



POLICY: Routine mailing of food instruments (FIs) is not allowed. Mailing of FIs to an individual participant by the local program shall be permitted only under limited and extenuating circumstances.

PURPOSE: To permit eligible individuals to participate in WIC who, due to one of the situations or conditions listed in this policy, would otherwise be unable to participate. This policy is to be used only as an exception basis under the conditions listed below.

RELEVANT REGULATIONS: 7 CFR §246.12(r)(4)—Food instrument pick up

OREGON WIC PPM REFERENCES: ♦530—Food Instrument Register and FI Stub
♦540—Proxy System
♦595—Separation of Duties

DEFINITIONS: *Food Instrument (FI)* “Food instrument” or “FI” means a negotiable financial instrument by which WIC benefits are provided to participants. Food instruments can provide either specific amounts of WIC authorized foods or formulas or a fixed-dollar amount for participants to obtain WIC authorized fruits and vegetables (referred to as a “Cash Value Voucher” or “CVV”). Food instruments are also referred to as “checks” or “vouchers.” Cash Value Vouchers are also referred to as “Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers.”

Proxy Third person (neither participants *nor authorized individuals whose signatures appear on the ID card*) temporarily authorized to pick up and/or shop with WIC FIs on behalf of the participant.

PROCEDURE:

Guidelines for mailing FIs 1.0 Local programs are authorized to mail food instruments under very limited circumstances, provided nutrition education contacts are not compromised and program integrity standards are maintained.

1.1 The minimum number of nutrition education contacts during each certification period shall not be affected.

1.2 Mailing of FIs shall be discontinued when the initial condition is resolved.

1.3 Local programs shall only mail *one month* of FIs at a time. See ¶4.4.1 for exceptions.

When mailing is allowed 2.0 Mailing of FIs shall be permitted on an individual basis only for the following conditions when no proxy is available and the participant is unable to reschedule:

EXCEPTIONS FOR MAILING FIs, cont.

(When mailing is allowed:)

- 2.1 Illness, immune disorder, or special health care needs of participant or immediate family member requiring care
- 2.2 Pregnant woman on bedrest or imminent childbirth
- 2.3 Participant unable to keep an appointment at a satellite clinic site with limited appointment availability, which would result in missing an entire month's FIs
- 2.4 Participant certified using a "paper" certification
- 2.5 Participant faxes or mails in missing proofs or required prescription.
- 2.6 Transportation emergency (bus strike, car broken down)
- 2.7 Formula for a temporary newborn or extra foods for an exclusively BF woman

Clinic-wide mailing

- 3.0 Federal regulations allow FIs to be mailed to participants on a local clinic or program-wide basis under certain limited conditions and with prior written approval from the state agency:

Written approval required

- 3.1 Written approval must be received from the state WIC office before a local program implements mailing of FIs on a clinic or program-wide basis. Written approval via email is acceptable.
- 3.2 Program or clinic-wide mailings will usually be done for only one month at a time. Schedule participants for a nutrition education or FI pickup for the following month.
 - 3.2.1 If the participant completed their appointment and an equipment malfunction prevented them from getting FIs, up to three months of FIs may be printed and mailed.

Reasons for clinic-wide mailing

- 3.3 Situations when program or clinic-wide mailing of FIs might be considered include:
 - 3.3.1 Equipment failure (e.g. printer not working)
 - 3.3.2 System failure (e.g. TWIST is not operating, data connection is not working)
 - 3.3.3 Natural disaster
 - 3.3.4 Clinic closure or participants unable to travel due to severe inclement weather

Mailing FIs

- 4.0 Ensure the following conditions are met when mailing FIs.
 - 4.1 FIs must be mailed by First Class mail in a "Do Not Forward" envelope.
 - 4.2 Verify the participant's mailing address before mailing FIs. FIs that are lost in the mail cannot be replaced.
 - 4.2.1 Advise all participants that mailed FIs cannot be replaced if lost in the mail.

EXCEPTIONS FOR MAILING FIs, cont.

(Mailing FIs:)

4.2.2 A participant may prefer to return to the clinic to pick up his/her FIs there is any concern that FIs may be lost or stolen if mailed to his/her address (e.g. homeless, living with a friend, mail is routinely stolen).

4.3 Staff shall initial each FI stub, indicate “mailed” and write the reason for mailing on each FI stub. See ♦530 for more information. “Mailed” FI stubs should be stored separately from other FI stubs.

4.4 Local programs shall only mail *one month* of FIs at a time (single issuance).

4.4.1 In the following situations, mailing up to three months of FIs is allowed:

- Temp newborn
- Extra foods for exclusively breastfeeding woman
- Proofs faxed or mailed to clinic
- Paper certification
- Satellite clinic only available every other month
- Satellite clinic without TWIST access

4.5 FIs for multiple family members may be sent in the same envelope.

Do not mail

5.0 Situations when mailing is *not* permitted under any circumstance:

5.1 Participant is past due for a recertification appointment.

5.2 There is an unresolved custody dispute.

5.3 There is an unresolved program abuse issue.

5.4 The participant has an overdue hospital grade electric breast pump.

FIs returned in mail

6.0 FIs returned in the mail will be entered into TWIST using the “Mail Return” function in the “Food Instrument” module. Returned FIs with a forwarding address sticker will not be remailed unless the new address is verified with the participant. If the new address is verified, the “Mail Return” function must be updated to show the FIs have been remailed.

6.1 FIs returned in the mail must be kept in locked storage when not attended by WIC staff.

Written procedure required

7.0 Local programs must develop a written procedure that addresses the following issues:

- Specific circumstances in which the local program will or will not mail FIs.
- How mailed FIs are documented and tracked.

EXCEPTIONS FOR MAILING FIs, *cont.*

- 7.1 If any local policy is more restrictive than state policy, the local policy must be approved by the state WIC program prior to implementation. ★

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