

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

WIC Program Disaster Plan

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) - Revised 1/4/21

Background

In the case of Coronavirus (COVID-19) as a public health emergency, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program will implement procedures if WIC services have been or need to be disrupted.

During this period of emergency, every reasonable effort will be made to continue issuance of food benefits to participants.

Missouri WIC Program Disaster Plan Definition

Missouri WIC Program Disaster Plan will be implemented in times of minimal staff and/or clinic closures. This plan will help to expedite services and reduce exposure for both staff and the applicants/participants.

This plan was developed in accordance with USDA guidance.

WIC State and Local Agency Protocol

WIC State Office Responsibilities:

1. Plan for continuation of statewide WIC services.
2. Gather and report usage of waivers by the local agencies to FNS. This will be completed through, at a minimum, weekly contact with each local agency.

Local Agency Responsibilities:

1. All Missouri WIC local agencies will follow procedures listed in this document.
2. Local agencies will prepare a plan for providing WIC services with reduced staff in the event this becomes necessary.
3. Local agencies will communicate with the public according to Department of Health and Senior Services and WIC state office direction.
4. Immediately contact the WIC state office if your local agency is anticipating closure for any period of time or if your operations change significantly (e.g., remote benefit issuance instead of onsite benefit issuance).

The following policies and procedures will be implemented to expedite services and ensure continuity of care through 30 days after the end of the nationally declared public health emergency, unless extended through written notification.

Procedures for Processing Applicants/Participants

REMOTE LOCAL AGENCY OPERATIONS – CERTIFICATIONS:

WIC local agencies may conduct WIC appointments and benefit issuance remotely via phone. The state agency is not able to provide global guidance on how this can be completed. Administrative and nutrition technical assistance (TA) staff are prepared to help staff work through possible options. WIC local agency staff can work at home, a WIC local agency closed to the public, or an alternate office location – wherever internet access to MOWINS is available.

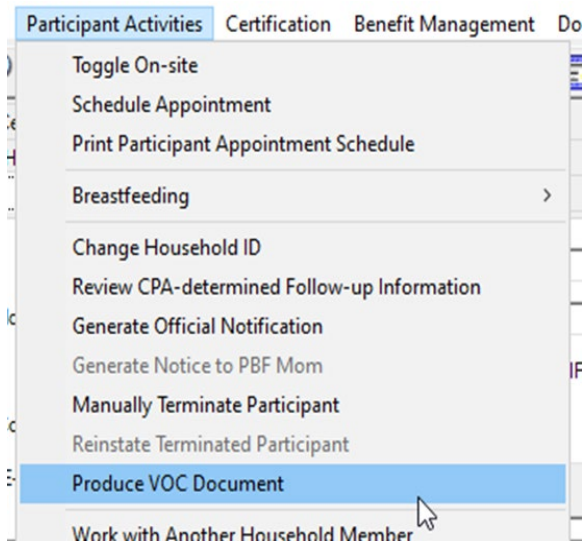
It is strongly advised that all local agencies preemptively establish a mutual partnership with one or more other local agencies to assist in the continuation of WIC services should a local agency be impacted to the point where there are no staff, or not enough staff, to continue services to the agency's full caseload. The state agency can very quickly enable a local agency willing to access the participant records of another local agency should they need to provide assistance. The state agency will not provide access to another agency's caseload in advance of an actual need, but request that local agencies work through TA staff should this need arise.

Many local agency staff continue to work in the office. Standard confidentiality measures must be taken, such as deleting proofs, destroying documents with personal information if not needed, and locking file cabinets, drawers, and computers when walking away.

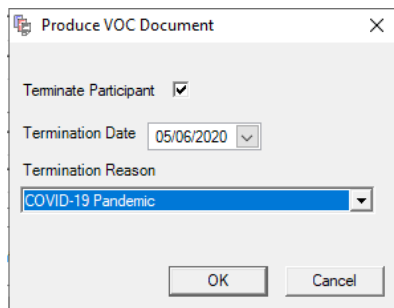
Staff who are not working in their regular offices shall maintain confidentiality using the same measures, as well as working in a separate/private area of the home, ensuring the computer is password protected, locking the room in which they are working, making phone calls behind closed doors, etc.

