

## Lost or Stolen Food Instruments

### Policy

**USDA Federal Regulations:** (a) Requirements. By August 15 of each year, each State agency shall submit to FNS for approval a State Plan for the following fiscal year as a prerequisite to receiving funds under this section. A complete and approved Plan shall include:

(xix) A description of how the State agency will replace lost, stolen, or damaged EBT cards and transfer the associated benefits within seven business days.

(xx) A description of the procedures established by the State agency to provide customer service during non-business hours that enable participants or proxies to report a lost, stolen, or damaged card, report other card or benefit issues, receive information on the EBT food balance and receive the current benefit end date. The procedures shall address how the State agency will respond to reports of a lost, stolen, or damaged card within one business day of the date of report.

(p) Food instrument and cash-value voucher security. The State agency must develop standards for ensuring the security of food instruments and cash-value vouchers from the time the food instruments and cash-value vouchers are created to the time they are issued to participants, parents/caretakers, or proxies. For pre-printed food instruments or cash-value vouchers, these standards must include maintenance of perpetual inventory records of food instruments or cash-value vouchers throughout the State agency's jurisdiction; monthly physical inventory of food instruments or cash-value vouchers on hand throughout the State agency's jurisdiction; reconciliation of perpetual and physical inventories of food instruments and cash-value vouchers; and maintenance of all food instruments and cash-value vouchers under lock and key, except for supplies needed for immediate use. For EBT and print-on-demand food instruments and cash-value vouchers, the standards must provide for the accountability and security of the means to manufacture and issue such food instruments and cash-value vouchers.

(2) The State agency shall establish policy permitting the replacement of EBT cards and the transfer of participant benefit balances within no more than seven business days following notice by the participant or proxy to the State agency.

(3) The State agency shall establish procedures to provide customer service during non-business hours that enable participants or proxies to report a lost, stolen, or damaged card, report other card or benefit issues, receive information on the EBT food balance and receive the current benefit end date. The State agency shall respond to any report of a lost, stolen, or damaged card within one business day of the date of report. If a State agency seeks to implement alternatives to the minimum service requirements, the agency must submit the plan to FNS for approval.

## Authority

- 7 CFR Part 246.4(a)*excerpt*
- 7 CFR Part 246.4(a)(14)(xix)
- 7 CFR Part 246.4(a)(14)(xx)
- 7 CFR Part 246.12(p)
- 7 CFR Part 246.12(bb)(2-3)

## Procedures

Store eWIC card stock in a secure location to reduce the risk of damage, loss or theft.

Immediately report the damage of stored eWIC card stock to the state WIC office via a phone call. Immediately report the loss or theft of eWIC card stock to the state WIC office using the electronic fraud and abuse report form located at <https://hhs.iowa.gov/wic/iowa-wic-program-fraud-abuse-reporting-form>. After review, State staff will provide further instructions.

Lost, stolen or damaged eWIC cards and unredeemed issued benefits will be replaced. Upon issuance of an Iowa eWIC card the brochure “Using Your Iowa eWIC Card” is given to the participant/parent/guardian. This brochure contains information on what they should do if their card is lost or stolen and includes the customer service phone number and web portal that is accessible to them 24/7.

Do not issue a replacement card or benefits if there is a reasonable suspicion that the participant is attempting to defraud the WIC Program. If there is reasonable suspicion of fraud, complete and submit the electronic fraud and abuse report form in detail. After review the state will provide instructions as needed.

Replacement cards can be issued in person or if the participant prefers, they can be mailed.

Replacing an eWIC card and issued benefits:

- Look up the benefits in the data system to determine whether they have been redeemed.
  - If benefits have NOT been redeemed,
    - Click on the Card Operations tab, select the reason for the replacement card set up and click replace set up. (In this case benefits would not need to be reissued since the benefits do not actually “live” on the eWIC card.)
  - If benefits have been Fraudulently redeemed,
    - Click on Card Operations, select the reason for the replacement card set up and click replace set up. Then reissue food benefits (if any are left) and call the State WIC office because an account balance correction is also needed.
- Document in the care plan the circumstances for reissuance.
- Document the request for the eWIC card to be mailed (if applicable).

Under certain circumstances, WIC purchased foods from the current month that are lost in a

catastrophe may be able to be replaced. See the document titled "WIC Operational Plans during an Emergency" and contact the State Office.

## **Best Practices**

Do not record any information in the data system about a lost or stolen card until you see the participant in person or the request for a new card to be mailed is made. Once a card is deactivated it can not be reactivated, even if it has been located. This also provides an opportunity to look at the remaining benefits to ensure that the correct benefits are replaced.

If a card is found and returned to the local WIC agency, verify in the WIC data system if the card has been deactivated or not.

- If it has been and a replacement card has been issued, destroy it.
- If the card has not been deactivated, attempt to contact the family.
  - If contact is made, determine the best course of action to get the card back into the hands of the family.
  - If contact cannot be made, deactivate the card and put a note in the record indicating what happened so when the family contacts you it can be replaced.

If a participant reports losing WIC purchased foods in a catastrophic event refer the participant to emergency relief programs.