

WIC Local Agency Conference Call

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2023, 8:30-9:30 AM

Agenda and Summary Notes

Agenda Items:

- National Updates - Kate
- WINNIE Update – Tami
- Troubleshooting Transactions – Erin
- Formula Update – Jessie
- Food Package Pictorials – Rebecca

National Updates- Kate

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities shared a new report, [About 2 Million Parents and Young Children Could Be Turned Away From WIC by September Without Full Funding](#), in fiscal year 2024 should Congress fail to provide additional funding to cover the costs of current levels of participation in the program. The analysis, which predicts a \$1 billion funding shortfall if Congress funds WIC at fiscal year 2023 levels, shows that state agencies could be forced to take drastic steps to reduce program participation to make up that shortfall.

Government funding for agriculture programs, including WIC, was extended through January 19, 2024, in a Continuing Resolution passed in November. Leaders in both the House and Senate have indicated that they hope to reach a deal on full-year spending bills in January, although progress in negotiating those measures has been slow.

NWA Developed Talking Points on WIC Funding for Agencies

NWA has compiled a new resource, [WIC Budget Shortfall Talking Points](#) to support members in conversations with community partners, participants, policymakers, and press.

Preliminary FFY 2023 Close Out Analysis

Today is the due date for the final WIC claim for reimbursement for FY 2023. Preliminary estimates of funds available for the final WIC Program payment to grantees indicates the state will be able to cover more unreimbursed WIC Program costs than last year. This is largely due to the additional WIC funding states received in September of this year. This funding had been requested during the year but wasn't received until the final weeks of the fiscal year. Final reimbursements are typically issued in late January/early February.

Other Program Updates

WINNIE Update – Tami

Due to a piece of software being unsupported, it caused a delay with beginning pilot for WINNIE. Due to this delay, we needed to readjust timelines to wait for the software updates. There was a planned move of our WIC servers from Kansas to Texas that was to occur immediately after WINNIE rollout was complete. This move will now need occur before we can start pilot. We are currently completing the new rollout schedule and will provide an update in January 2024.

CVB guidance – Tami

We recognize the Cash Value Benefits have been hard and challenging to work through. We don't have control of the amount of CVB, that is set by Congress. It must be approved by Congress with each Continuing Resolution or budget appropriation. At the state, we are uncertain of the amount until Congress moves forward with a budget.

Since the CVB amount isn't guaranteed, until it becomes a permanent part of the food package, we can't make it the default in the information system. Changing the default package at this time would put us at risk of over issuance if an increased amount isn't approved. We worked with our MIS and eWIC contractors in 2022 to create a back-end process that helps streamline increasing benefits when we are made aware of approvals of the increased CVB when we have a short turnaround time. This has worked well with the uncertainty of the CVB over the last year.

Some things local agencies can continue to do to make sure that no participant misses the increased CVB are:

1. Review the benefits before issuance. Reviewing the aggregate issuance screen prior to sending eWIC data will eliminate reissuance of benefits at a later time.
2. Use the **\$9, \$11, or \$16.50 (or \$10, \$12, \$18) – BY AGENCY** Infoview report found in the INFOVIEW TEMPLATES >> Benefits >> Agency Management folder to identify participants that have been incorrectly issued the lower amount of CVB. Staff can then **void** the benefits issued for the incorrect amount for these participants **before** the Printed First Date to Use (PFDTU) of their benefit set, create a new food package with the correct CVB food item (*Fruit/Veg CVB – 26, 47 and 52 dollars*), and reissue with the correct CVB level.

Troubleshooting Transactions – Erin

The [WIC Transaction Troubleshooting Guide for Local Agencies and Contacting the Helpdesk](#) is updated to help CPAs more easily determine the process to follow when helping troubleshoot participant transaction issues. The only instance when an issue can be reported directly to the health.wicvendor@state.mn.us inbox is when fresh produce items are reported as not mapped. All other transaction issues must be reported to the Minnesota Helpdesk first.

