

Emergency Planning

- I. The WIC Program is not intended to be a first-response disaster assistance program.
- II. The State WIC Office and local agencies must prepare for and follow emergency procedures in the event of an emergency.
- III. An emergency is defined as any situation that threatens the continuity of State or local agency WIC operations or the safety of its personnel. Emergencies include but are not limited to disasters and states of emergency as declared by the Governor. Emergencies may only affect one clinic or may affect multiple clinics or the statewide food benefit issuance system.
- IV. Preparing for an emergency
 - a. Participate in local agency/government preparedness planning and training.
 - b. Prepare a contact list of emergency services and personnel.
 - c. Develop or update an alternative emergency food services list.
 - d. Determine roles and duties of staff in emergency situations.
 - e. Train local agency staff on emergency procedures.
 - f. Preparing for potential pandemics should be part of the agency's emergency planning. Considerations should include items such as staff absenteeism, social distancing, disinfection of facilities, staff telework, remote appointments, safe benefit delivery, etc.
- V. Immediate actions in the event of an emergency
 - a. WIC staff and participants should be protected from immediate harm or be evacuated if necessary.
 - b. Program records, equipment and supplies should be protected from damage or destruction whenever possible.
 - c. The local WIC Director shall contact the State WIC Program Manager to report on the status of the following:
 - i. The number of WIC clinics, staff and clients affected,
 - ii. The extent of damage to service delivery,
 - iii. If program records or equipment has been damaged or destroyed,
 - iv. WIC vendors that are closed and if retail purchase is still possible,
 - v. Estimated length of service disruption,

- vi. The number of staff available to work in the clinic,
 - vii. If utility service has been disrupted,
 - viii. The safety of the water supply,
 - ix. Estimated number of newly eligible applicants as a result of the disaster.
- d. The State WIC Program Manager will communicate with and receive guidance from the USDA Regional Office.
 - e. The State WIC Program Manager and the local WIC Director will jointly decide whether or not WIC services will continue as normal, be interrupted or be altered.
 - f. If WIC services will not be available for a period of time, refer clients to alternative emergency food services.

VI. Providing services during an emergency

- a. The State WIC Office will follow the Utah Department of Health's and Human Services's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP); local agencies will follow similar local agency plans.
- b. Alternate methods of providing WIC food benefits during an emergency include:
 - i. Issuing benefits at an alternate site,
 - ii. Issuing benefits curbside/drive-up,
 - iii. Mailing of eWIC cards
- c. When a decision is made to provide services at an alternate location:
 - i. Coordinate with emergency services and local government to establish a safe alternative site.
 - ii. Use mobile equipment as needed to provide certification and benefit issuance.
 - iii. Consider use of alternate staff.
 - iv. Work with the State WIC Office and Help Desk on technical and computer issues.
 - v. Inform clients and potential applicants on the availability of WIC services and how to access WIC benefits.
- d. Disaster-related evacuees who seek WIC benefits shall be considered as special nutritional risk applicants and receive expedited certification processing. These applicants must be notified of their eligibility or ineligibility within 10 days of the date of the first request for Program benefits.
 - i. Disaster-related evacuees may use the affidavit option if the required proof of identity, residency, or income is not available and

would cause an unreasonable barrier to service. (See Provisional Certification and Unreasonable Barrier.)