

## Missed Appointments and Food Instruments

### Policy

**USDA Federal Regulations:** (4) Food instruments and cash-value voucher pick up. Participants, parents and caretakers of infant and child participants, and proxies may pick up food instruments and cash-value vouchers in person or the State agency may provide for issuance through an alternative means such as EBT or mailing, unless FNS determines that such actions would jeopardize the integrity of program services or program accountability. State agencies that opt to mail food instruments and cash-value vouchers must establish and implement a system that ensures the return of food instruments and cash-value vouchers to the State or local agency if a participant no longer resides or receives mail at the address to which the food instruments and cash-value vouchers were mailed;

### Authority

7 CFR Part 246.12(r)(4)*excerpt*

### Procedures

Contract agencies must establish written procedures for alternate means of issuing benefits when participants timely present adequate reasons for their inability to come to their scheduled appointment. These procedures are subject to approval of the state office.

Adequate reasons for inability to appear in clinic include but are not limited to the following extenuating or extreme personal circumstances. (The contract agency may identify additional reasons considered adequate for inability to appear in clinic in their written procedures.)

- A medically fragile parent/guardian/participant,
- A pregnant woman confined to bed,
- A death in the family, or
- Another family emergency.

Contract agencies must communicate their missed appointment policy to all participants by written notice at certification and signage posted in the clinic. This communication must address at least the following points:

- The importance of notifying the local WIC agency as soon as possible;
- How the participant can notify local agency WIC staff; and
- Their options include rescheduling the appointment, arranging for a proxy to attend an appointment on their behalf, or in the case of nutrition education appointments

- completing a wichealth.org lesson or a nutrition education phone appointment.
- Keeping WIC appointments is important. Participants who do not have food benefits issued for three consecutive months will be terminated from the program with an option for reinstatement.

Steps to follow when participants notify local agency staff they have missed their scheduled appointment.

- Assess the reason for their inability to keep/make their appointment in the clinic.
- Offer to reschedule the appointment for later in the day, week, or month.
- Remind the parent/guardian/participant about the following options
  - to designate a proxy and how to do so,
  - wichealth.org and
  - if applicable, the option of a telephone contact.

If none of these are feasible or reasonable actions, issue one month of benefits and schedule an appointment for the following month when the remaining benefits can be issued.

Local agencies must offer another appointment to claim benefits before the month ends. This may mean offering an appointment in a community other than where the participant normally comes to the clinic.

## **Best Practices**

Scheduling options for contract agencies to consider implementing to increase participant access to FIs when appointments are missed include:

- Reserving portions of or full days for “make-up days.”
- Offering early morning, noon hour, and late afternoon appointments to accommodate employed parents/guardians/participants.
- When several clinic days are scheduled each month, hold clinics in different parts of the month rather than consecutive days.