

# WIC Local Agency Conference Call

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2025, 8:30-9:30 AM

## Agenda and Summary Notes

### Agenda Items:

- National Updates (Congress passes CR, supplemental funding) - Kate
- U of MN Workforce Grant – Katie Hendel
- HIE WIC Referral Project Update – Rebecca
- Food Package Changes in June – Rebecca
- Egg changes – Katlyn
- Evaporated Milk Changes – Tami
- Promotion and Uptake of new mobile app – Tami

### National Updates- Kate

#### Congress passes Continuing Resolution (CR)

Congress passed a CR to fully fund the program for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 25. CR contains \$7.6 billion which is an increase of \$500 million from FFY24. Participation and food costs continue to rise, and the CR increased funding level provides more stability due to increased participation and food costs.

#### Supplemental Funding

WIC federal regulations allow state agencies to carry forward 3% of their total WIC grant into the next FFY. Minnesota has carried forward generally the full 3% each year to ensure the state had funds that could be accessed to cover immediate program costs if there were a federal government shutdown at the start of the FFY. A federal shutdown at the beginning of the FFY creates the scenario in which no funds have yet to be provided for program costs.

This past fall we discovered that carry forward funds can only be used to cover program administrative (NSA) costs and not food costs (7 CFR 246.16(b)(3)(ii)(A)). With this realization, the state decided to distribute a portion of the 3% carry forward funds to WIC local agencies as supplemental grant funds. We intend to continue this practice moving forward unless there are major changes in the level of federal funding received for the Minnesota WIC Program or the program regulations are changed. This change provided additional grant funding to all WIC local agencies in the state based on their caseload level. This year \$2.5 million in supplemental funding was provided through this process.

### Other Program Updates

University of Minnesota Workforce Grant – Katie Hendel

Katie Hendel shared about the WIC Professional Opportunities for Paraprofessionals (POP) in WIC project by the University of Minnesota. She shares this 5-year project is to develop a more robust, resilient WIC workforce to enhance the likelihood that eligible families participate and adopt nutrition recommendations. The project has four phases that include,

- Phase 1 to conduct national formative assessment of paraprofessional staffing models and training strategies.
- Phase 2 to use human-centered design approaches to co-create staff training and resources for paraprofessionals and supporting WIC staff.
- Phase 3 to pilot the training program across Wisconsin and Minnesota.
- Phase 4 to create a plan for nationwide scalability.

Katie shares the project is looking for advisory board members and working group members for phase 1 focus groups. If you have questions or are interested in participating, contact Katie at [khendel@umn.edu](mailto:khendel@umn.edu).

### **Health Information Exchange (HIE) WIC Referral Project Update – Rebecca**

The goal of this project is to increase WIC referrals through Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC) from their Electronic Health Record (EHR), EPIC to Hennepin WIC. HCMC, MNIT and Koble have created a successful electronic referral process from EPIC to Hennepin County WIC. Referral information (name, DOB, phone number, guardian, and anthropometric measurements) is sent from HCMC EPIC through a Health Information Exchange (HIE) to Hennepin WIC via email. The project team is following up on suggestions from Hennepin and Ramsey counties to make additional changes to content in the referral. Next steps are to explore these changes and see how we might expand this to other counties.

The SHIP program has WIC referrals as one of their strategies under the healthcare umbrella. Ways to increase referrals through using the online application, online referral form or this WIC HIE referral project were discussed with SHIP staff. If any SHIP coordinator reaches out and wants to consider WIC as a county strategy and your agency would like some support in those discussions, please reach out to your state WIC consultant.

### **Food Package Changes in June – Rebecca**

WIC food package changes will be entered into the information system on June 7 for local agencies to implement changes with participants on June 9. The main food items that will be changed in June are formula, infant cash value benefits (CVB) and milk.

#### **Formula**

##### **Mostly breastfed (MBF) infant package**

- Currently, the maximum ounces a 0–1-month old MBF infant can receive is 104 oz (1 can).
- Beginning 6/7, the maximum for 0–1-month old MBF infant will increase to 435 oz (up to 4 cans). This is the same amount that the MBF 1–3-month category currently receives.
- 1 can will continue to be the default for MBF infants.
- WIC staff will need to further assess formula needs beyond 1 can.

