WIC Benefits Now Available Through EBT Card Statewide

September 16, 2020

Conversion to new system benefits vendors and households with young children

AUGUSTA - The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program has completed the transition from paper food vouchers to an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card more than a month before a deadline established by the federal government. The new system is called eWIC.

The WIC program, administered by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC), works to improve the health and nutrition of women, infants, and children during critical times of growth and development. WIC provides healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support and supplies, and referrals to other services. Participants statewide at nutritional risk receive WIC benefits through local WIC agencies in their communities.

The WIC program serves more than 16,500 individuals. Pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, and infants and children up to age 5 are eligible. Participants must meet income guidelines, live in Maine, and be determined by a health professional to be at "nutritional risk."

Through the new eWIC system, benefits for WIC-approved foods are automatically entered onto an EBT card similar to a debit card. This card replaces the current paper-based food instruments and cash-value vouchers that were redeemed at WIC-authorized stores statewide.

Maine rolled out eWIC (//www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/index.php?topic=DHS+Press+Releases&id=2905956&v=dhhs_article_2020) in phases by county. Penobscot and Piscataquis counties went live on June 22. Aroostook, Hancock, Washington, Kennebec and Somerset WIC participants began receiving cards on July 20. Participants in Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford, Sagadahoc, Waldo, Lincoln, Knox, Cumberland and York counties started receiving cards on August 31.

Recognizing the value of eWIC, the federal Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 mandated that each state WIC agency implement an electronic benefit transfer system throughout the state by October 1, 2020. Benefits of conversion to an electronic system include smoother and faster transactions at the register and automatic electronic payments to vendors.

During the implementation period, Maine WIC paused its enrollment of new vendors. This pause has now been lifted. Enrollment information for stores can be found at www.maine.gov/WIC (//www.maine.gov/wic) .

For more information about the benefits of WIC, how to enroll as a new participant, or store locations, please go to www.maine.gov/WIC (//www.maine.gov/wic) .

Credit

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