

# **WIC CARD FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ'S) FOR RETAIL VENDORS**

## **What is the WIC Card?**

As you are aware, the Massachusetts WIC Program is planning to implement a new food benefit system, called the "WIC Card".

The WIC card will allow for the purchase of WIC authorized food items using magnetic card technology. The implementation of this system will allow WIC participants to purchase authorized products using an electronic card that will eventually replace the current paper check system.

## **Why is Massachusetts implementing the WIC Card?**

The WIC Card is intended to improve the retail experience for WIC customers and vendors through automated processing. WIC customers will use the WIC Card instead of paper checks, when making purchases, which will help reduce the in-lane delays customers sometimes experience today. In addition, the WIC Card will eliminate the paper handling and processing of WIC checks and expedite payments to retailers.

## **Will the WIC Card system help identify WIC approved items?**

Yes! The WIC Program will support a database of UPCs (bar codes) and PLU codes for fruits and vegetables. When a WIC food item is scanned into the cash register system, its code will be checked against a database updated daily. Each WIC transaction will be approved or rejected based on the Massachusetts Approved Product List (APL) that verifies the benefits. Based on the experience of other states which have already implemented the WIC Card successfully, in-lane service will take less time than it does today.

## **Will the WIC Card improve timeliness of payment?**

Yes! WIC transactions will be settled daily, meaning that most retailers will be reimbursed the next business day. In addition, maximum price adjustments will be made at the time of the transaction by the WIC Card system. The retailer will know the reimbursement amount immediately and will be able to reconcile all WIC transactions without the possibility of rejection.

## When will the WIC Card be rolled out?

Massachusetts plans to pilot the WIC Card in July 2014, with full statewide roll-out taking place through the Fall of 2014.

## Will retailers need to accept both the WIC Card and paper checks during transition?

Yes. WIC participants will be issued the WIC Card on a rolling basis as they come to WIC local programs on a 3-month appointment cycle. During transition, some WIC customers will have the WIC Card, while others will still be using their previously issued checks. Retail vendors will need to be ready to accept WIC Card transactions as soon as WIC local programs start issuing benefits to customers in their area.

Due to a phased roll-out schedule, retailers should expect to handle both WIC Card transactions and paper checks over a 7-month period. Once the transition is complete, WIC will no longer issue paper checks.

## How can I get more information on the WIC Card implementation?

Massachusetts WIC has scheduled retailer information sessions for the month of March 2014. The schedule and locations were emailed to all retailers and is posted below.



# 1-800-WIC-1007



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