90-DAY CERTIFICATION FOR CHILDREN RECEIVING FOOD PACKAGE IV ONLY:

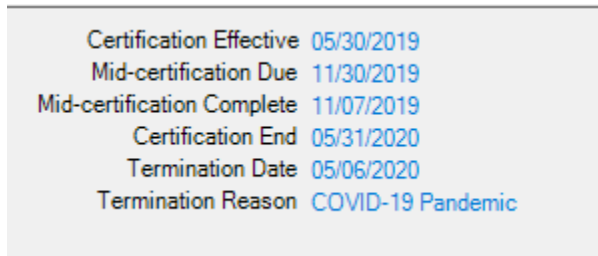
- The certification for children receiving food package IV may be extended for up to 90 days, but never beyond the end of the month of the 5th birthday. Refer to policy [8.1.180](#).
- The certification extension may only be used once for each participant.
- The local agency will produce a verification of certification (VOC), and terminate the participant with the current date. The local agency will create a VOC for the participant, entering a certification end date that is up to 90 days later than previous certification end date, using the following procedure:
 1. In MOWINS, prior to the current certification end date, go to "Participant Activities" and select "Produce VOC Document"



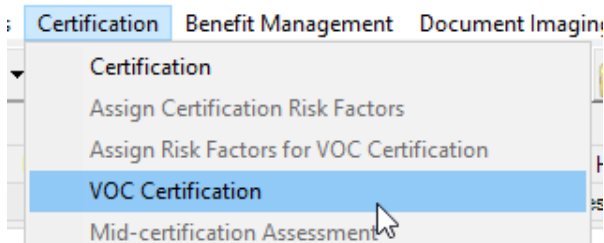
When the “Produce VOC Document” screen opens, choose to “Terminate Participant.” The “Termination Date” will be “Today”, and the “Termination Reason” will be “COVID-19 Pandemic.”



2. MOWINS will produce a VOC for the participant and terminate the current certification for “COVID-19 Pandemic.”



3. In the same participant folder, go to “Certification” and select “VOC Certification.”



4. The “VOC Certification” screen will open. The WIC Category will remain the same, and will be on the VOC. The “Certification End Date” will be up to 90 days past the previous certification end date (e.g., if the current certification end date is 05/31/20, then the VOC certification end date will be 08/31/20).

5. The remaining sections, if required for that VOC certification, should be entered using the information printed from the VOC. Click “OK” once all data is entered.
6. Staff should document a note in MOWINS.
7. The printed VOC should be updated with the following information written on the form:
 - a. Signature of staff who entered the VOC Certification information into MOWINS
 - b. Documentation of the new certification end date
 - c. “COVID-19 Pandemic” should also be documented on the form for future reference
8. Once the information above has been documented on the VOC, the form should be scanned into MOWINS.

MEDICAL DOCUMENTATION FOR FOOD PACKAGE III:

- Expiring Medical Documentation (WIC-27)
 - Local agency must try to contact the health care provider (HCP) for a new WIC-27.
 - If unable to reach the HCP, the local agency may issue up to 2 months of the formula indicated on the expiring WIC-27.
 - Obtain a new, completed WIC- 27 from the health care provider via facsimile or staff email address within 60 days.
- New participant or a new prescription, continue to follow [2.3.030](#) Issuance of Food Package III. If unable to obtain a written order, the order may be provided verbally by telephone.
 - Local agency staff will fill out a WIC-27 and write “Verbal Order” in the space for the HCP’s signature.
 - A completed WIC-27 must be scanned into MOWINS within 15 days and prior to issuing the next month’s benefits.

ANTHROPOMETRICS/BLOOD WORK:

- If the participant is physically present, complete anthropometrics and blood work per policy.
- If the participant is NOT physically present, in the certification guided script or mid-certification (MCA) guided script:
 - Demographics screen:
 - Select the radio button “No” for Physically Present
 - Select “COVID-19 Pandemic” from the dropdown menu for Reason Not Present
 - Height/Weight tab:
 - Do not enter height or weight measurements
 - Blood tab:
 - Click “Add”
 - Select “COVID-19 Pandemic” from the dropdown menu for the Reason Blood Work Was Not Collected if blood work is required
 - Select the appropriate reason from the dropdown menu if blood work is not required at the time of certification or MCA.
- Required height, weight, and blood work may be deferred to the next certification or MCA.
- Staff may use the crystal report ‘Reason Blood Work Not Collected’ to track all participants whose blood work was skipped due to COVID-19.

