



District of Columbia WIC Program

Public Health Emergency

Disaster Guidance

2020 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

March 2020

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Background

A new coronavirus is causing an outbreak of pneumonia. The virus was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan City, China. Since then, the virus has spread to over 140 countries, and cases have been identified in every state in the United States. During a pandemic event, the key public health intervention to slow the spread of the disease may be social distancing.

Due to guidance related to quarantines and social distancing, state agencies will need to implement administrative flexibilities to ensure continuation of operations and services. In this case, WIC local agency sites will be required to operate under alternate procedures. Staff may face an increased workload as many State, local, and clinic employees and their families may also be impacted by the pandemic and unable to work.

On March 11, 2020, the Mayor of the District of Columbia declared a state of Public Health Emergency. In order to facilitate implementation of approved administrative flexibilities and waiver, the DC WIC Program has created emergency policies and procedures that will help minimize the disruption of WIC services. Throughout the emergency, the state agency (SA) will focus on providing support to authorized Local Agencies (LA) and their affiliated clinic sites.

WIC is a federally funded program that serves a specific population with special nutrition needs. WIC is not designed or funded to meet the basic nutrition needs of disaster victims who would not otherwise be eligible for the Program. WIC must operate in disaster situations within its current program context and funding. For these reasons, WIC is not to be considered a first line of defense in responding to the nutrition needs of disaster victims, including the provision of infant formula.

During this period of emergency, every reasonable effort will be made to continue issuance of food benefits to participants.

Best Practices for Preventing Illness

Follow these best practices for preventing illness and the spread of the virus:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/protect/prevent.html>
2. <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/>
3. Immediately wash hands after any contact at the WIC service site and/or handling of WIC checks. Use soap and water, wash for at least 20 seconds.
4. Clean countertops, chairs, etc in between participant visits with disinfectant. Approved disinfectants for fighting Coronavirus can be [found here](#).



WIC State and Local Agency Responsibilities

State Agency Responsibilities:

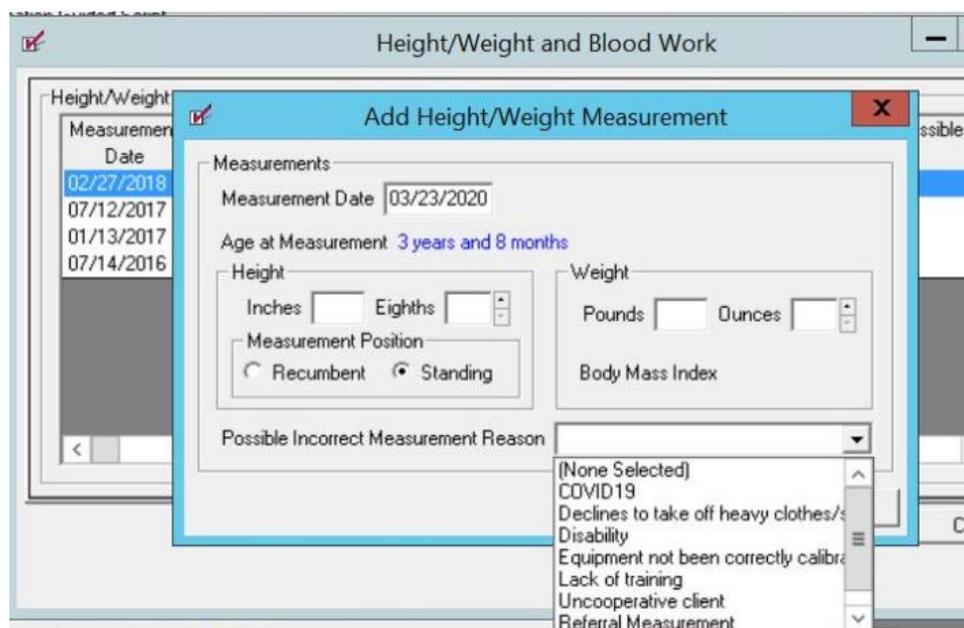
1. The SA will develop a plan for best possible continuation of WIC services
2. The SA will coordinate communications and services with other state and federal programs, and all WIC business partners
3. The SA will document vendor correspondence regarding any disruption in normal business operations that may directly impact WIC Families
4. The SA will work with TriCare pharmacy regarding possible deliveries of special formula to a participant's home or an acceptable physical address
5. The SA will work with DC Health Communications to update all social media sites and to update the DC WIC website as necessary (www.dcwic.org)
6. The SA will assist LAs in fast printing procedures to aid in the mailing of WIC and Cash Value (CVC) Checks
7. The SA will utilize TeleTask to communicate ongoing changes and updates to WIC families (i.e. scheduling accommodations, site closures, etc.)

