

Subject: Lost or Stolen Vouchers Reported by a Participant or Parent/Guardian

References: 7CFR246.12

Policy: Local Agency (LA) staff must follow standard procedures when vouchers are reported lost or stolen by a participant or parent/guardian (PPG). Local Agencies may provide replacement vouchers if unredeemed vouchers are reported as lost or stolen, according to the procedures below.

- **Only the participant or parent/guardian (PPG)** may report lost or stolen vouchers and receive replacements. Proxies may not report lost or stolen voucher or receive replacement vouchers.
- LA staff are responsible for clearly explaining the Rights and Responsibilities to the PPG, including expectations and proper use of vouchers and the local agency's practice for replacement of lost/stolen vouchers.
- Local WIC agencies must apply the lost and stolen voucher policy and procedures equitably and consistently within the agency to all participants.
- Unredeemed vouchers reported lost or stolen can be replaced only one time in a 12 month period, unless the situation meets the criteria for an exception as stated herein.
- Local Agencies may choose not to replace food vouchers but, **must, at a minimum, replace infant formula vouchers** if participant is otherwise eligible for replacement.

Purpose: To maintain program integrity by preventing misuse of WIC vouchers reported as lost or stolen and replaced. To account for vouchers reported lost or stolen. To assure that food benefits are available to WIC participants.

Procedures:

1. Reporting and Determining Eligibility for Replacement:

- **Determining eligibility for replacement vouchers:**
 - Replacement vouchers may be issued if the following are met:
 - No member of the household has received replacements for lost/stolen vouchers within the last 12 months; **and**
 - No vouchers reported lost or stolen have been redeemed by PPG or a proxy. Check the WIC information system for redemption information and replace only those not redeemed. If there is any question about signatures on the redeemed

vouchers, contact the State WIC Program Integrity Specialist for assistance in making the determination.

- Current month vouchers may be replaced.
- Subsequent months in a multi-month series may be replaced – **one month at a time up to 3 months**, if requirements for replacement are met.
- **Exceptions:** In certain cases, as noted below, exceptions to the policy may be appropriate. Examples of exception cases are listed below.
 - **Documentation of theft:** If the PPG has acceptable documentation (i.e., insurance claim or police report) of a criminal incident related to stolen vouchers, it may be appropriate to make an exception and reissue up to three month's vouchers at one time regardless of prior reporting of lost and stolen vouchers. However, an exception must not be granted if vouchers previously reported lost or stolen were cashed by the PPG or proxy.
 - **Destruction of home:** If the participant lives in an area of a known event (such as a flood, fire, or tornado), it may be appropriate to make an exception and reissue up to three month's vouchers at one time regardless of prior reporting of lost and stolen vouchers. Depending on the situation, it may be appropriate to replace vouchers that have already been used. For example, if voucher images show the vouchers were used by the family on 5/10/14 and the home was destroyed by fire on 5/15/14, a full-package replacement would be appropriate.
 - **Verified Custody Change:** If you receive official documentation that a child or infant participant is no longer in the custody of the PPG who received the original vouchers, the local agency must issue replacement vouchers to the new caretaker/guardian.
- If you have questions or are uncertain whether an exception is appropriate, contact your State WIC Consultant and/or State WIC Program Integrity Specialist.
- If an exception is made, document the reason in the WIC Information System and scan in any related documentation.
- Lost/stolen paperwork ([Exhibit 8-F1](#) and [Exhibit 8-F2](#) or [Exhibit 8-F3](#) (a one page form) must still be completed as usual (except in the case of a custody change to a foster family if the original vouchers were issued to a different household).
- **Report of lost or stolen vouchers:**
 - Mark vouchers as reported lost/stolen in the WIC Information System.
 - If vouchers will be replaced, have the PPG complete and sign the Lost or Stolen Vouchers Report ([Exhibit 8-F1](#)) or ([Exhibit 8-F3](#)) at the time vouchers are reported lost or stolen.
 - [Exhibit 8-F1](#), [Exhibit 8-F2](#), and [Exhibit 8-F3](#) must not be modified by local agencies without getting approval from their State WIC Consultant and the State WIC Program Integrity Specialist.
 - Review and ensure form is complete and clear, and discuss any appropriate follow-up with the PPG as needed.

