WIC Operating Rules and Technical Implementation Guidelines

Bonnie Belza
FNS EBT Users Group Meeting
November 3, 2009
San Diego, Ca
“Why not use cards...”

“Food stamps are on a debit card now -- Why couldn’t WIC work the same way?”

“Have any states worked out a better system than paper coupons?”
What we’ll cover

- Where did the need for Operating Rules come from?
- Who is developing rules and specifications?
- How were issues defined?
- What is being worked on?
- When will they be available?
- Where will they be used?
- How do I get involved?
States and Retailers frustrated with initial implementation of integrated systems and stand-alone options

Differences in technical implementations and interpretation of policy

Costs of developing, implementing and maintaining different systems
WHO IS DEVELOPING RULES AND SPECIFICATIONS?

- State Agencies/ITOs
- Retailers
- EBT Processors
- Cash Register Vendors
- POS Terminal Vendors
- Third Party Processors
- FNS staff

Over 80 stakeholders participating since August 2009
August Meeting

- Meeting in Omaha, NE
- Open forum for gathering operational and technical issues
- Identified major areas of concern
  - Merchant transaction processing rules
  - APL file
  - Different interpretations of technical specifications
SEPTEMBER MEETING

- Meeting in Washington DC
- Categorized and prioritized issues as Operational or Technical
- Developed recommendations in breakouts that represented all stakeholders
- Agreed that Business Operating Rules need to drive Technical Specifications
ONGOING EFFORT

- Holding regular Conference calls to refine solutions
- Updating Issues list as items are resolved and incorporated into Operation Rules
- Gathering recommended changes to technical specifications
**Goal: Simplify Implementation**

- Provide core set of requirements for retailers that have not integrated
- Provide a standard reference for RFP requirements, procurement and implementation
- Minimize differences that can be costly to the WIC program and difficult to maintain if multiple State agencies are served by that system
GOAL: CONSISTENT OPERATIONS

- Provide a choice of EBT processors
- Ensure a level playing field
- Maintain common data for quality assurance and continuous improvement
- Provide a framework for future EBT services
What Issues do the Operating Rules Address?

- Merchant processing requirements
- Card appearance
- File handling
- Risk and Security Management
- Testing and Certification
- Authorized Product List
- Reporting

Lane operations

- PINs and Hot Card List

Numbering standards

UPC/PLU coding
WHAT DO THE TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS COVER?

- Online EBT - real time messages from POS terminal to State’s system
- Offline EBT – Smart card interface to EBT terminal
- File formats for Authorized Product List, Hot Card List, Claim, Reconciliation and Settlement files
- Data definitions and content
WHEN WILL DOCUMENTS BE AVAILABLE?

- First draft of WIC Operating Rules released in November 2009
- Technical specification changes January 2010
- X9.93 standards 2008 version available from American National Standards Institute eStore
  [http://webstore.ansi.org](http://webstore.ansi.org)
WHERE WILL THEY BE USED?

- By States and ITOs to plan, develop and implement WIC EBT
- By Retailers to design POS and Cash register systems
- By EBT Processors and Third Party Processors to provide WIC EBT services
- By FNS to manage the implementation and ongoing administration of WIC EBT
How do I get involved?

- Review Operating Rules draft with your Agency
- Provide technical specifications to your Information Technology staff
- Participate in reviews and conference calls

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UNITED STATES WITH WIC EBT

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