Local Agency / Service Site Responsibilities:

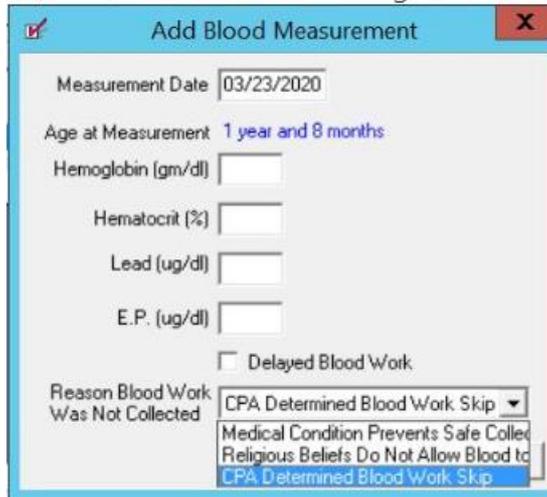
1. Service sites will follow all procedures listed below
2. Service sites will post all signage according to the SA's direction
3. LA staff will make referrals to any available food assistance services
4. Service sites will ensure that their primary focus is feeding WIC families; with the overall goal to provide food benefits and reschedule appointments
5. As needed, staff will utilize the Language Line for interpreter needs when bi-lingual staff are not available to interpret for a participant with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
6. LA staff will mail WIC and CVC checks to participants, if possible
7. LA staff will continue to make an effort to abide by separation of duties, unless it is a burden due to reduction of staff
8. LA Staff will review emails throughout the day and stay in communication with the SA on a regular basis

Guidance for Performing Phone Certifications:

1. If the participant/caregiver has an appointment, review the CARES file in advance
2. Engage with the participant/caregiver as though they are present in the office
3. Explain that this is an exception to normal WIC practices and policies; give a brief description of the WIC Program, if necessary, and the process of the appointment they are calling in for (mid-cert, recertification, initial certification, etc.)
 - a. Let the participant know that all information is confidential and give an approximate time for the length of the appointment, if possible
4. Request that all required documentation be self-reported and explain that proof of residency, income, identity, and pregnancy (if applicable) will be required at the next in-person appointment
 - a. Note: Lack of documentation for eligibility criteria shall not defer certification or issuance of food benefits
5. If medical documentation is available that contains height/weight (within 60 days) and/or bloodwork levels (within 90 days), request that the participant/caregiver submit documents by sending a scan or photo via email or text
 - a. DC CARES Options:
 - i. Staff may take participant/caregiver-reported measurements for height and weight, with documentation provided later
 - ii. If caregiver-provided measurements are not available, use the *Standard Anthropometrics for Infant/Children Chart* for the infant/child's age group (see appendix 1 and appendix 2)
 - iii. Staff should select "COVID19" from the dropdown options for "possible incorrect measurement reason" in the Height/Weight Measurement box



- iv. If hemoglobin measurements from within 90 days are not available, staff shall select the “CPA determined skipped” option