2. Replacing lost or stolen vouchers if eligible - first month:

- LA staff must explain that the state agency tracks voucher redemptions and if vouchers reported lost or stolen **and** replacement vouchers are both redeemed, the PPG will be asked to repay the value of these vouchers or the participant will be removed from the program.
- If English is not the primary language, an interpreter or language line must be offered to assist with the form and adequate understanding of the discussion. If an interpreter or language line is declined, record this in the WIC Information System.
- Vouchers must be replaced only one month at a time unless an exception is noted.
 - Replace the applicable month of vouchers for each family member whose vouchers were reported lost or stolen. Use the “replace” function in the WIC Information System rather than “reprint”.
 - Inform the participant that, if vouchers reported lost or stolen are found, they must notify the WIC clinic and return them to the clinic.
 - Complete the Lost or Stolen Vouchers Replacement Form [Exhibit 8-F2](#) or [Exhibit 8-F3](#) and have the PPG sign.
 - Give the PPG a copy of the form.
 - Scan a copy of the completed form into the participant’s file in the information system.
 - Add an Alert and Note to the household record stating which benefit month was replaced and that no replacements are allowed for one calendar year from the date of last replacement vouchers.

3. Replacing lost or stolen vouchers if eligible - subsequent month(s):

- LA staff must explain that the state agency tracks voucher redemptions and if vouchers reported lost or stolen **and** replacement vouchers are both redeemed, the PPG will be asked to repay the value of these vouchers or the participant will be removed from the program.
- If English is not the primary language, an interpreter or language line must be offered to assist with the form and adequate understanding of the discussion. If an interpreter or language line is declined, record this in the WIC Information System.
- Check the information system to determine if **any** previous month’s lost or stolen vouchers were redeemed by PPG or a proxy; if so no further replacements can be issued.
 - Contact your State WIC Consultant and/or State WIC Program Integrity Specialist if the signatures on vouchers raise questions or concerns.
- If previous lost or stolen vouchers haven’t been redeemed, local agency staff may replace the applicable month of vouchers for each family member whose vouchers were reported lost or stolen. Use the “replace” function in the WIC Information System rather than “reprint”.
- Inform the participant that, if vouchers reported lost or stolen are found, they must notify the WIC clinic and return them to the clinic.
- Complete the Lost or Stolen Vouchers Replacement Form ([Exhibit 8-F2](#)) (or [Exhibit 8-F3](#)) and have the PPG sign.
 - Give the PPG a copy of the form.
 - Scan a copy of the completed form into the participant record.

- Add a Note to the household record stating which benefit month was replaced and that no replacements are allowed for one calendar year from the date of last replacement vouchers. Replace or update Alerts as needed to reflect the revised “no replacement” period.

Guidance:

1. Local agencies may use a waiting period (not to exceed 1 week) before replacing lost or stolen vouchers in order to facilitate an adequate search for them.
2. If the participant is not eligible for replacement vouchers, the local agency should refer to other community food resources.
3. Local agencies may choose to provide infant formula from stock in lieu of replacing formula vouchers. If so, this must be documented in Notes in the participant record and the Lost or Stolen Vouchers Report and Replacement forms ([Exhibit 8-F1](#) and [Exhibit 8-F2](#)) or ([Exhibit 8-F3](#)) must still be completed and signed and a copy given to the PPG.
4. Local agency staff are encouraged to pro-rate replacement vouchers as practical based on timing in the month the vouchers were reported lost or stolen.
5. If there is any uncertainty about which vouchers were lost or used, local agency staff must use their best judgment and document in Notes why specific action was taken.
6. Contact your State WIC Consultant and/or Program Integrity Specialist if you have any questions about this policy or the accompanying procedures.