



**PROCEDURE:**

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- a. Discuss ways they could contribute to a relief effort, such as sharing expertise about the nutritional needs of the WIC eligible population.
  - b. Learn how the State plans to provide food to the general population to determine how the WIC Program can appropriately assist the State in response to disasters or emergencies.
5. The Nutrition Services (NS) area will address the needs of participants with documented qualifying conditions receiving Food Package III. They will provide participants with a point of contact at their Local Clinic as well as the SA's public website for additional information. ONS will ensure this information is kept up to date.
6. ONS will work with relief agencies responsible for disaster and public health emergency planning which includes the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) elements, including the Center for Threat Preparedness. The Office will coordinate with FEMA, relief organizations, State and local emergency operation centers and maintain a list of these agencies' contacts that is kept up to date. The State Agency Disaster Coordinator will identify WIC SA staff positions for full or partial deployment if needed through the duration of the disaster.
7. ONS will notify FNS partners, State and Local Agency (LA) staff, authorized WIC vendors, WIC participants and the public informed during an emergency, food recalls or other supply chain disruption. ONS will maintain the Community Service Directory (ATT 1) and utilize active vendor listing in Crossroads to keep those entities informed during the disasters. FNS partners - FNS MARO Supplemental Nutrition Division Director, MARO Supplemental Food Programs Branch Chief and Team Leads will be notified and kept apprised of ongoing disaster related issues and/or public health emergencies. LAs through the SA will utilize Documentation of Disaster Problems and Resolutions (ATT 2), to keep FNS apprised of disaster related issues. Through the LA and SA websites, participants and the general public will be advised of program changes that affect their area.
8. This policy will be used by the State and Local Agency as a guide for the continued operations by instituting alternate procedures as necessary through the following during a disaster:
  - a. Certification procedures that increase flexibility in required documentation.  
(See Policy 2.22)
  - b. Food Delivery procedures that deviate from standard food packages.  
(See Policy 2.22)
  - c. Notify the public of any changes in normal program operations, including alternate procedures or locations. Increase outreach to potentially eligible individuals affected by disaster
  - d. Designate staff to work on disaster and public health emergency teams at the State, local and clinic levels

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- e. Designate alternate means and locations for certification and benefit issuance for circumstances in which the conventional means and locations are not possible or optimal. (See Policy 2.22)
  - f. Plan for a back-up power system in the event of a power or other technology outage, to include a plan to access program records and issue benefits.
9. The Local Agency Director will prepare and use the list of responsibilities and designated personnel on the Emergency Preparedness Meetings, Drills and Test Exercises (ATT. 3) form that was completed during a staff meeting to discuss the emergency plan as a check list for preparation.
10. The Local Agency Director will be responsible for the following:
- a. Assuring that annual pre-disaster preparation is completed;
  - b. Maintaining communication with SA, WIC personnel, the media and local sources of food assistance during the initial disaster alert/activation phase, during the disaster and during the restoration/recovery phase; and
  - c. Assuring that pre-disaster procedures and restoration/recovery procedures following a disaster are followed and documented per policy.

**D. WIC Program Management during Disaster Situations**

- 1. Disasters may affect caseload management and could result in priority restrictions, the use of waiting lists, shifting of caseload assignments and the need to refer applicants to other sources of food assistance because of the following factors:
  - a. Many people may suddenly become eligible because of loss of income; and
  - b. Food package adjustments, such as the issuance of ready-to-feed infant formula because of unsafe drinking water, formula shortages, and increased food costs affecting the number of people that can be served.
- 2. The Local Agency will take reasonable measures to continue providing food benefits to WIC participants in disaster situations.
- 3. The Local Agency operating in a disaster situation will actively promote the WIC Program to potentially eligible individuals, while operating within its capacity to actually serve newly eligible persons.
- 4. Certain situations may be so devastating to WIC operations that benefits must temporarily be suspended and participants referred to other programs or congregate feeding sites.
  - a. The State Agency Disaster Coordinator will contact the State disaster relief agency and the FNS Regional Office for assistance and information when the Local Agency must decide whether to suspend WIC operations in a disaster area.

- ### E. Continuation of Benefits

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The SA and LA will update their public web pages/social media accounts with instructions for obtaining an up-to-date VOC and to notify neighboring State agencies of where a VOC may be obtained by displaced participants. This policy should help to expedite the certification process and ease transition to another SA.