- v. Staff should **not** select/click the “Delayed Blood Work” box
 - b. Note: Lack of documentation for anthropometrics and labs shall not postpone certification or issuance of food benefits
6. Gather all medical information to the extent possible by performing a [Value Enhanced Nutrition Assessment \(VENA\)](#), and provide risk assessment, nutrition education, and referrals:
 - a. Certification can be streamlined to the extent permitted by DC CARES
 - b. Staff should make every effort possible to provide nutrition education appropriate to the risk factor determined through the VENA process
 - c. Staff may reference dcwic.org to provide SA-approved nutrition education resources to participants
 - d. Staff should encourage participants to view lessons through the [WICSmart App](#) (or online portal) for secondary nutrition education and/or primary education for low risk participants
 - e. Staff should utilize dcwic.org to provide WIC participants with appropriate referrals. If WIC participants need COVID-19 information, refer participants to <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/>
7. Complete the [Signature for Certification Form](#):
 - a. Read the condensed Program Rights and Responsibilities bullet points to the participant (see Appendix 3)
 - b. Obtain the caregiver’s verbal agreement to the Rights and Responsibilities
 - c. Staff shall write “COVID19”, the date, and their initials on the signature line
 - d. File the Signature for Certification Form in the participant’s folder
 - e. Create an alert in the participant’s DC CARES account that the participant was certified during COVID19



8. Issuing a Proxy (or proxies)
 - a. A participant or caregiver may choose to allow up to two (2) proxies who may redeem the WIC checks when the participant is unable
 - b. The participant/caregiver must name their proxy(s) over the phone
 - c. LA Staff shall write the proxies' names on the Signature for Certification Form in the "Proxy #1" and "Proxy #2" lines, as appropriate
9. Prescribe and issue food benefits:
 - a. Review the [food package](#) and confirm the food prescription meets the participant's needs; inform the participant of emergency food package changes / increased flexibilities (see Appendix 4)
 - b. See below for information regarding the prescription of special formulas
 - c. Issue the maximum benefits allowed (up to 3 months)
 - d. Inform the caregiver that food benefit checks will be mailed, and review the best mailing address
 - e. Write "Mailed / (date) / (initials)" next to the corresponding check numbers on the Check Register
10. Offer education on redeeming food benefits:
 - a. If the participant/caregiver is new to WIC, educate on how/where to shop and redeem benefits; inform participants of resources on dcwic.org, and encourage the participant to download the [WIC Shopper App](#)
 - b. Educate participants on additional food items available during COVID-19; explain that these increased flexibilities / food package changes will be removed when operations return to normal
 - c. Remind the participant/caregiver that they, and their proxies (if applicable), need to sign the WIC ID folder **before** going to the store to redeem benefits, to avoid any unnecessary frustrations at the check-out counter
11. Follow-up appointments should be made according to LA policy:
 - a. Remind the participant / caregiver what to bring to the next appointment
12. Thank the participant for participating in WIC, offer a phone number for questions
13. Along with WIC and/or CVC checks, mail a copy of the *LA Letter to Participants* and appropriate nutrition education materials (if applicable)
 - a. If the participant/caregiver is new to WIC, also mail the WIC ID Folder
 - i. Place a post-it note on the WIC ID Folder instructing the participant and proxy(s), if applicable, to sign the Folder before going to the store to redeem benefits
 - b. The LA letter to Participants may be edited to provide information on on-line nutrition education resources such as dcwic.org and [WICSmart](#)



Guidance for Performing Mid-Certification Appointments over the Phone

1. Read the participant's file before the phone appointment
 2. Engage with the participant/caregiver as though they are present in the office
 3. Conduct a brief assessment using the VENA process
 - a. Obtain weight, length and height information, if the participant has information available from within the past 60 days
 - b. Refer to anthropometric and haemoglobin DC CARES instructions listed in the Guidance for Performing Phone Certifications (above)
 - c. Follow up to the previous nutrition risks and concerns identified during certification
 4. Offer nutrition education and breastfeeding support, as appropriate
 5. Refer to other social and health programs, as appropriate
 6. Confirm that the participant's current food prescription meets their needs; inform the participant of emergency food package changes / increased flexibilities (see appendix 4)
 7. Complete a breastfeeding review if there is change in the breastfeeding participant's and infant's food benefits
 8. Issue food benefits:
 - a. Review the participant's mailing address
 - b. Issue 90 days of benefits
 - c. Write "mailed / date / initials" on the Check Register
 - d. Include a *LA Letter to the Participant* with the WIC Checks, if the participant has not already received this letter
 9. Schedule the next appointment based on LA policy
 - a. Remind the participant if there is anything they need to bring
 10. Thank the participant for participating in WIC, offer a phone number for questions
-