### **Contract Powder Formula**

- Participants, when issued the new food item, will be able to choose any powder contract formula in the store.
- The new food item for contract formula in WINNIE will be *WIC-allowed Formula-Powdered*. The short description that participants will see in the MN WIC app is *WIC Formula – Powdered*.

### **Infant CVB changes**

- CVB options are no longer restricted to fresh. Infants will be able to get canned and or frozen fruits and vegetables.
- The regular CVB food item **Fruits and Vegetables – (WIC-Allowed)** will be added to the default food prescription for infants.
- The food item will **NOT** replace the **Fruit and Vegetables – (FRESH ONLY)** in the current food prescriptions. If you want to provide to an infant that already has food prescriptions created you will need to create a new prescription before issuing benefits.

### **Milk**

- All types of milk can be purchased under one food item.
  - **Fat Free/Skim Milk or 1% (WIC-allowed)** food item will allow all the following to be purchased:
    - Fat free/Skim or 1% milk
    - Fat Free or 1% Lactose free milk
    - Fresh Goat milk
    - Unflavored Soy beverage
    - Nonfat powdered milk
    - Evaporated fat free/skim and goat milk
  - **Whole Milk (WIC-allowed)** food item will allow the following to be purchased:
    - Whole milk
    - Whole Lactose Free milk
    - Fresh Goat milk
    - Evaporated whole and goat milk
    - Soy beverage

**Note: This does NOT apply to 2% milk**, 2% milk food items will continue to be issued individually. This is because women and children over 2 years require a medical prescription for 2% milk.

**Materials** are being revised and will be posted to the website (i.e., Shopping guide, pictorials) by June rollout. After all food package changes are made, print versions will be made available to order through Brush Art in spring 2026.

### **Egg changes – Katlyn**

On April 1 egg options in the food package will be expanded to include brown eggs and cage free eggs. We are not able to include free range, pasture raised, or organic eggs due to cost containment efforts. The shopping guide will be updated on our website to reflect these

changes on April 1. Participants will be notified via an app message. Please help share this information with participants.

### **Evaporated Milk Changes – Tami**

Starting now, when issuing benefits to participants with evaporated milk, Local Agencies should use the *Selected LDTU* function on the Issue Benefits page in WINNIE to **change the Last Date to Use (LDTU) to the 6** for all new or current households with a member being issued evaporated milk.

How to change a household's LDTU is reviewed in the WINNIE training module, [Issue Benefits 2B – Manual Cycle Adjustments](#) (Table of Contents: Selected LDTU 1 - Cycle Adjust).

Issue the current evaporated milk food item on all sets of benefits with a **Printed First Date to Use (PFDTU) on or before June 6**. These benefits sets should still have a LDTU of the 6 of the month.

**Issue the regular milk food item on all sets of benefits with a PFDTU after June 6.** Agencies can use the FOOD & FORMULA ITEMS ISSUED BY PFDTU Infoview report found in the INFOVIEW TEMPLATES >> Food & Formula folder to identify participants currently being issued evaporated milk.

Completing the prompts:

*Enter 3-digit Agency ID: your Agency ID*

*Enter Food Item ID(s) – separate with semi-colon and no spaces: 15;17;18;41*

*Enter Start Date: 3/5/25*

*Enter End Date: 6/6/25*

Enter a Priority Alert to inform staff that the household will need to have their LDTU changed to the 6<sup>th</sup> if issued evaporated milk on benefits with a PFDTU on or before June 6.

For more information see [Evaporated Milk Follow-up – Action Items](#).

### **Promotion and Uptake of new Mobile App – Tami**

We want to acknowledge all the work agencies have done to help participants get the new version of the app! Please continue to encourage participants to download the new mobile app version. As of Tuesday, February 25, the MN WIC App will no longer work unless the user has updated to the new MN WIC App version. Participants with the old version will not be able to use any of its functions or receive messages through the app. For additional information, visit the [Minnesota WIC App](#) page.

### **Online shopping project - Kate**

Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska piloted online shopping with Hy-Vee stores. Washington and Massachusetts are currently testing online shopping for WIC at Walmart stores in those states. If you receive any participant calls with questions, please share that online shopping for WIC is not available in Minnesota currently.

