case, the State or local agency has the option to grant exceptions to qualified applicants that are disabled, receiving ongoing health care, to working parents or caretakers, or to infants that are under eight weeks of age if it is not possible for these applicants to be present at the time of certification.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> [WIC Regulations § 246.7\(o\)\(1\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> [WIC Regulations §247.7 \(o\)\(2\)](#)

## CHAPTER 5 – FOOD INSTRUMENTS

## REPLACING UNREDEEMED FOOD INSTRUMENTS

State agencies may establish their own policies and procedures with regard to replacement of *unredeemed* WIC food instruments (vouchers or checks) that are destroyed in disasters, within the parameters of Federal WIC regulations and policy. FNS will support replacement of WIC food instruments if the State agency can verify that the original food instruments were not redeemed. In addition, State agencies should have participants sign a statement attesting to the fact that their food instruments have been destroyed as a result of the disaster.

State agencies that have transitioned to EBT should have policies and procedures in place with regard to replacement of the EBT card. EBT cards that are deemed inoperable, lost, or stolen should be replaced as soon as possible, but not later than seven (7) business days following notice by the participant or proxy to the State agency. For more information on replacement of EBT cards, refer to the [WIC EBT final rule](#) and corresponding [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

## REPLACING FOOD BENEFITS

When developing a disaster plan, State agencies may develop a viable method of replacing food benefits destroyed during a disaster. State agency policy and procedures may allow for replacement of food benefits redeemed but destroyed **only if:**

- The replacement of redeemed food benefits does not result in the replacement of prior month(s) benefits. If the participant has benefits remaining in a 3-month issuance cycle, the State agency has the option to issue the remaining benefits to replace the lost/destroyed food. For example: If a participant redeemed benefits for



both June and July, but they were destroyed in July (when disaster occurred), the State agency has the option to only replace July's benefits, not June's benefits. In this example, the State agency cannot issue June benefits because that would result in the retroactive (prior month's) issuance.

- State agencies develop a process to determine the portion of current month's food benefits to be replaced.
- The quantity of replacement food benefits reflects the portion of food benefits for which the participant would still be eligible.
- State agencies require participants to sign a statement attesting to the fact that their food benefits have been destroyed as a result of a disaster.

Per WIC Policy Memorandum 95-9A, "Revision of WIC Disaster Policy and Coordination", State agencies should not issue replacement of food benefits in areas where mass care relief organizations, such as The American Red Cross or the Salvation Army, are providing feeding services.

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### ISSUING FOOD INSTRUMENTS

Federal WIC Regulations allow a WIC State agency, under certain circumstances, to issue food instruments to participants who are not scheduled for nutrition education or a second or subsequent certification.<sup>17</sup> In this case, food instruments can be mailed to participants or, for State agencies that have transitioned to EBT, may issue electronic benefits, to the extent feasible.

When a disaster prohibits participants from visiting the clinic, or creates a staffing shortage in the clinic, FNS will allow food instruments to be mailed or issued electronically even to those individuals who were scheduled for nutrition education. This option cannot be utilized for certification visits. When a State agency exercises this option, the nutrition education visit must be rescheduled.

State agencies may not mail or issue more than a 3-month supply of food benefits.<sup>18</sup> If a State agency chooses to mail food instruments, it must utilize a system that ensures the return of food instruments if the participant no longer resides or receives mail at the address to which the food instruments were

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<sup>17</sup> [WIC Regulations § 246.12\(r\)\(4\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> [WIC Regulations § 246.12\(r\)\(5\)](#)

mailed. FNS also encourages the use of the following procedures with regard to the mailing of food instruments:

BEST PRACTICES FOR MAILING FOOD INSTRUMENTS

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Use first class mail with one of the following phrases included on the envelope:

"Do Not Forward,  
Return to Sender"

"Do Not Forward,  
Address Correction  
Requested"

Do not use window envelopes.

Window envelopes can increase the incidence of stolen envelopes.

Window envelopes provide an easy means of examining the content of the envelope.

Do not identify the name of the WIC clinic.

Do not use the words "WIC Program" on the return address.

Mentioning "WIC" may increase the incidence of mailed food instruments being stolen.

