

**8.01 Benefit Issuance**

**PURPOSE:** To provide staff parameters for issuing food benefits to clients, while ensuring adequate nutrition education opportunities are offered and documented.

**A. POLICY:**

1. The WIC Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card shall be the instrument by which food benefits are made available to clients. (See Policy 8.09, WIC Electronic Benefit Transfer Card Issuance).
2. Food benefits are for the client's use only. (See Policy 2.23, Authorized Person).
3. Food benefits shall be made available to clients at the time of certification, unless the client is:
  - a. Hospitalized.
  - b. Living in a homeless facility where food benefits are used for communal food preparation.
  - c. Living in a residential institution (e.g., correctional facility, rehabilitation center).
4. Food benefits are to be issued for no more than three full months. An additional partial month of benefits may be issued to a newly certified family member in order to align the family's Benefits Valid Through (BVT) date.
5. When a category and food package change occur from an IBP to an IFF mid-benefit month:
  - a. The full benefit month formula and food quantity cannot exceed the maximum monthly allowances for the new client category. (See Policy 7.04, Maximum Food Package.) Staff shall void benefits to prevent over-issuance, if applicable.
  - b. The infant is eligible to receive the IFF formula maximum regardless of the BE/BP redemptions for the current benefit month.
6. When a category and food package change occur as a result of a change in breastfeeding status or a change from PG to BE mid-benefit month:
  - a. The woman should be assigned the food package with the maximum amount of benefits available.
  - b. The woman is eligible to receive her maximum food package regardless of the infant's formula redemption for the current benefit month.
  - c. If the new food package contains fewer items, allow the system to implement the change with the next month's Benefit Start Date.
  - d. If the new food package contains additional items, i.e., category change from PG to BE, the full benefit month food quantities cannot exceed the maximum monthly allowances for the new client category. (See Policy 7.04, Maximum Food Package.) Staff shall void benefits to prevent over-issuance, if applicable.

7. Food benefits shall be prorated if benefits are issued 11 or more days after Benefit Start Date (BSD) (See Policy 8.02, Benefit Proration).
8. Clients are eligible for supplemental food benefits for their entire certification period. Food benefits must not be withheld, delayed, or denied to clients who refuse or fail to participate in nutrition education (NE). This includes NE at interim education (EDU), mid-certification (I/CEVAL), and Nutrition Counseling with a Registered Dietitian (NCRD) appointments.
  - a. For clients who complete nutrition education contacts throughout the certification period (See Policy 5.02, Nutrition Education Contacts), local agencies may issue benefits at 3-month intervals regardless of the NE method used or whether contact was made with the client (i.e., wichealth.org lesson completed remotely).
  - b. For clients who have not completed the offered nutrition education contacts and/or missed a scheduled appointment (any appointment type following certification/recertification appointment), local agencies must attempt to contact the client at least once prior to issuing additional benefits. The contact can be by voice call, text, email, or other appropriate method determined by the local agency. Contact attempts must be documented in the client/family record. In cases where the attempt to contact is unsuccessful, once documented, the local agency may issue up to three months of benefits when the client's benefits are due.
9. During a certification period, if no connection has been made after issuing benefits for six or more consecutive months, local agencies must determine if benefits are being actively redeemed and attempt to contact the client to schedule the next appropriate appointment and encourage participation in the Program. The contact can be by voice call, text, email, or other appropriate method determined by the local agency. Contact attempts must be documented in the client/family record.
  - a. If the client is actively redeeming benefits (redemption within last 60 days), local agencies may issue up to 3 months of benefits.
  - b. If the client is not actively redeeming benefits (no redemption within last 60 days), local agencies may not issue benefits until connection with the client is made.

References:

7 CFR 246.2

7 CFR 246.7(r)

7 CFR 246.10(b)(2)(ii)(D)

7 CFR 246.12(r)(5)

USDA Food Package Guidance 2016

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-food-packages-state-agency-frequently-asked-questions>

Cross-Reference:

2.23 Authorized Person

5.02 Nutrition Education Contacts

7.04 Maximum Food Package

8.02 Benefit Proration

8.09 WIC Electronic Benefit Transfer Card Issuance