## **Questions & Answers**

**Could there be a potential increase in the per participant rate next year?**

It is something the team can explore.

**Does the supplemental funding have to be applied for?**

No, the state allocates the funds directly to agencies.

**Are there any plans to expand the referrals project to other healthcare systems?**

Yes, we will explore next steps on how to expand the project. There are no plans currently but if you talk with a healthcare system in your area or they express interest, please let us know. We are looking for partners for expansion!

**Who is considered a paraprofessional in WIC?**

Paraprofessional CPA: An individual who has not attained a college degree to otherwise qualify for hiring as a CPA, but who is of a culture and/or speaks a language needed to serve participants from that community. To work as a paraprofessional CPA, such an individual must receive extensive training and mentoring to assure they acquire and maintain the minimum competencies needed in WIC. This individual can serve low risk participants under continuous supervision, and with ongoing training and mentoring from a local agency's nutrition professionals. For more information [Section 4.3: Competent Professional Authority \(CPA\) Qualifications and Responsibilities](#).

**Will concentrate formula remain specific by type/brand or will it be moving to one contract type as well?**

Concentrate and Ready to Feed (RTF) will still need to be issued separately.

**Will infant CVB changes continue at the 9-month package?**

At this time, we are only updating the food item they can receive. Expanding the CVB to the 6-month-old food package is not happening in June, that will happen in early 2026.

**Will food package changes be shown in the app?**

Yes.

**For the milk option, will CPAs still need to issue the yogurt and cheese options?**

Yes.

**What are documentation expectations for soy beverage and/or tofu on food packages?**

We are currently working on this policy, watch for further guidance.

**How will WIC staff issue 2% milk instead of whole if that is what the family wants?**

2% milk food items will continue to be issued individually.

**Will there be information to share ahead of the roll out with our clients instead of them just getting a message via the app? Many clients are not getting the message.**

Materials will be ready to provide to participants on June 9 when CPAs begin to implement changes. This will not affect current participants unless they want to change their food package beginning June 9.

**Is the addition of brown eggs and Cage free eggs temporary?**

No, we plan to leave these options on the program on and after April 1.

**What is the reason for no free range, pasture raised, and organic cost related?**

Yes, it is cost prohibitive for MDH WIC to add these items.

**Will the formula insert/education document be available from Brush Art?**

The document will be posted on the MN WIC website and will be available to order from Brush Art. We don't have a specific date when they will be on the Brush Art site.

**Do we need to wait until closer to the LDTU of 4/6 for evaporated milk changes? Currently I have a participant with LDTU of 4/5 and the change box is disabled?**

Additional information was provided on March 20 with scenarios related to changing the LDTU of the benefits when issuing. For more information see [Evaporated Milk Follow-up – Action Items](#).

**Do people with an Android phone need to re-register for the MN WC app or does it automatically update and keep their account information?**

Yes, they need to re-register.

**Is there a way to run a report to see if people have the new app downloaded or not? Will the new report also include if the family is enrolled in “Contact Us”?**

Yes, we are working on updating the current report and will provide information when available. The new report can include if the family is enrolled in “Contact Us.”

**When I register agency/store it does not allow access to the homepage shopping and nutrition links.**

That is currently the design of the MN WIC app. We are working on a solution to allow agencies to be able to view the MN WIC app similar to what a participant sees. More information to come.

**We've noticed that if people are using the suggested text from their keyboard when entering an account name in the app, it adds an automatic space after their name and it doesn't allow them to save their registration information.**

Yes, they need to remove the space after their account name.

**Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks**

Issue Benefits 2B – Manual Cycle Adjustments

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/training/cfh/wic/winnie/issue2b/index.html>)

Minnesota WIC App

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/infosystem/hubert/mnwicapp/index.html>)

Evaporated Milk Follow-up – Action Items

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/winnie/evaporatedmilk.pdf>)

Section 4.3: Competent Professional Authority (CPA) Qualifications and Responsibilities

([https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch4/sctn4\\_3.pdf](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch4/sctn4_3.pdf))

WIC LOCAL AGENCY CONFERENCE CALL

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](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: 1-800-657-3942.

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