

Message from Mike

November 10, 2010 --- That was my first day as the Director of Community Nutrition! It is hard to believe that it has already been 4 years, but as the saying goes - "Time flies when you are having fun!"

And it has been fun. Okay, not every day, as all of us have had to overcome speed bumps to implement Crossroads and WIC EBT (eWIC). There are many quotes that relate speed bumps to life's journey, most related to their purpose of slowing us down so we can be more observant. I think the one I like the best is that "Life is like a roller coaster. There will always be speed bumps, obstacles and a lot of screaming, but I loved the ride." This has been the best position I have ever had-the daily rewards far outweigh the speed bumps.

When we initiated the pilot back in November 2013 (can you believe it has been a year!!!) and with each regional roll-out, I always asked the staff - "Can we issue benefits and can they be redeemed?" That was my simple guide as we pushed onward. Is Crossroads and eWIC a finished product? No, as several change requests and fixes to "work arounds" must be still completed. That is the goal for this year.

Unfortunately our success (and funding) is largely measured by one thing - the number of participants that we serve. This number has significantly declined in the past year, so we must all make a concerted effort to reach the numbers we once served. With the implementation of eWIC, I believe now is the time that the Virginia WIC Program can begin evaluating how WIC services are to be delivered. What is the role of apps and iPhones? What is the role of social media? What is the best mechanism to provide nutrition education?

Did you know that in 2013 the Virginia WIC Program began providing services at Head Start Centers? This year we will expand this outreach effort into day care centers. Both of these efforts are aimed to keep the children and their parents engaged with the WIC Program as well as choosing a healthy lifestyle.

It has come to my attention that several stores, particularly in the Southwest section of the state, have started forming "Mom's Club." These clubs offer store tours, cooking lessons, and basic nutrition classes to all pregnant women. These clubs have been very successful in bringing women together to share information regarding their pregnancies and have had a positive impact on healthy birth outcomes. These stores do not single out WIC moms, but all are encouraged to attend. The bonding that occurs is remarkable as they share their "stories" and advice. I am excited by the idea of having more WIC authorized stores start "Mom's Clubs". If my staff or I can be of any assistance to you in starting this type of positive networking exchange for women, contact me at Michael.Welch@vdh.virginia.gov. These are just several examples of creative ways to engage moms, pregnant women and children. Let's continue to "think outside the box" to increase our ability to generate positive pregnancy outcomes, healthy infants and children.

Over these past four years I have always counted on the retail stores and their staff as a significant part of the Virginia WIC Program team. What will your role be in 2015?

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Another Way to Help Us Save the Trees! ** Special Notice **

Starting in January 2015, the Working With WIC Retailer Bulletin will ONLY be distributed electronically. The WIC Program staff will email the link of the on-line version to the email address of record for each authorized retailer, corporate trainer and corporate contact. Saving print costs can go a long way in saving money so we can use our limited funds to provide food benefits to eligible women, infants and children.

New Minimum Stocking Requirement

A new Minimum Stocking Requirement (MSR) affecting all stores became effective October 1, 2014. In October, a copy of the new MSR was distributed to all stores and corporate

contacts. A summary of the major changes made to the MSR include:

- Reduction - Similac Advance Earlyshield concentrate) formula stocking requirement;
- Clarification - Whole grain versus non whole grain breakfast cereals;
- Clarification - Whole grain products (whole wheat bread and brown rice);
- Minimum stocking waiver process for formula or baby items is no longer an option; and
- Clarification about the program's plans to restrict the issuance of 2% milk.



Minimum Stocking Requirement

<http://www.vahealth.org/DCN/General%20Info/Files/documents/2014/pdf/Minimum%20Stocking%20Requirement.pdf>

Elimination of Formula Waivers...

Under the new Retailer Agreement (effective October 1, 2014), the WIC Program no longer offers a waiver to the Minimum Stocking Requirement (MSR) for infant formula. In lieu of formula waivers, the new MSR for formula has been reduced; for example Similac Advance Earlyshield concentrate from 34 cans to 9 cans.

The MSR for Similac Advance Earlyshield powdered formula remains at 9 cans. The WIC Program will continue to monitor formula redemption and will review stocking requirements as we continue to gain more data from our new management systems.

UPC (Universal Product Code) Update Request Changes

The UPC submission process using the APL Central application has been discontinued, due to some unforeseen technical issues. Stores and corporate retailers should not use this application until advised by the WIC Program that the system is properly working. Please note that the WIC Program has added all previously submitted UPC requests, if deemed eligible.

Stores can continue to submit the UPC Update Request Form and images as usual. The UPC Update Request Form and its instructions are available on our website.