1. Verification of Certification (VOC)
  - a. To expedite the certification process, the WIC clinic can provide Verification of Certification (VOC) to WIC participants when a disaster-related evacuation is anticipated.
  - b. If a VOC has not been issued, participants in disaster-prone areas can be reminded during their certification visits that it is a good practice to prepare a disaster folder that contains their WIC certification documentation and plan on taking these materials with them if they are evacuated.
2. Income eligibility determination may deviate from the usual WIC Program operation in disaster situations.
  - a. During subsequent certification, participants who express that their income documentation was lost because of a disaster will be considered as income eligible.
  - b. It must take place within a reasonable time period (approximately 1 month) following a disaster during which they have not had time to acquire documentation.
  - c. The documentation will be verbally verified as similar to that documented during the previous certification.
  - d. A note will be placed in the **Income Overview Comments** area in the **Crossroads Income Information** with the date and the statement: "Income Documentation Lost in Disaster."
  - e. An applicant who has a loss of income because their place of employment was destroyed and is likely to be out of work for an extended period will have income assessed based on the previous month.
  - f. An applicant who has a temporary loss of income because of a business that sustained some damage, or a temporary loss of utilities, will have income calculated on a twelve (12) month basis.
3. While temporary shelters and tent cities in which disaster victims may stay meet the definition of a "homeless facility", residence in such facilities does not automatically make such persons eligible for WIC. Homeless applicants must qualify through the certification process to receive WIC benefits.
4. During disasters, WIC Program employees who are also WIC participants or caretakers will not be responsible for issuing eWIC benefits/cards to themselves or members of their immediate family or conducting any aspect of the eligibility process for themselves or members of their immediate family, including issuing of VOC cards, taking anthropometric measures, and certifying the eligibility of such persons.

1. WIC participants may require a change in food package during a disaster. (See Policy 1.10.I.A)

- a. EBT card replacement and benefit transfer will be completed on a daily basis as ONS is made aware. If needed, these replacements can be completed from an alternate location.
- b. In areas where mail could be unreliable in a disaster or emergency, they could be picked up at the clinic.
- c. If an emergency clinic is in place, an EBT card could be allocated to the client and later linked to the EBT account once the staff is connected to Crossroads.
- d. The WIC Program will not replace food lost in a mass disaster where community emergency feeding services are provided. WIC personnel will be aware of locations of emergency feeding services and sources of clean water to be able to refer those who contact WIC for this type of assistance.
- e. In the case of a natural disaster affecting large numbers of people in a regional or State nature where emergency declarations initiate action by Federal and State public and private disaster assistance providers, participants are not required to provide proof of disaster for food benefit replacement.
- f. The State Agency will provide guidance on the replacement of benefits based on the situation.

## H. Vendor Management

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- Monitoring and Evaluation: Assess effectiveness of alternative procedures during disaster recovery and conduct post-disaster evaluations.
- Review and Revision: Annual review and update of policies to align with regulatory changes and best practices.

**I. Nutrition Services**

**A. Food Delivery Procedures**

1. Establish a working relationship with the State's emergency management agency and other relevant organizations (e.g., FEMA, American Red Cross).

The WIC Program will not replace food lost in a mass disaster where community emergency feeding services are provided. WIC personnel will be aware of locations of emergency feeding services and sources of clean water to be able to refer those who contact WIC for this type of assistance.

In the case of a natural disaster affecting large numbers of people in a region or State nature where emergency declarations initiate action by Federal and State public and private disaster assistance providers, participants are not required to provide proof of disaster for food benefit replacement.

- a. The State Agency will provide guidance on the replacement of benefits based on the situation.
- b. WIC participants may require a change in food package during a disaster or supply chain disruption.
  - Adjust food packages and authorized food lists to accommodate participants with limited access to food storage or preparation facilities.
  - Make food package substitution adjustments based on the availability of options due to disaster or supply chain disruption
- c. Ready-to-feed infant formula may be issued when water sources are not safe.
- d. Formula in supply at the WIC clinic may be distributed to WIC participants, as necessary.
  - i. Develop a schedule for food distribution to minimize congestion and ensure orderly access.
- e. There are no exemptions or exceptions allowed when medical documentation is required for the issuance of certain supplemental foods, including exempt infant formulas and WIC-eligible nutritionals during disasters. Staff can secure medical documentation by phone with hard copy documentation within a two week time period. Refer to WV Policy 4.09.F.5.
- f. A homeless food package may be issued to WIC participants with no storage and/or electricity.
- g. WIC personnel will provide nutrition counseling and handouts about safety when cooking, eating and drinking following a disaster, as necessary.

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