## CHAPTER 6 – INFORMATION FOR VENDORS

## OUT-OF-STATE FOOD INSTRUMENTS

At the discretion of the originating WIC State agency (i.e., the WIC State agency in which the participant was initially certified), retail vendors may be authorized to accept out-of-State food instruments (voucher and check) during unique circumstances such as disaster situations<sup>19</sup>. The receiving State WIC agency must advise vendors when this is allowed and for what length of time the practice will be in effect. If at all possible, the participant should receive the exact brand of infant formula specified on the out-of-State food instrument. If it is not possible to provide the exact brand items for the other foods listed on the out-of-State WIC food instrument, a similar item may be substituted from the receiving State's WIC-approved food list.

The originating State agency is responsible for the cost of the food instrument (voucher or check). The out-of-State vendor should deposit each WIC check into its bank account and the amount of the WIC check will then be charged against the originating WIC State agency's bank account. If the originating State agency issues vouchers instead of checks, the out-of-State vendor should submit the vouchers for payment to the originating State agency.

These policies are not applicable for State agencies with direct distribution or home delivery programs, as these State agencies do not operate through retail vendors.

Note: Retail vendors that have transitioned to EBT will not have the option to accept out-of-state EBT cards, as EBT cards are only functional in the issuing State.

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<sup>19</sup> [WIC Regulations §246.12\(h\)\(2\)](#)

## CHAPTER 7 – NUTRITION CONCERNS

## ENCOURAGING BREASTFEEDING

WIC encourages breastfeeding as the standard method of infant feeding. During a disaster, some things that WIC can do to help support breastfeeding mothers include:

- Meet with the local emergency preparedness team to convey the importance of continued breastfeeding during emergencies and contribute to a plan that supports breastfeeding mothers and infants during disasters.
- Raise awareness among new mothers of the benefits of continued breastfeeding.
- Promote that breastfeeding is the safest food in an emergency.

For more information on supporting breastfeeding during a disaster, see the American Academy of Pediatrics [factsheet](#).

## FORMULA



In a disaster, access to safe drinking water and cooking facilities may be limited. WIC State agencies are expected to coordinate with State and local emergency service operations offices, to serve WIC participants most effectively during disasters. In the absence of potable water and sanitary conditions, ready-to-feed formula is recommended for those infants not being breastfed.

There may be situations that require liquid formula concentrate to be issued. In this instance, **water would not be an allowable WIC cost**; therefore, State agencies should plan to refer participants in need of water to

FEMA and/or mass care organizations such as the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army. Also, State agencies should consider encouraging participants

to have an emergency supply kit that includes items such as one gallon of water per person per day for a minimum of three days, for drinking, sanitation, and food preparation.

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#### MEDICALLY-FRAGILE PARTICIPANTS

To ensure a smooth transition, State agencies may want to designate a competent professional authority (CPA), as established by State agency policy, to facilitate the nutritional/breastfeeding assessment and needs of evacuees.

Some infants, children or adult WIC participants may require prescribed WIC-eligible formula (i.e., non-contract infant formula, exempt infant formulas and/or WIC-eligible nutritionals) for documented qualifying conditions. Issuance of such formulas requires medical documentation. Due to the nature of the medical conditions of these participants, close medical supervision is essential.

WIC clinic personnel should refer medically-fragile individuals in need of medical care to local medical providers to ensure that the participant is linked to the health care system during a disaster. State agencies should contact the respective FNS Regional Office with any questions about the authorization, and issuance of non-contract infant formula. WIC regulations specify the technical requirements for medical documentation, which can be provided as an original written document, electronically, or by facsimile.<sup>20</sup> Medical documentation also may be provided by telephone to WIC clinic staff. If the documentation is provided via telephone, the WIC staff must document the information in a participant's file until written confirmation is received – normally one or two weeks. This method may only be used if absolutely necessary to prevent undue hardship to a participant or to prevent a delay in the provision of WIC-eligible formula that would place the participant at increased nutritional risk.

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#### STATE AGENCY OPTIONS

In an effort to provide the best service to medically-fragile disaster survivors, State agencies may exercise the following additional options:

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<sup>20</sup> [WIC Regulations§ 246.10\(d\)\(4\)](#)

## WIC DISASTER GUIDANCE

Participants that are evacuated to another State or within the State who can provide documentation for WIC-eligible formula may be issued food instruments up to the end of their current certification period. This information will be annotated on the VOC and/or a participant's record.

Participants that are evacuated to another State or within the State who cannot provide documentation for WIC-eligible formula may be issued a one-month food instrument after assessment.