REMOTE LOCAL AGENCY OPERATIONS – FOOD INSTRUMENT ISSUANCE – eWIC CARDS:

- The following process is only to be completed in agencies with three (3) or more WIC employees.
 - One staff person shall determine income eligibility
 - May also issue food benefits
 - One staff person shall determine medical or nutritional risk
 - May also issue food benefits
 - One staff person shall set up the eWIC card and assign a PIN
 - May NOT issue food benefits
- Local agency staff will need to complete all breastfeeding, WIC, and eWIC education.
- The designated staff person NOT setting up the eWIC card and PIN, will update the necessary information in MOWINS.
 - Health information
 - Food prescriptions
 - Verify mailing address and phone number
 - Primary cardholder and date of birth
 - Issue benefits
 - **DO NOT ASSIGN AN eWIC CARD**
- Once all information is completed by local agency staff, a separate local agency designated to set up the eWIC card and assign the PIN must:
 - Set up the new eWIC card
 - Staff setting up the card will need to sign their (staff) name along with ‘COVID-19’ in the “Capture Signature for Card” screen

- o Set the PIN
 - Verbally ask the participant what they want the PIN to be set as on their eWIC card OR
 - Use a PIN generator to create a PIN for the eWIC card
 - <https://www.debitcardpin.com/>
 - o Put an alert in MOWINS for the household to remind staff to obtain the participants signature for the card on the WIC Signature Pad Backup (WIC-25) form when the household returns to the clinic
 - o Mail the Shopping List for the issued benefits, eWIC handout(s), and the eWIC card with the [eWIC Card Letter for Local Agencies](#)
 - o Mail the eWIC card in a non-window envelope marked with “Do Not Forward, Return to Sender”
 - o Track all eWIC cards mailed on a [eWIC Card Tracking Sheet for Local Agencies](#)
 - Every Monday, the spreadsheet must be emailed to WICHelpDesk@health.mo.gov for tracking at the state agency
 - o If using the PIN generator, mail the generated PIN in the [eWIC Card PIN Letter for Local Agencies](#) in a separate non-window envelope 1 day following the of mailing the eWIC card.
- Confirm the participants have received their card and generated PIN, if mailed.

The eWIC card PIN MUST NOT be documented anywhere, with the exception of including the PIN into the eWIC Card PIN letter. If a participant forgets their PIN or does not receive the eWIC Card PIN letter, the participant must come to the local agency to reset the PIN.

NOTE: If three staff are not available to remotely mail food benefits on eWIC cards, contact the MOWINS Help Desk (800-554-2544) for mailing assistance.

SIGNATURE COLLECTION:

- The signature does not need to be an ink (“wet”) signature. A signature can be provided in any form that is permissible by the state agency.
- The following are signature collection methods of which the state agency is aware, that are acceptable for all forms:
 - o **Phone.** Local agency staff can read the form to the participant and obtain a verbal authorization of understanding. The local agency staff can sign the participants name followed by the staff initials on the form or sign the participant’s name on the electronic signature pad followed by staff initials.
 - o **Electronic.** Participant can be emailed a copy of the form, and (without printing or signing) the participant reads the form and sends a return email to an agency-assigned email address verifying they have read and understand the information on the form. The participant is to include their name within the electronic verification.
 - o **Photo.** Participant can print, sign, photograph, and email or text a photo of the signed form to an agency-assigned email address or agency-assigned phone.

- **Fax.** Local agency can fax a copy of the form requesting signature. The participant can read the form and fax the signed form back to the local agency.
- **Mailed.** Local agency can mail a copy of the form requesting the form be signed and returned. The local agency can include an addressed, stamped envelope.
- **PDF.** Some local agencies can use software to request electronic signatures on documents. It is acceptable to reproduce the form (during this COVID-19 event) in another format with the exact content, with an electronic signature field added.
- Local agencies that are using an alternative method not included in the list above shall contact their TA for approval.
- Print off all signature statements and place in a hard file for future reference.
- Put an alert in MOWINS to remind staff a signature is required when the participant returns to the clinic on the following forms:
 - WIC Participant's Rights and Responsibilities (WIC-10)
 - Lost/Stolen Food Instrument Form (WIC-32)

SEPARATION OF DUTIES:

- Ensure that a minimum of two employees are available to perform certification duties to ensure that one employee is not determining eligibility for income and also determining medical or nutritional risk. Either person may issue food benefits to that same participant.
- If the local agency is unable to meet the minimum of two staff to complete income eligibility and medical or nutritional risk:
 - Run the Separation of Duties crystal report and conduct chart reviews per policy.
 - If the local agency is not able to conduct chart reviews per policy, upon time for the Local Agency Monitoring, the state agency will randomly review 2% of clients that one staff person performed both income eligibility and medical or nutritional risk to ensure program integrity was maintained.
- This does not apply to the prohibitions against certifying oneself or close friends and relatives.

