

**In Wake of Disaster:
WIC & SNAP Matter**

**By Ellen Vollinger
Legal Director**

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)

**Prepared for Session
Disaster Planning – Considerations for
Program Manager**

5/19/14

**National WIC
Association
2014 Annual
Education and
Networking
Conference**

Putting WIC in Context

Disasters can exacerbate hunger struggles for low-income people

WIC operates in disaster situations within its program context & funding

Unlike distribution of commodities or emergency issuance of SNAP, WIC does not have legislatively mandated role for disaster relief; WIC is not “first line of defense” in responding to nutritional needs of disaster victims

But WIC is crucial for vulnerable mothers, infants & children affected by disaster

Making a Difference with WIC in Wake of Disaster

WIC can respond effectively by:

- Running an effective program that reaches WIC eligible people**
- Being prepared for disasters**
- Continuing operations post-disaster**
- Helping existing WIC client disaster victims replace food benefits &/or food instruments**
- Modifying some rules and procedures re: certification, recertification, nutrition assessment, nutrition education, food package, food instrument issuance, & vendors**
- Conducting WIC outreach to eligible population affected by disaster**
- Getting out info re: D-SNAP & other disaster aid for which WIC clients might be eligible**

Being Prepared

Enroll WIC eligible people prior to disaster

- clients stock food/have better nutritional status**
- agency better able to reach w/post-disaster aid**

Develop WIC Disaster Plan:

- Anticipate variety of potential scenarios affecting agency's ability to respond w/adequate staffing**
- Allow range of approaches to meet potential changed circumstances of WIC eligible population (those currently enrolled as well as eligible nonparticipants)**

Texas Plan:

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/wichd/gi/administrative.shtm>

Expedited Policies/Procedures

- Evacuees/homeless persons
- Prioritization
- Waiver of physical presence
- Proof of residence/id & income
- Nutrition assessment/nutrition education
- Shorter certification periods
- WIC CAs

Replacing Food Benefits &/or Food Instruments

- Replacing WIC food benefits redeemed but lost in isolated personal misfortune
- Replacing WIC food instruments lost in disasters
- Current clients—in state; out of state
- Mail options

Food Package

- **Medical documentation for exempt infant formulas and WIC-eligible foods**
- **FNS waivers**
- **WIC vendor accommodations**
- **Contact with stakeholders, including vendors**

WIC & SNAP Disaster Resources

http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/WIC_Disaster.pdf

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/detailed-policy-guidance-disaster-situations>

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-disaster-response>

<http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/dfspguide06.pdf>

SNAP, D-SNAP & SNAP Waivers

■ Regular rules:

- SNAP recipients who lose food due to misfortune can request replacement benefits
- Replacements normally sought within 10 days and approved case by case
- After disaster, some people not on SNAP may be eligible for regular SNAP benefits

■ Waivers:

- Extended time limit to request individual replacement benefits
- Hot and prepared food waiver
- Automatic mass replacement of benefits via EBT cards
- D-SNAP provides supplemental benefits to SNAP HHs
- D-SNAP extends benefits to disaster survivor HHs not already participating in SNAP

■ Background:

- EBT industry and retailers play roles
- Presidential Declaration for Individual Assistance needed
- FEMA's website posts declarations See <http://www.fema.gov/disasters>
- FNS website section has D-SNAP Guidance
- See http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/response/D-SNAP_Handbook/guide.htm
- FRAC website disaster aid section
- See <http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/snapfood-stamps/disaster-snapfood-stamps/>

Outreach Matters—Case Study

NYS & partners have active SNAP outreach projects

After Sandy, Food Bank For NYC:

- Created multi-language D-SNAP flyer**
- Disseminated D-SNAP information via e-newsletter**
- Reached out to former Tax Clients**
- Distributed over 3k D-SNAP outreach materials throughout NYC**
- Developed D-SNAP webinar training/delivered to 57 CBOs**
- Created & distributed D-SNAP prescreening tool to NYC SNAP TF**
- Presented on AARP NY-hosted teletown hall to 17k AARP members residing in 12 D-SNAP zip codes**
- Provided D-SNAP application assistance via call center**

Top Ten Checklist

- 1) Develop a WIC Disaster Plan
- 2) Form relationships w/ stakeholders: USDA, non-profits, electeds, food retailers, EBT processors
- 3) Do WIC outreach in non-disaster & post-disaster times
- 4) Get word out via media, social media, EBT call center, help lines
- 5) Help WIC clients replace lost food &/or lost benefit instruments
- 6) Modify policies & procedures
- 7) Help connect WIC clients w/D-SNAP & other aid
- 8) Let public know WIC helps recovery, including economic recovery
- 9) Congratulate partners & workers
- 10) Evaluate & learn lessons for future

Contact Information

www.frac.org

@fractweets

facebook.com/foodresearchandactioncenter

Ellen Vollinger

Legal Director

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)

1200 18th NW

Washington, DC 20036

202-986-2200

evollinger@frac.org