If you have any questions regarding the UPC submission process, the Approved Product List, or specific items on the current WIC Approved Food List, please contact WIC_Retailer@vdh.virginia.gov.

You can also contact Brian Tun, UPC Coordinator for assistance on submitting UPC requests – see related article on page 7.



UPC Update Request Form

<http://www.vahealth.org/DCN/Vendor/retailstorepubs.htm>

WIC_Retailer@vdh.virginia.gov is an email address created to provide a communication vehicle that WIC retailers can send questions, issues and requests to the WIC Vendor Compliance Team. Some examples of the types of correspondence that could be sent to this email address are:

- Email address/emergency contact changes;
- WIC compliance questions;
- Request for retailer supplies;
- UPC Update Request forms and supporting documentation; and
- General WIC Program questions.

WIC Program staff daily monitors this email account and incoming notes are routed to the appropriate staff. To ensure these incoming email notes are routed correctly, retailers are asked to identify your store's WIC ID (4 digit number); identify your assigned Vendor Liaison or other point of contact. Replies

will be sent to the retailer using the email address that was used to submit your email note. Therefore, retailers should monitor your email account regularly in order to receive communications from the WIC Program.

New Capabilities for Retailers Using Xerox Stand Beside Devices

Working together with the Virginia WIC Program to improve the stand-beside device functionality, Xerox will deploy new features from time to time. As part of this service commitment, new functionality was recently implemented for retailers using the Xerox stand-beside Point of Sales (POS) devices. This new functionality allows retailers to void the most recent completed transaction. Stand-beside devices already allowed for the voiding of individual items prior to completing the sale, but now the stand-beside device(s) will allow the most recent completed sale to be voided as well. The function is referred to as "Void Last Transaction". To use this option, look under the "retailer options" menu. Once the Void Last Transaction option is selected, it's a simple process that the stand-beside device will step the user through. Using this function requires a supervisor's password to complete and will result in a reversal of the entire transaction. **All voided benefits will be restored to the eWIC cardholder's account and any settlement processing will be canceled or reversed.**

Remember: only the most recent completed eWIC transaction can be voided.

If you have any questions about using the "Void Last Transaction" function, please contact the Xerox Retailer Helpdesk at: **1-877-436-6057**.

Stores with Integrated solutions should contact their Value Added Reseller (VAR) for guidance about voiding transactions on their POS system.

EBT Showcase

In September, the Virginia WIC Program hosted several other state agencies that are still in the planning stage for implementing their own version of WIC EBT. Eighteen representatives from Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Maryland,

Washington D.C., Virginia Islands, and the Mid-Atlantic WIC Regional Office spent two full days learning about the Virginia WIC Program's EBT experience. A range of topics were covered during these two days, including:

- Discussion of the operational and administrative challenges when both a new Management Information System and eWIC processing capabilities are simultaneously implemented;
- Strategies for providing an intense (week long) training sessions (over three months) for over 600 local WIC staff;
- A reflection of "lessons learned" and discussion of what the Program would do differently, if we could turn back the implementation time clock;

EBT Showcase

continued from page 3

- A discussion of the many new resources for both eWIC cardholders and retail stores which were successfully developed by the program;
- A presentation of the new iPhone monitoring review app was provided; and
- An opportunity to gain firsthand exposure in using the eWIC benefit card at both a stand beside and integrated retail store setting was provided.

While the transition to eWIC seems to be ages ago, the last food instrument was printed in May 2014, and overall has been relatively smooth.

During the WIC EBT Showcase, two WIC Coordinators hosted the group for a candid discussion about how their workload has changed, and their overwhelming enthusiasm about moving to eWIC payment method was phenomenal to hear. The WIC Coordinators offered many pluses with very few, if any, minuses. Our eWIC cardholders and families love the flexibility that eWIC benefit cards offer them, and the

elimination of paper food instruments has helped reduce any associated stigma, which has truly transformed the WIC Program and its operations.

All WIC Program staff stated they would never go back to using paper food instruments, now that they know firsthand the many benefits eWIC provides to delivering nutritious foods to eligible women, infants and children – a sentiment that has also been reflected throughout most of the Virginia EWIC Retailer community.

Reduced Fat Milk – A New Standard Is Coming!



Recently the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) published the final food package rules. One significant change identified in the final rules applies to the issuance of 2% reduced fat milk. Many WIC participants will no longer be able to purchase 2% milk, unless medically justified. This change means stores will see a dramatic reduction in eWIC cardholders that can purchase 2% milk, using their eWIC benefit card.

This change will not be implemented by the Virginia WIC Program until **January 1, 2015**. You can contact your Vendor Liaison if you want information about your September (2014) eWIC redemptions for 2% milk in order to identify how this change may impact your store's future sales.