Prescriptions and Special Formulas

1. If a participant has a current prescription for a special formula or WIC-eligible Nutritional, that prescription may be extended in DC CARES for 60 days



Best Practices for Mailing Food Benefit Checks

1. Use first class mail with one of the following phrases included on the envelope:
 - a. “Do not forward, return to sender”
 - b. “Do not forward, address correction requested”
 2. Do not use envelopes with windows
 - a. These provide an easy means of examining envelope contents
 3. Do not use the words “WIC Program” on the return address:
 - a. Mentioning WIC may increase the incidence of stolen envelopes
-

Lost / Stolen Check Reports and Check Reissuance

During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, any reports of lost or stolen WIC checks shall be processed as follows:

1. Checks may be reissued for all participants reporting checks as lost or stolen
 2. LA staff will complete the [Lost or Stolen Check Report Form](#) while the participant is on the phone
 3. If the participant is reissued checks, the LA staff will write the check numbers and the date on the form
 4. Review the participant’s address on file as any checks reissued will be mailed
 5. LA staff will read the Liability Waiver to the participant on the phone and ask for a verbal acceptance of the terms
 6. LA staff will write “COVID 19” in the participant’s signature box, and fill in their name and the date, per normal
 7. LA staff will only submit lost/stolen reports to the SA if checks were reissued:
 - a. Email the completed Lost or Stolen Check Report Form to info.wic@dc.gov
 8. Lost or Stolen Check Report Forms shall be placed in the participant’s file
 9. When documenting the Lost or Stolen Report in DC CARES, LA staff shall note that the report was submitted during COVID-19 and the participant needs to sign the Form in their file at their next in-person appointment
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Lost / Stolen WIC ID Folders

Participants must possess their WIC ID folder in order to redeem food benefits. If a participant calls to report they lost their WIC ID folder:

1. Review the mailing address on file, as a new WIC ID folder will be mailed
 2. Remind participants to sign the new WIC ID folder before going to the store
 3. Document using a *General Note* in the participant’s DC CARES file
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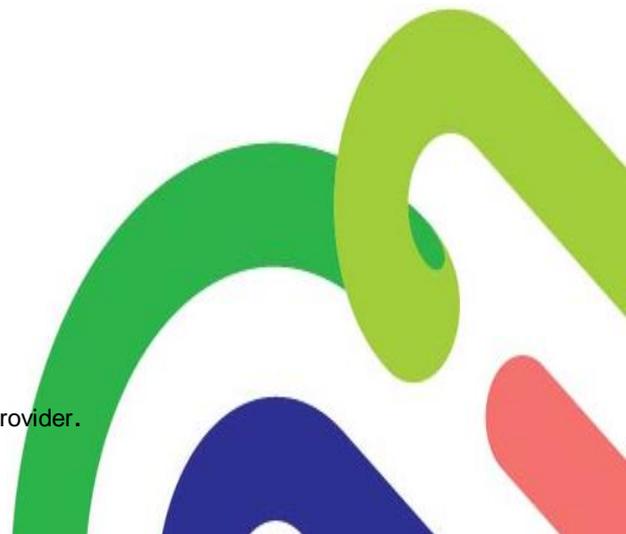
Disaster Recovery (Return to Normal Operations)

State Agency Responsibilities:

1. The SA will communicate with Local Agencies when it is appropriate to return to providing services as normal
2. The SA will coordinate communications and services with other state and federal programs, and all WIC business partners, as necessary
3. The SA will work with DC Health Communications to issue a press release and update all social media sites, as necessary
4. The SA will update the DC WIC website (dcwic.org), as necessary
5. The SA will utilize TeleTask to communicate the return to normal business operations to DC WIC participants, as necessary
6. The SA will mine CARES data for COVID-19 exceptions and create reports as necessary
7. The SA will submit reports as requested by USDA

Local Agency / Service Site Responsibilities:

1. As participants come in for subsequent appointments, staff will gather documentation that was not received via email or text message during the time of disaster (i.e.: proof of residence, income, etc)
2. Staff will perform and enter into DC CARES any anthropometric measurements or bloodwork data that was deferred during the disaster
3. All service sites will return to normal operations, including scheduling and physical presence requirement





