

WIC During Disaster

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is not designed to be a disaster assistance program, and is, therefore, not considered a first response option for disaster survivors. WIC policies allow State agencies flexibility in program design and administration to support continuation of benefits to participants during times of natural or other disasters. WIC State agencies are encouraged to work with FEMA as well as their own State and local emergency services offices to assist participants during a disaster.

WIC State Agencies

- Disaster-related evacuees who seek WIC benefits should receive expedited certification processing.
- In cases where disaster-related evacuees move in with another household, the displaced individuals may be treated as a separate economic unit.
- Verification of certification (VOC) information should be provided by the local WIC office to WIC participants when a disaster-related evacuation is anticipated.
- The documentation requirements for income, residency and/or identity do not apply to a disaster survivors whose documentation has been damaged, lost or destroyed, or if the agency determines the income documentation requirement would present an unreasonable barrier to participation.
- State agencies may allow the participant's certification period to be shortened or extended by a period not to exceed 30 days.
- State agencies may establish their own policies and procedures with regard to replacement of unredeemed WIC checks or vouchers that are destroyed in disasters.
- State agencies may mail food instruments to persons who are not scheduled for nutrition education or a second or subsequent certification.

WIC Participants

- Participants/evacuees do not have to present proof of identity, residency or income that is normally required (that is, if one had to leave home in such a hurry that she was unable to bring the necessary documents, or if those documents were destroyed).
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- Participants/evacuees may be able to use their original WIC checks or vouchers in the State to which they have been relocated. The WIC State agency will inform participants if this is the case, usually through a toll-free telephone number and/or other public announcement.
 - Contact information for State WIC agencies can be found on the Food and Nutrition Service website: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/contacts/statealpha.htm>.

WIC-Authorized Vendors

- WIC vendors may be allowed to accept out-of-State food instruments during disaster situations. The State WIC office will advise vendors if this is allowed.
- If at all possible, the participant should receive the exact brand of infant formula specified on the out-of-State food instrument.
- If it is not possible to provide the exact brand items for the other foods listed on the out-of-State WIC food instrument, a similar item from the neighboring State's WIC-approved food list may be substituted.
- The originating WIC State agency (i.e., the WIC State agency in which the participant was initially certified) is responsible for the cost of the food instrument. The out-of-State vendor should deposit each WIC check into his or her bank account for payment. If the originating WIC State agency issues vouchers instead of checks, the out-of-State vendor should submit the vouchers for payment to the originating WIC State agency.

These WIC vendor policies do not apply to Mississippi and Vermont because the WIC Programs in these States do not operate through grocery stores.

For more information on WIC disaster resources use the following link:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-disaster-response>