



SUPPORT THE MODERN WIC ACT (H.R. 1464)/21ST CENTURY WIC ACT (S.3842)

The More Options to Develop and Enhance Remote Nutrition in WIC Act (MODERN WIC Act), sponsored by Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) and the 21st Century WIC Act sponsored by Senators Roger Marshall (R-KS) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), are critical legislation that seeks to modernize WIC's service delivery to build a stronger, more accessible program. Recognizing WIC's record of success in improving maternal and child health, this legislation would create permanent virtual certification options while preserving WIC's health screenings and program integrity, providing participants with flexibility and choice to better meet the needs of busy families.

REDUCING BARRIERS TO WIC ACCESS WHILE PRESERVING PROGRAM INTEGRITY

With support from USDA and Congress, WIC providers have made significant progress in recent years to modernize service delivery. While WIC agencies have been efficiently leveraging digital tools and online platforms for years to provide nutrition education and breastfeeding support, the more recent introduction of virtual certification options have marked a significant shift in program operations, allowing families to choose between a virtual or in-person appointment. In many cases, virtual services have ameliorated longstanding barriers to access, such as transportation, time off work, and arranging child-care.

THE MODERN WIC ACT AND 21st CENTURY WIC ACT WOULD:

1. Update WIC's physical presence requirements to allow for virtual certifications, while preserving program integrity and health screenings
2. Allow for virtual issuance of benefits on the e-WIC card

After physical presence was required for WIC certification starting in 1998, WIC has never reached more than 65 percent of the eligible population. Children, in particular, phase off the program as recertifications are required each year. Short-term waiver authority has allowed USDA to pilot virtual certification options, with WIC providers reporting a 15% increase nationwide in child participation between February 2020 and September 2023.

Without Congressional action, the waivers providing authority for virtual certifications will expire in 2026.

The MODERN WIC Act and the 21st Century WIC Act will update physical presence requirements to create permanent virtual service options, maximizing participant flexibility and choice while facilitating efficient use of State and Local Agency resources. Participants would have the choice to complete their certification appointment in person or virtually, with 90 days to complete required health screenings if they elect for virtual appointment. In addition to addressing barriers to participation, this model presents a renewed opportunity for WIC staff to proactively partner with healthcare to coordinate care and reduce duplicative tests. The MODERN WIC Act and the 21st Century WIC Act would codify these flexibilities while improving administrability.

MODERNIZING BENEFIT INSSUANCE

Congress must clarify that remote WIC benefit issuance is permitted, reducing in-person touchpoints to support sustained participation. With paper vouchers, families would come into the clinic at least every three months to pick up benefits as part of a nutrition education touchpoint. With e-WIC rolled out nationwide, nearly all State Agencies have the capability to securely load new benefits to a participant's EBT card while providing nutrition education over the phone. This step promotes convenience for participating families while assuring program integrity.

The MODERN WIC Act and 21st Century WIC Act include necessary reforms that will prepare WIC to serve a new generation of WIC families. WIC must provide families with a modern and accessible experience consistent with other healthcare settings.

