

## Section 1.17: Emergency Actions

5/2019

**References:** [MOM Section 5.2](#), [MOM Section 7.4](#), [MOM Section 7.8](#), [MOM Chapter 8](#), [Guide to Coordinating Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for WIC Service During Disasters](#)

**Policy:** In the event of an emergency (e.g., flood, fire, prolonged power outage, etc.), Local Agencies must follow community/regionally developed disaster plans as well as state procedures/Minnesota WIC state agency procedures.

**Purpose:** To ensure that WIC participants continue receiving WIC services and to secure WIC property and records.

### Procedures

If an emergency prevents or limits a local agency's ability to carry out normal operations of the WIC Program, the local agency should:

1. Contact your State WIC Consultant for guidance on how to minimize interruptions to WIC services. Report on the following:
  - If assistance is needed
  - The number of WIC staff and participants affected by the emergency
  - The estimated length of service disruption
  - If electricity and/or water service has been disrupted
  - The safety of the water supply
2. Seek information regarding your community/regional disaster plan. Follow applicable emergency procedures.
3. Follow applicable emergency procedures as set forth by state agencies or other governing bodies.

### Guidance

#### Plan for Emergencies

Local agencies are encouraged to have a plan in place for dealing with emergencies. The plan may include:

- Community disaster coordinator contact information.
- Staff members' home phone numbers.

## SECTION 1.17: EMERGENCY ACTIONS

- Media contact information.
- Arrangements for securing computer/medical equipment, supplies and participant records.

### Clinic and Participant Accommodations to Consider

In consultation with state agency staff, consider clinic and participant accommodations that can be made. Areas to consider (not every area may be applicable to the specific emergency situation):

- Clinic site:
  - Are any of your WIC sites located in areas that are vulnerable due to the emergency? If so, consider alternate sites, limiting sites, or using alternate clinic days.
- Water source:
  - Will the emergency affect the water supply? If the water supply is contaminated, follow instructions from the Minnesota Department of Health and local water safety experts.
  - Be aware of how water safety may affect WIC participants and their need for, or use of, WIC foods. For example, infants may need ready-to-feed infant formula. The State WIC may notify local WIC vendors of the increased need for ready-to-feed formula in areas where water might be contaminated. The State WIC agency may facilitate shipping of other types of formula to WIC Clinics.
  - Encourage breastfeeding mothers to exclusively breastfeed, eliminating the need to prepare formula and minimizing the infant's exposure to unsafe water.
- Staffing:
  - Extra CPA staff may be needed at WIC Clinics to make referrals and assess the appropriateness of the current WIC food package.
  - Consider changing clinic and staff hours to include evenings and Saturdays to increase participant accessibility.
  - Consider exchanging staff phone numbers, should there be a need to communicate from home or another site.
  - In the case of a strike, it is the responsibility of the local agency administration and leadership to make decisions about staff contingencies.
- Protecting program records, supplies and WIC Information System equipment from possible damage:
  - Secure and/or move computer/medical equipment, supplies, participant documents and program records.
- Food Benefits:
  - Be prepared to review food packages and make adjustments to accommodate participants' access to safe water, refrigeration and cooking facilities.

## SECTION 1.17: EMERGENCY ACTIONS

- Be flexible in food benefit issuance for eligible participants.
  - Refer participants to a nearby clinic or issue benefits as appropriate. Up to 3 months of benefits may be issued in emergencies. [MOM Chapter 8: WIC Cards](#)
- Emergency food assistance:
  - Develop and maintain a list of emergency food resources to provide to victims of any disaster requiring food assistance.
- Referrals:
  - Become familiar with and expand referral to other resources or services that families may need, such as temporary shelters, tetanus shots, mass feeding sites, insurance assistance, well-water testing, Red Cross, FEMA, etc.
- Communications:
  - Use the media to inform participants and potential applicants of how to access WIC services, including clinic hours and locations during the disaster.
  - Notify your State Consultant of changes in office or clinic sites.

### Suggestions to simplify clinic and benefit issuance procedures

- **Lost eWIC card**

Families may have lost their eWIC card. If so, search the WIC Information System database to locate participants coming in without their eWIC cards and issue a new card as needed.
- **Lost or damaged food benefits**

Participant might lose or have food benefits damaged during an emergency. Those food benefits may be replaced. See [MOM Chapter 8: WIC Cards](#)
- **Certification Procedures**

Certification procedures may be modified as described in Streamlined Certification Process, [Exhibit 1-M: Streamlined Certification Process for Emergency Situations](#). Consult with State WIC Consultant before implementing.
- **Mailing eWIC cards**

Mailing/updating WIC nutrition and food benefits may be an option if the WIC Clinic is closed due to an emergency. Refer participants to a nearby clinic if available and convenient or mail replacement eWIC cards as appropriate. See [MOM Chapter 8: WIC Cards](#).
- **Homeless participants**

Mailing/updating WIC nutrition and food benefits may be an option if the WIC Clinic is closed due to an emergency. Refer participants to a nearby clinic if available and convenient or mail replacement eWIC cards as appropriate. See [MOM Chapter 8: WIC Cards](#)
- **New Request for medical formula**

## SECTION 1.17: EMERGENCY ACTIONS

A written prescription is preferred, but if unavailable, attempt to get a 'verbal' prescription from the health care provider. Issue benefits for medical formula for one month and complete the paperwork at the next benefit issuance. Follow normal issuance procedures in [MOM Section 7.6 Medical Documentation](#).

### Contact your State WIC Consultant if:

- Your agency is unable to serve all who are eligible.
- Your agency needs additional supplies, equipment, eWIC cards, or other materials.
- Your agency or clinic is operating from a new address or at a different phone number.

### Statewide Emergencies:

In the case of a statewide emergency affecting WIC services to participants, USDA would assess the emergency and might approve the additional emergency actions to be implemented outside of normal WIC business authority. These could include:

- Mail/update food benefits from the WIC Information System directly to participants
- Coordinate commodity foods distribution from the USDA regional office
- Provide for alternate food delivery mechanisms – the Commissioner of Health may approve other food delivery mechanisms, if approved by USDA
- Permit formula shipments
- Provide ready-to-feed formula in the event that water is limited or unsafe
- Request financial assistance for additional costs.

## Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

### [Section 5.2: Certification Procedures](#)

([https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch5/sctn5\\_2.pdf](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch5/sctn5_2.pdf))

### [Section 7.4: Supporting Breastfeeding with the WIC Food Package](#)

([https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch7/sctn7\\_4.pdf](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch7/sctn7_4.pdf))

### [Section 7.8: Food Package 2 Infants 6-11 Months](#)

([https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch7/sctn7\\_8.pdf](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch7/sctn7_8.pdf))

### [MOM Chapter 8: WIC Cards](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/mom.html#cards>)

### [Guide to Coordinating Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for WIC Service During Disasters](#)

(<https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/guide-coordinating-wic-service-during-disasters>)

## SECTION 1.17: EMERGENCY ACTIONS

### Exhibit 1-M: Streamlined Certification Process for Emergency Situations

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/exhbts/ex1/1m.pdf>)

### MOM Section 7.6 Medical Documentation

([https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch7/sctn7\\_6.pdf](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch7/sctn7_6.pdf))

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