PROXY GUIDELINES:

Please remind WIC participants if they or another family member are under quarantine (voluntary or involuntary), they may designate an alternative representative or proxy to attend appointments, pick up food benefits, or purchase food benefits at the authorized WIC retailers on their behalf.

- Participant must complete the [Proxy/Alternative Authorized Representative \(WIC-33\)](#) form or provide a written signed statement to designate a temporary proxy or alternative authorized representative.
- If it is not possible to obtain temporary proxy or alternative authorized representative documentation, staff may take verbal permission via phone from the authorized representative on file after confirming identify by verifying personal information in the participant file (participant name, date of birth, etc.).
- "COVID-19" must be written on Proxy/Alternative Authorized Representative form and scanned into the participant folder.
- Staff should enter the following General Note: "See scanned documentation for designated proxy or alternative authorized representative due to COVID-19."

Breastfeeding

BREASTFEEDING EDUCATION:

- If a mother has access to the internet, she can complete lessons on breastfeeding at wichealth.org. WIChealth.org has excellent lessons that are very appropriate for prenatal women.
- Follow up for these lessons can be completed by the breastfeeding peer counselor (BFPC), CPA, or nutritionist by phone.
- There are also excellent videos and handouts available at the [USDA's WIC Breastfeeding Support](#) page which can be accessed on a smartphone.
- If a mother does not have a smartphone or internet access, education can be provided over the phone.
- For Breastfeeding Friendly WIC Clinics receiving special funding 3, any of these methods of providing education during social distancing will suffice to meet the terms of your grant.

BREAST PUMP ISSUANCE:

- Breast pump issuance should continue per policy. Policy requires waiving any deposit for clients who state that they are unable to pay a deposit.
- Staff should thoroughly assess need for breast pump via phone or Zoom, including what type of breast pump client needs. If client is able to get a pump from their insurance company, and does not need a pump immediately for reasons such as low supply, baby in NICU, or other reasons in policy, then refer client to insurance company.
- Issuing Pumps
 - Staff should provide client with verbal, written, or online instructions on assembling and using pump. There are materials in the pump kits showing how to assemble the kit. Staff should also provide client with link to product demonstrations for Hygeia products, which are available [here](#). For Lactina pumps, agencies are encouraged to share this [video](#) with participants. The Medela personal pump contains either a DVD or website link showing how to use the pump.
 - If service is being provided face to face, use a demo kit and demo pump to demonstrate putting the pump together, rather than touching the kit the client will use. If service is curbside or drop-off, provide client with the web links to use.
 - Clients will still need to sign the pump loan agreement for loaned multi-user pumps. Staff can sign the signature pad for the client to issue the pump in MOWINS.
 - Staff should follow up by phone with all clients within 24 hours to make sure that the client was able to assemble and use the pump. After that, follow up by phone per policy. Provide client with phone number to call agency breastfeeding staff in case of questions.
- Returning Pumps
 - When pumps are returned, they should be quarantined in a clear plastic bag or tub, as usual, for three days to monitor for infestation.
 - Once staff have determined that no infestation is present, pumps should be thoroughly disinfected before being returned to inventory. There is a list [here](#) of cleaners that are effective against coronavirus and other pathogens. This is not an all-inclusive list. Any returned tote bags or kit pieces should be discarded.

Food Distribution

FORMULA:

If participants cannot locate formula at a retailer in their area, participants should contact their local agency. The local agency should contact the state agency regarding formula availability concerns.

FOOD SUBSTITUTIONS:

- [COVID-19 Retailer Guidance](#) is available on the website regarding allowable food substitutions if WIC-approved stock is not available at the store at the time of the WIC transaction. The food substitutions go into effect April 3, 2020. The notices include information about:
 - Eggs
 - Bread
 - Infant fruit and vegetables
 - Peanut butter