So what is being done to prepare eWIC Cardholders for this upcoming change? Starting in November, WIC clinic staff will begin outreach and educational techniques using a variety of methods:

- Distributing flyers announcing the 2% reduced fat milk change which becomes effective January 1, 2015;
- Holding nutrition education classes for eWIC cardholders which covers many important topics, including the milk issuance change;
- Holding "Stretching Your Food Dollar" classes will be held which covers how to select and prepare WIC approved foods; and
- During individual WIC counseling sessions discussing the benefits of drinking 1% low fat milk.

While this change will most likely take time for it to be fully accepted, it represents one of several steps to help combat childhood obesity.

EPPIC Vendor Portal....Presented By Xerox Corporation

Xerox has designed a EPPIC Vendor Portal application (on-line) that allows store owners or authorized agent to access your eWIC account sales activity. You can access the link below.

Benefits:

- Examine date specific eWIC transactions.
- Review eWIC settlement information.
- View Approved Product List data.
- Print or download account activity
- Access to yearly 1099 report.

All Virginia authorized retailers and agents may register and use the EPPIC Vendor Portal. Contact your assigned WIC Vendor Liaison to receive assistance to set up your initial account. Please have your assigned WIC ID, SNAP number and valid email account handy when requesting this assistance.

Once your account is set up and if you require a password reset, please contact the WIC Program Helpdesk at **1-888-942-3663**. For instructions on how to use the application a quick reference guide is available online and can be downloaded at the link below.



EPPIC Vendor Portal

<https://www.ebt.acs-inc.com/vawicvendor/vendorLogin.vendor>



EPPIC Quick Reference Guide

<http://www.vahealth.org/DCN/Vendor/retailstorepubs.htm>

Who Said It Couldn't Be Done – Let Me Tell You About Our New iPhone Monitoring Visit App?

Beginning with the new Retailer Agreement (effective October 1, 2014), many store monitoring visits will be completed using a new iPhone monitoring visit application. This new 'iPhone app' allows the Reviewer to scan Universal Product Codes (UPCs) which are then automatically validated as being the correct item, and automatically determines if the items collected meet the Minimum Stocking Requirement (MSR).

This monitoring visit app also allows the Reviewer to capture responses for all of the other required questions, such as if prices are displayed on WIC items, and WIC shelf labels are being used correctly. Store personnel, as well as the Reviewer, can enter their name, position and contact information and sign the electronic form using their finger. All of the information is captured electronically and transmitted wirelessly when the review is completed. The process is more accurate, faster and requires no paper. But it will take some time to obtain the required iPhone devices and train local agency staff, so you may continue to see some paper review forms.

The essence of the Store Monitoring Review process remains unchanged by using this new technology. Stores will still receive a result of: "Pass", "Fail" (MSR was not met) or "Other" (MSR was met but there are other findings to be corrected). Stores receiving a result of "Fail" or "Other"

will be revisited within 90 days. And there are administrative fines (\$100, second documented MSR failure) and potential WIC Program disqualifications for three "Failed" MSR visits within a consecutive 12-month period.



iPhone and sled

So while much of the Store Monitoring Review process remains unchanged, there are a few noteworthy changes. For now, documented program violations that require follow up actions by the store will continue to be documented via a "warning" letter which will be sent "certified" mail to the store or corporate office. A copy of the monitoring review form will be sent with these "warning" letters. Please note that our ultimate goal is to eliminate sending a "warning" letter and distribute this type of communications via email only. This strategic administrative change will help save "trees" and the WIC Program thousands of dollars in printing, postage, addressing, mailing and handling written communications.

Paper copies of the completed review form will no longer be available. Stores wishing to receive a copy of the completed review form will be required to send an email request. Once this request is received then we will sent a "link" where the store or corporate office can access, download and print a copy of the review form.

Here are a few of the most common questions that came from the recent Contract Reauthorization training sessions held during the past several months.

Q1: How can a retailer using a stand-beside Point of Sales (POS) device(s) obtain WIC transaction data?

A1: Use the EPPIC Vendor Portal (see article on page 5)

Q2: When will a new Food List be distributed to stores?

A2: An updated WIC Approved Food List is scheduled to become available in October 1, 2015.

Q3: Why are eWIC cards not allowed to be manually entered for payment like other credit cards/debit cards?

A3: Cashiers can manually enter the Personal Account Number (PAN) if they identify the eWIC benefit card cannot be read using their POS system. Under no circumstances can the PAN (16 digit) be manually entered without the eWIC Cardholder presenting the actual eWIC benefit card. Cashiers should encourage the eWIC Cardholder to contact the Xerox customer service number (found on the back of the card) so that the benefit card can be replaced. **IMPORTANT: This is a procedural change then what is stated in the eWIC Cashier Handbook.** When this resource is updated, then the procedures outlined in this resource will be updated as well.

