

Section II: Local Agency Procedure Manual

IX. Local Food Delivery

A. Issuing/Replacing Benefits

Purpose

Provide guidance on benefit issuance and replacement.

Policy

Local WIC Staff will issue appropriate benefits to all eligible participants according to this policy.

1. Benefit Issuance

- The CPA determines how many months' worth of benefits a participant receives.
 - Issuing three months of benefits is recommended for most participants.
 - More frequent issuance (unless for the purpose of aligning family members) implies the participant has greater education needs. Documentation of reason for more frequent issuance, as well as education provided, will be made in the chart for each issuance.
- Benefits are issued "month to month", starting on the first day and ending on the last day of the calendar month.
 - Some benefits may be prorated based on the timing of issuance during the month by three-quarters, half, or one-quarter.
 - Clinic staff may provide the full food package ("un-prorate") at their discretion in the following circumstances:
 - ❖ If the reason for late issuance was related to a clinic issue, rather than a participant issue (i.e. missing appointments, or opting to start on the program later in the month). Examples of this may include the inability of the clinic to find an appointment time early in the month; clinic being short staffed and needing to reschedule participants; or a technical problem that prevented issuance correctly.
 - ❖ Documentation in the chart for reasoning of providing the full package rather than the prorated package is required.
- Only the participant or their authorized representative may complete an appointment on behalf of the participant.
- Local agency staff will review benefits for accuracy with the participant/authorized representative prior to sending EBT data to processor.
- Issuance of benefits prior to completion of program requirements is prohibited.

2. eWIC Card Issuance/Replacement

- Only one eWIC card will be issued per household.

- Each household will have one designated primary cardholder, who will also be listed as an authorized representative (primary or alternate). The primary authorized representative is ultimately responsible for program compliance, and therefore will determine who will be assigned primary cardholder. They may change this designation at any time.
- A foster child is a household of one. Each foster child must have their own eWIC card, to be managed by their authorized representative (in most cases the foster parent).
- Local agency staff will instruct the participant/authorized representative on setting a personal identification number (PIN) for the card, and ensure they understand redemption procedures.
- Lost, damaged or stolen eWIC cards may be replaced by the local agency (preferred), or by contacting Solutran at (844) 583-3237, or online at www.mybnft.com. Solutran replacements will be processed within 24 hours, however they will be sent using ground shipping.
 - When the clinic is replacing an eWIC card, documentation of the reason for the replacement will be made in every household member chart.
 - If a trend within an agency is observed by the State Office, a conference call may be set up with local agency staff.
 - ❖ The State staff may request local staff to educate participants about card care when replacements are excessive.
 - Replaced cards will have the same PIN number, if a change is desired, the primary cardholder is responsible for this.
 - If the card is being mailed from the local agency, it is required to document this on the *eWIC Card Inventory Log*. Mailing must be certified (“Do not forward/Return to Sender” on envelope), and the signed certified card will be scanned into the chart. If the signed card is not received in a reasonable amount of time, contact should be made to determine next steps for ensuring the participant receives their card.
- If a card is found and returned to the clinic:
 - Review the account and contact the primary cardholder. If it is still active, and cannot be immediately returned to the cardholder, deactivate the card and documentation of circumstance will be made in the chart.
 - The participant/authorized representative will be responsible to request a new card.

3. Over-Issuance

- An over-issuance is any instance where more than the maximum allowable WIC benefits are issued for a benefit period.
- The local agency or participant may be responsible for any fund’s mis-spent due to over-issuance. The State Office may require these funds to be re-paid.

- Reimbursement will be made to the State Office within 30 days of receipt of this invoice.
- Payment of the funds may not be made from the WIC funding source in the contract for local agency restitution.
- The participant, or their caretaker, may be responsible to repay mis-used benefits per policy, “D. Participant Fraud, Abuse and Sanctions” in section II, VII. Certification, Eligibility and Coordination.

4. Remote-Issuance

- Benefits may be loaded remotely at the discretion of the local agency staff when program requirements have been met by the participant.
 - Communication with the participant is required, including a plan for the next appointment (if applicable), and an understanding/acknowledgement of why the benefits are being loaded.

5. Food Package Changes Within a Benefit Cycle

- Changing a food item or updating a food package may be done at the participant’s request (i.e. new medical prescription received, or breastfeeding amount change reported).
 - Where possible, it is ideal to start the new package on the following month, as any current redemption could complicate issuance of a new current food package.
 - Issuance shall be prorated based on redemption in current month where possible.
- Breastfeeding amount changes in a current month may affect both food packages in the dyad.
 - The mother shall keep her current month benefits.
 - The infant will receive the appropriate benefit for the current month (where possible).
 - Future months shall reflect updated status and correct package for both mother (if applicable) and infant.
 - If the mother has changed from breastfeeding to non-breastfeeding, she will be notified of her end of certification date (to be documented in chart) or be provided the *End of Certification/Notice of Ineligibility*, dependent of where she is in the post-partum period.
- Changing a “food item already issued” will prompt the system to update current and future benefits and will load the new benefits (if this functionality is correctly executed).
 - Local agency staff shall NOT void benefits to make food package changes. Voiding benefits prior to a change household guided script (CHHGS) for custody change is the only time “void” should be used independent of the food wizard/CHHGS in the MIS. Using Void at any other time can affect the database and is prohibited to ensure data integrity in the MIS.

6. Foster/Kinship Placement or Legal Custody Changes

- In any situation where an infant/child has a legal custody change, the WIC staff may move the child's household, and re-issue benefits appropriately (may be prorated, or fully issued based on the situation and timing in the month). Legal paperwork must be scanned into the participant file to allow for any household changes in this situation.
- If an infant or child is legally in the custody of the State (Child and Family Services), or Tribal authorities, they are considered a foster child and will need to be placed in a household of "1". When this happens during a current certification, benefits need to be voided in current household, and re-issued (in full, at staff discretion) via the new caretaker/foster home authorized representative. Placement paperwork that has been provided to the caretaker of the foster infant/child must be scanned into the chart.
 - This paperwork must have enough information to determine that legal placement is with the authority, whom the current caretaker is, and must include:
 - Caretaker's name
 - Date of Placement
 - Infant/Child name and Date of Birth
 - Caretaker relationship to the child (i.e. licensed home vs. family member) is not a determinant of minor's status as a "foster child", and hence a family of "1" for WIC purposes.
- If the infant/child was removed from a home with current participants certified (others in that household with valid benefits), that card shall not be de-activated.
 - If no redemption for the infant/child has happened in the current month, then all current and future benefits may be voided for that infant/child prior to using change household guided script.
 - If some redemption has occurred for this participant, only void future benefits and written notification to the authorized representative listed in the household to let them know they shall not use any more of the benefits related to the infant/child who is no longer in their custody.
 - Documentation of this communication shall be made in the participant folder.
 - If redemption occurs after verified communication takes place, this must be reported to the State Office for investigation and potential restitution of benefits.
- A new card will be issued for the infant/child in the new household of "1", with current (may be prorated if deemed appropriate by staff) and future benefits loaded onto the card.
 - If any errors are encountered in the process of changing households or removing/replacing benefits, call the WIC Helpdesk for assistance.

7. Shared Custody Between Parents and/or Guardians

- The primary authorized representative is responsible to ensure that the participant receives the benefits they are issued, regardless of where the child is residing. The WIC program, or its staff, will not split the benefits for the family or intervene in the WIC status unless there is a legal custody change.

8. Temporary Loss of Income (furlough)

- Benefits will be issued monthly since the situation should be temporary.