Formula Update – Jessie

There are supply concerns with Nutramigen, and it is out of stock in areas. Mead Johnson is reporting that small batches will be released at the end of December and in the coming months. The stock levels in stores will take some time to recover.

A common question coming forward is about the ability to issue larger can sizes. We are not allowed to add the larger cans as an option for participants since there is no waiver in place. We must issue an amount of formula that doesn't exceed the Maximum Monthly Allowance, and this is challenging with the larger cans. With the shortage, agencies could issue concentrate or Ready to Use (RTU), and it might be found in the stores depending on availability. Agencies can also place an order from the state for these items.

Contract formula is at healthy levels in Minnesota and across the country. There could potentially be some stores that are still struggling with their wholesaler or other issues. If you hear of an issue with contract formula in your area, talk with your consultant and they can work closely with the vendor team to reach out to the store and wholesaler if needed.

Food Package Pictorials – Rebecca

The food package pictorials are now updated and are posted to the website page [WIC Food Package Materials](#). The pictorials are laminated and are translated into Somali and Spanish. The laminated copies are available to order from the BrushArt website. Please contact your State WIC Consultant with any questions.

Questions & Answers

Could there be a way to add CVB for an entire household at once versus by each individual when we switch to WINNIE vs adjusting each individual package?

Food prescriptions are individual so we cannot add amounts at the household level. WINNIE will allow to fix the CVB amount after redemption has occurred though!

If a person is missed in getting an increase for CVB and there were redemptions we can work to get them put on?

If the Local Agency didn't issue the correct CVB, in some instances we can fix it on the back side when there have been redemptions. Not all can be resolved so we recommend running the Infoview report that indicates for your agency which participants do not have the increased CVB so you can resolve them before they have any redemptions. If you identify them prior to their Printed first date to use, you can void and reissue the benefits with the correct amount.

Are vendor staff taught how to report transaction issues as well? For example, it would be a lot easier if a HyVee staff person took pictures of the item that isn't going through and reports it to their corporate office. By the time we hear about the issue from the WIC participant, they are no longer at the store.

In general, vendor staff are not taught how to report transaction issues. If there is an issue outside mapping fresh produce, they likely do not know how to troubleshoot the transaction. They are given training materials to help them try to determine if an incorrect food is brought to the register, but they wouldn't otherwise know how to troubleshoot most transaction issues outside of trying a different register, calling for assistance, or trying to ring the foods a second time.

Most store staff are trained to report the item to their corporate office or person in charge of mapping at the store if a fresh produce item doesn't ring up. They open a ticket to resolve the item.

We have seen RTU 6 pack of 8 oz in stores... would this fit into WIC maximum monthly allowance?

Uncertain, without doing the calculations.

Can RTU formula be used for anyone?

During a shortage of a specific formula, the substitution is allowed on a month-to-month basis. If formula supply is not a concern, refer to MOM [Section 7.5: WIC Formula](#), under **7.5.2 Ready to Feed/Use Formula** for guidance. Reach out to your consultant with any questions.

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[About 2 Million Parents and Young Children Could Be Turned Away From WIC by September Without Full Funding](https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/about-2-million-parents-and-young-children-could-be-turned-away-from-wic?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=45f490e6-4c12-449d-8809-df27f6415e2d) (https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/about-2-million-parents-and-young-children-could-be-turned-away-from-wic?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=45f490e6-4c12-449d-8809-df27f6415e2d)

[WIC Budget Shortfall Talking Points](https://media.nwica.org/wic%20budget%20shortfall%20talking%20points.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=45f490e6-4c12-449d-8809-df27f6415e2d)

(https://media.nwica.org/wic%20budget%20shortfall%20talking%20points.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=45f490e6-4c12-449d-8809-df27f6415e2d)

[WIC Transaction Troubleshooting Guide for Local Agencies and Contacting the Helpdesk](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/vendor/troubleshoot.pdf)

(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/vendor/troubleshoot.pdf)

[WIC Food Package Materials](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/fpmaterials.html)

(https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/fpmaterials.html)

MOM [Section 7.5](#)

(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch7/sctn7_5.pdf)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 625 Robert St N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.

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