Q4: With the new paperless monitoring reviews and electronic signatures -- what is the expected turnaround time for stores to receive monitoring results from the SWO?

A4: Stores should expect to receive a warning letter within 30 calendar days after the visit has been completed. Stores will receive a hard copy of the monitoring review forms with their warning letter only if they fail the minimum stocking requirement visit.

Q5: When can stores remove the old WIC (green) window decal?

A5: Since all paper food instruments have been redeemed or expired, stores can now remove the old green WIC window decals.

Q6: How many non-whole grain cereal types are required?

A6: Currently only one non-whole grain cereal type is required to meet the Minimum Stocking Requirement.

Q7: If a store decides to change its designated brand, will the State WIC Office (SWO) need to be notified?

A7: The term "designated brand" has been modified to a slightly different term, "store eligible brand". A retailer may have more than one store eligible brand. A "Wholesome Informed Choices" (WIC) shelf label must be used on all store eligible brands sold at your store. The WIC Program does not need to be notified if you change your store eligible brand(s). Remember store eligible brands must be flagged in the Approved Product list before they can be sold to eWIC Cardholders.

Q8: Are language options offered for balance inquiries on the internet & phone systems? Many participants are having a hard time reading their benefits that do not have English as their first language.

A8: At this time language options are not available for balance inquiries, but we are looking into various options that may help to better communicate benefits available to the eWIC Cardholder. As we make progress implementing these new approaches, you will hear more about these options.

Hail and Farewell



Recently, **Andrea Smith-Clanton** joined the Vendor Compliance Team and will be an integral member of the team over the next 4-6 months, being responsible for handling many of the administrative tasks associated with completing the contract reauthorization process which affects more than 850 WIC authorized stores. Andrea has more than 20 years of experience working in various information technology/administrative positions. She has extensive experience in the healthcare and public health sector. She previously held several data management positions at the Virginia Department of Health. Andrea is passionate when it comes to delivering exceptional customer service and has used her multi-language skills to assist individuals who speak Spanish. In her free time, she enjoys singing and cooking. She is eager to assist the WIC Program with supporting stores through the contract reauthorization process.

If you have specific questions about the status of your WIC Program contract, please contact Andrea by email (Andrea.Smith-Clanton@vdh.virginia.gov) or by telephone (804-864-7800).

Effective in September, **Brian Tun** assumed the position as the UPC Coordinator for the WIC Program, replacing Boyd Neal. Brian earned his Master's degree in Community Health Education from Western Illinois University and is a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) from the

National Commission from Health Education Credentialing, Inc. Brian came to the WIC Program from another Division within the Virginia Department of Health (VDH); where he worked as a Health Promotion Program Supervisor. Prior to coming to VDH, he was employed at the Peoria City/County Health Department in Peoria, IL as the Director of Health Promotion and Wellness for 10 years. Brian received his undergraduate degree in medicine from Burma, his native country, and worked in primary care medicine for five years. Brian will have a key role in managing the eWIC maintenance process. If you have specific questions please contact Brian by email (Brian.tun@vdh.virginia.gov) or by telephone (804-864-7849).

In his spare time, he enjoys playing golf, reading books and spending time with his families. He is extremely excited to be a member of the Division and for the opportunity to expand his eWIC knowledge. Any UPC or APL requests previously sent to Boyd Neal should now be sent to Brian Tun (Brian.Tun@vdh.virginia.gov).

We wish **Boyd Neal** the best as he moves from his role as UPC Coordinator to his new position within the Division working on the Special Nutrition Program (SNP) team. His expertise and extensive knowledge-base will be sorely missed.



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DIVISION OF COMMUNITY NUTRITION

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Table of Contents

Message from Mike	1	EBT Showcase	3
Another Way to Help Us Save The Trees!.....	1	EBT Showcase continued.....	4
New Minimum Stocking Requirements	2	Reduced Fat Milk - A New Standard Is Coming!.....	4
Elimination of Formula Waivers	2	EPPIC Vendor Portal...Presented By Xerox Corporation.....	5
UPC Update Request Changes	2	Who Said It Couldn't Be Done.....	5
WIC_Retailer@vdh.virginia.gov	3	Did You Know Question and Answers.....	6
New Capabilities for Retailers Using Xerox Stand Beside Devices..	3	Hail and Farewell.....	7

Important Links and Numbers

Training & Resources:



www.vahealth.org/DCN/Vendor/retailstorepubs.htm

For Participants:



www.vahealth.org/DCN/General%20Info/EBT/index.htm

Xerox Retailer Help Desk:

877-436-6057

Vendor Liaison:

804-864-7800 and ask to
speak to a Vendor Liaison

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