Upon receipt of medical documentation and assessment, the individual may be issued a one month food benefit.

If the exact item is not on the approved product list, a comparable WIC-eligible formula appropriate for a participant's qualifying condition may be issued.

After the one-month issuance of FIs, State agencies should continue to follow their WIC operations as described in the State Plan.

## CHAPTER 8 - ALLOWABLE COSTS

Disaster planning is critical to providing WIC benefits during a disaster. In addition to coordination with their respective FNS Regional Office for guidance, State agencies should plan to coordinate with other relevant agencies such as the State Department of Health.

In certain disaster situations, WIC State agencies may receive requests for WIC staff to perform duties that are outside of WIC's scope with WIC resources (i.e., staff, facilities, equipment, and supplies). If this occurs, WIC State agencies need to be mindful of how to handle these types of situations in an effort to not incur unallowable costs. The following are situations that would be considered allowable costs:

- In response to the use of WIC staff, the State agency director may authorize WIC employees to be part of their State's Disaster Response Team. If other reimbursement is unavailable, staff time for participating in disaster team activities, such as planning and training, would be an allowable cost for the WIC Program because the employees would gain knowledge and experience useful to assist the WIC Program in disaster preparedness.
- In planning its response to a potential biological disaster, each State agency must consider the use of all available resources within its jurisdiction. Consequently, the State agency may, without regard to the allowability of costs to the WIC Program, incorporate the use of its WIC Program resources (i.e., staff, facilities, equipment, and supplies) into a disaster plan. This does not authorize State agencies to transfer WIC Federal funds to non-WIC accounts, such as to a State agency's government disaster account, for use. However, in the event of an actual disaster, WIC Program resources, i.e., computers, equipment and supplies, etc., may be utilized in support of ongoing disaster relief efforts in accordance with the State agency's biological disaster plans.
- During a biological disaster, if it is determined that masks and respirators are necessary for the safety and well-being of WIC Program employees and participants to conduct WIC Program operations, the cost of such items is allowed. However, not all disaster-related safety items would be

an allowable cost. State agencies need to check with their respective Regional office for guidance on a case-by-case basis.

## CHAPTER 9 – FNS DISASTER RESPONSE

## FNS DISASTER RESPONSE OVERVIEW

The FNS Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is responsible for coordination of information reporting on all incidents and disasters involving FNS nutrition assistance programs. Each FNS Regional Office has a Regional Disaster Coordinator (RDC) responsible for supporting FNS disaster preparedness and response at the regional level. The RDC also serves as the disaster point of contact for all FNS Program areas in the Region. Regional office WIC Program staff coordinates with RDCs in assisting WIC State and local agencies during disaster situations.

It is particularly important that WIC State agencies communicate with their FNS Regional Program contacts before and during a disaster, especially when they are unable to operate the Program and serve eligible participants. Additional information about OEM and how they operate can be found at the following link: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/disaster-assistance>

## OTHER FNS PROGRAMS

There are two primary FNS supplemental disaster nutrition assistance programs - distribution of USDA Foods for congregate and household feeding (limited situations) and Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP). Additional information about each of these programs and how they operate during a disaster can be found at the OEM link: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/disaster-assistance>.

## CHAPTER 10 – ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### HELPFUL LINKS

#### FNS

- [FNS Disaster Assistance](#)

#### WIC

- [How to apply for the WIC Program](#)
- [State agency contact information](#)
- [WIC State agency toll-free numbers](#)
- [FNS Handbook 901](#)
- [WIC EBT Final Rule](#)
- [WIC EBT Operating Rules](#)

#### FOOD SAFETY

- [Food Safety in an Emergency](#)

#### SNAP

- [D-SNAP Guidance and Toolkits](#)

#### FOOD DISTRIBUTION

- [USDA Foods Disaster Manual](#)

#### OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES

- [CDC – Emergency Preparedness Factsheet for Pregnant Women](#)
- [FEMA – Contact List](#)
- [FEMA – Recovery Support Functions](#)
- [FEMA – National Response Framework \(NRF\)](#)
- [FEMA – National Disaster Recovery Framework \(NDRF\) and Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [FSIS – Consumer’s Guide to Food Safety](#)
- [USDA – Introduction to Emergency Support Functions](#)
- [USDA ESF #11 Functions](#)