Appendix 1: Standard Anthropometrics for Infants (0-36 Months)

Source: https://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts/data_tables.htm

Sex	Age (mos)	Weight (LB)	Length (IN)
M	0	7.78	19.68
M	1	8.83	20.75
M	2	10.76	22.29
M	3	12.51	23.47
M	4	14.09	24.44
M	5	15.52	25.28
M	6	16.82	26.03
M	7	18.00	26.72
M	8	19.06	27.35
M	9	20.02	27.93
M	10	20.89	28.48
M	11	21.68	29.00
M	12	22.40	29.50
M	13	23.06	29.97
M	14	23.66	30.42
M	15	24.21	30.85
M	16	24.71	31.27
M	17	25.18	31.67
M	18	25.62	32.06
M	19	26.03	32.44
M	20	26.41	32.81
M	21	26.77	33.17
M	22	27.12	33.52
M	23	27.45	33.86
M	24	27.78	34.19
M	25	28.09	34.51
M	26	28.40	34.82
M	27	28.70	35.13
M	28	29.00	35.42
M	29	29.30	35.71
M	30	29.60	36.00
M	31	29.90	36.27
M	32	30.20	36.54
M	33	30.50	36.81
M	34	30.81	37.07
M	35	31.12	37.33
M	36	31.43	37.58

Sex	Age (mos)	Weight (LB)	Length (IN)
F	0	7.49	19.40
F	1	8.37	20.35
F	2	10.02	21.77
F	3	11.53	22.87
F	4	12.92	23.80
F	5	14.19	24.62
F	6	15.36	25.36
F	7	16.44	26.03
F	8	17.42	26.66
F	9	18.33	27.24
F	10	19.17	27.79
F	11	19.94	28.31
F	12	20.65	28.81
F	13	21.31	29.29
F	14	21.92	29.75
F	15	22.49	30.19
F	16	23.03	30.61
F	17	23.53	31.02
F	18	24.00	31.42
F	19	24.45	31.81
F	20	24.87	32.19
F	21	25.27	32.55
F	22	25.66	32.91
F	23	26.04	33.26
F	24	26.40	33.60
F	25	26.75	33.94
F	26	27.10	34.29
F	27	27.44	34.63
F	28	27.77	34.96
F	29	28.10	35.28
F	30	28.43	35.58
F	31	28.76	35.88
F	32	29.08	36.16
F	33	29.41	36.43
F	34	29.74	36.69
F	35	30.07	36.94
F	36	30.40	37.18



Appendix 2: Standard Anthropometrics for Children (2-5 Years Old)

Source: https://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts/data_tables.htm

Sex	Age (Years)	Weight (LB)	Height (IN)	Sex	Age (Years)	Weight (LB)	Height (IN)
M	2.0	27.93	34.04	F	2.0	26.58	33.45
M	2.5	29.90	35.96	F	2.5	28.76	35.56
M	3.0	31.75	37.51	F	3.0	30.73	37.09
M	3.5	33.77	38.98	F	3.5	32.81	38.44
M	4.0	35.97	40.36	F	4.0	35.01	39.78
M	4.5	38.31	41.69	F	4.5	37.32	41.13
M	5.0	40.75	42.98	F	5.0	39.73	42.50

Appendix 3: Program Rights and Responsibilities Phone Bullet Points

Read the following to the participant and ask for their acknowledgement of the WIC Program Rights and Responsibilities.

- I. While participating in WIC, you have the right to expect that you will receive courteous service, good quality foods based on your nutrition needs, and that you will be offered health services and nutrition education
- II. If you believe that you have been discriminated against due to race, color, gender, etc, you may contact the Office of Civil Rights
- III. As a WIC Participants you are responsible for making sure you do not participant in two or more WIC programs at the same time, and for following guidelines set for obtaining and using WIC foods
- IV. Intentionally misleading the Program about eligibility criteria may result in civil criminal prosecution under DC and Federal law
- V. Do you consent to participant in the Program and agree with the responsibilities of participation?

Inform the participant that they will be asked to sign this form at their next in-person appointment.



