



April 15, 2020

Food and
Nutrition
Service

SUBJECT: Request for WIC Flexibility in Response to COVID-19

TO: Tim English
Regional Administrator
Midwest Regional Office

1320
Braddock
Place
Alexandria,
VA
22314

This letter is in response to the March 23, 2020 correspondence from Ohio WIC requesting program flexibility in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) as a result of significant impacts to providing WIC Program services to participants due to COVID-19.

Ohio WIC requested a waiver of the federal requirement that the State agency must ensure that no more than a three month supply of food instruments is issued at any one time to any participant, parent or caretaker of an infant or child participant, or proxy, as outlined by 7 CFR 246.12(r)(5). Pursuant to the authority granted in section 2204(a)(1) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127), USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approves this waiver request through **May 31, 2020**.

Given the recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to control the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic through means of social distancing, USDA FNS understands that normal offline electronic benefit transfer (EBT) benefit issuance procedures, which often involve contact between participants and clinic staff, create an undesirable risk. This waiver removes a requirement that could prevent or impede the provision of essential Program services to participants.

This waiver allows Ohio WIC to issue up to four months of WIC benefits on electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards at one time. This waiver is only applicable to regulations at:

- 7 CFR 246.12(r)(5) which requires the State agency to ensure that no more than a three month supply of food instruments is issued at any one time to any participant, parent or caretaker of an infant or child participant, or proxy.

Ohio WIC will fully inform participants that they are being issued benefits for four months at one time, and will provide nutrition education, as appropriate.

The waiver authority of P.L. 116-127 requires, at section 2204(b)(1), that the State agency submit a report which includes a summary of the use of this waiver and a description of whether this waiver resulted in improved services to women, infants, and children. The State agency shall provide the Regional Office with this report no later than 1 year after the date of approval.

USDA FNS appreciates Ohio WIC's commitment to addressing the operational challenges impeding the delivery of WIC benefits to women, infants, and children in need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Widor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and 'W'.

SARAH WIDOR
Director
Supplemental Food Programs Division