

## Section 7.14: Food Package Options for Homeless Participants

UPDATED 4/2021

**References:** 7 CFR 246.10

**Policy:** Local agencies must make food package adjustments as requested to accommodate participants who are homeless.

**Purpose:** To provide foods that are suited to a homeless individual's resources and needs.

### Procedures:

- Assess the participant's circumstances, including availability of food storage and refrigeration, transportation, access to grocery stores and use of specific foods, to determine what food package adjustments are needed to accommodate the participant's situation. Additional considerations include:
  - Residence in a shelter or other living quarters that lack cooking facilities or with very limited cooking and food preparation facilities.
  - Inconsistent access to sanitary food storage and preparation facilities and/or unsanitary or restricted water supply.
  - Residence in a homeless facility, provided that:
    - The homeless facility does not accrue financial or in-kind benefit from a person's participation in the Program.
    - Foods provided by the WIC Program are not subsumed into a communal food service, but available *exclusively* to the WIC participant for whom they are issued.
    - The homeless facility places no constraints on the ability of the participant to partake of the supplemental foods from WIC, breastfeeding support or nutrition education. WIC staff should assist the participant with determining which WIC foods will best meet the facility's storage or refrigeration requirements.
  - Living "between" places, including migrants.
- Residency in a homeless facility or other institution does not automatically determine need for food package adjustments. A standard food package may be appropriate for homeless participants that have adequate food storage and preparation facilities.

## SECTION 7.14 HOMELESS FOOD PACKAGE

- Determine the appropriate benefit issuance schedule based on the individual's needs/circumstances and when follow up is needed.
- See [Section 5.6](#), Homeless Applicants and Participants for more information.

### Guidance

- Homeless participants represent a higher risk population. The homeless condition may predispose participants to health and nutritional risks.
- Provide what the participant can actually use. Certain food selections may be helpful such as:
  - Powdered or evaporated milk
  - Small juice cans - which may be offered if living conditions lack refrigeration, and/or adequate or sanitary food storage facilities.
  - Soy beverage in shelf-stable packaging (note: Pacific brand soy beverage is shelf-stable, but not widely available. Check local availability before recommending.)
- Provide information about options such as:
  - Canned beans
  - Fluid milk available in half-gallon containers
  - Option to receive all dairy as milk, rather than including yogurt and cheese
- Assess the participant's situation and whether homeless-friendly food options are needed at each benefit issuance. Revise the food package as circumstances and resources change.
- Provide counseling on ways to best use, prepare and keep foods safe, taking into consideration the participant's situation.
- Refer to community assistance programs as appropriate.

### Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

#### Section 5.6

([https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch5/sctn5\\_6.pdf](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch5/sctn5_6.pdf))

*Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program 85 E 7<sup>th</sup> Place, PO BOX 64882, ST PAUL MN 55164-0882;  
651-201-4444, [health.wic@state.mn.us](mailto:health.wic@state.mn.us), [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us);  
To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-4444*