DC WIC COVID-19 Expanded Food List

DC WIC has **temporarily expanded its food list** in response to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) emergency to ensure WIC participants and their families have the food they need to stay healthy. **The chart below shows only the NEW FOODS that WIC participants can buy.**

Instructions for WIC participants:

- 1) Refer to the [food list](#) in your WIC ID folder when shopping for a specific food item.
- 2) If you cannot find a food item at the store, review the list below of **additional foods** you can purchase with your WIC checks.
- 3) Contact your local WIC site if you have any questions: dcwic.org/wic-locations

(Effective: 4/1/2020 until further notice)

Food Category	New Foods	Notes About Buying
Bread	32 oz. loaves of 100% Whole Wheat Bread (brands listed in WIC ID folder)	32 oz. loaf of bread will count as 2 whole grain choices
Pasta	32 oz. package of 100% Whole Wheat Pasta (brands listed in WIC ID folder)	32 oz. box of pasta will count as 2 whole grain choices
Cow's Milk	All container sizes of milk (quart, half gallon & gallon)	- Mix & match container sizes regardless of container size listed on check (<i>Ex: Can buy 4 quarts of 1% milk instead of 1 gallon</i>) -Must buy the total amount of milk listed on check
	Goat milk (all brands, including organic)	-Can substitute goat milk for cow's milk - Type of milk (fluid, powdered, evaporated) and % fat (non-fat, 1%, 2%, whole) must match what is written on the check
	Plain low-fat kefir (all brands, including organic)	Can substitute plain low-fat kefir for cow's milk
	Organic cow's milk (all brands)	Type of milk (fluid, powdered, evaporated) and % fat (non-fat, 1%, 2%, whole) must match what is written on the check
Yogurt	All container sizes of yogurt	- Mix & match container sizes regardless of container size listed on check (<i>Ex: Can buy four 8 oz. containers instead of one 32 oz. container</i>) -Buy the total amount of yogurt listed on check
	Plain low-fat Greek yogurt	Buy the total amount of yogurt listed on check
	Organic Greek & organic regular yogurt (all brands)	Must buy plain, low-fat or plain, non-fat yogurt

Soy Milk	Gallon containers of soy milk	-Mix & match container sizes regardless of container size listed on check -Must buy the total amount of soy milk listed on check
	All brands of soy milk	
	Unsweetened flavored soy milk	
	Organic soy milk	
Cheese	24 oz, 38 oz, 48 oz packages of cheese	These size packages should only be used with multiple checks.
	28-pack of cheese sticks	Can be substituted for 16 oz. of cheese
	Organic cheese (all brands)	Can buy shredded, cubed, sliced or sticks
Eggs	All egg sizes (medium, large, XL)	Buy the total number of eggs listed on check
	All carton sizes (6, 12, 18, 24 eggs)	18-count & 24-count cartons must be purchased with multiple checks, unless 'two dozen eggs' is written on your check
	All egg colors (white or brown)	
	Organic eggs (all brands)	Cannot buy eggs with added omega-3's
Beans	All sodium levels of canned beans	Buy the total amount of beans listed on check
	Organic beans (all brands)	
Peanut Butter	Full-fat peanut butter (all brands)	Buy the total amount of peanut butter listed on check
	Organic peanut butter (all brands)	Buy chunky, creamy, or crunchy. Only peanut butter, no blends
Baby Food Vegetables & Fruit	2 oz. containers (all brands)	-Buy plain vegetables & fruit
	4 oz. pouches (all brands)	-Buy combinations of vegetables or fruit (<i>example: peas & carrots, apples & pears</i>) but not vegetables mixed with fruit
	Organic baby fruits & vegetables (all brands)	
*Additional Organic Foods	Organic brown rice, organic barley	-Buy any brand - Follow instructions in WIC ID folder for specific items
	Organic canned fish, organic baby food meat	
	Organic fruits & vegetables (canned, fresh, frozen)	

Note about WIC Formula: If a WIC participant is having trouble finding the formula listed on their check, they should speak to the store manager to see when shipments are scheduled and whether items (such as formula) can be put on hold for them.

WIC is here for you!

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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