



eWIC-- Now You've Done It! What Next?

(Survey highlights: from Retailer Coordinators across the country)

	Considerations/ Challenges/ Pain Points Post-Implementation	Future Focus
Investigating / Troubleshooting/ Training: Why foods didn't go through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cashier and Participants failing to slow down and actually review the utilized benefits portion of the register receipt. They both just get frustrated and say that everything was WIC Approved but there is a remaining balance. Upon reviewing the receipt with them it is discovered that at least one of the items that was being purchased was not a WIC Approved Product; • Steep learning curves for vendors and families; • Complaints against vendors that are shopper education related; calls from participants trying to get unauthorized food items, stating "this is what I always get"; • Cashier confusion when checks are still available to be cashed vs card; • Locked PIN's; • Training all staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing educational buys in the store to ensure store staff know the correct procedures for an eWIC transaction • Updated grocer training and support materials. New shopping and WIC information materials for participants. • Working with stores to help better train the cashiers with eWIC
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating state administrative rule and statute to change from paper is the longest process (up to 2 years); • Being ready for pre-development of policies and procedures to address staff role and activity changes; • NTE/MARL (setting & monitoring at subcat or product level), • High risk vendor identification (MIS is not set up to reflect the right indicators for eWIC, based on indicators for checks); • Minimum Stocking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We added POS lane criteria, additional explanation of NTE calculation, enhanced minimum stock requirements, more detailed inventory record requirements, A50 regulations, different peer group assignments, more detailed CPSC, client access criteria, new vendor sanctions, new inventory audit procedures, new vendor monitoring procedures, new vendor agreement procedures, the migration of materials from print to online, new high-risk vendor indicators, and forms to assist vendors with ordering special formula. • Competitive pricing selection criteria; • Minimum inventory based on realistic redemptions; • Peer group classification system - transition away from register count and more on business model since this seems to link more to price and redemption patterns; update limiting selection criteria; inventory audit of items other than formula; variety of compliance buys to identify training needs in addition to typical compliance investigation mission;



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanctions, stocking requirements, transition from single to multi-use devices. Reviewing federal guidelines, checking with other states that have been eWIC longer than us on what is working for them, identifying shortcomings with our P&P against eWIC changes & challenge; • Fraud prevention.
Technical/ Register/ POS Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring stores that use integrated POS have properly configured their respective systems; • PLU mapping, getting vendors to update their APLs daily, explaining NTEs, and POS lane criteria; • Differences in stand beside POS terminals and integrated register systems and the error messages received; • APL issues (not up to date and UPC submission & produce mapping); • Communication between State Agencies and vendors/ECR providers about system updates (recertifications needed); • Cashiers confusion when checks are still available to be cashed vs card; • POS and integrated systems (i.e. down time when software updates affect code, independent grocers ability to keep up to date equipment and software because of cost, no perks for fully implemented states to help vendors transition to integrated, and just the typical issues with reliance on technology and the internet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APL maintenance • Communication with partners- POS providers, Processors, etc. • Agreements- additional language re: notification of POS changes/versions.
Using Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being ready for the technological advances that ebt data provides and allows for. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using data from our new MIS to refine policies with regard to High Risk Assessment, CPSC, adjusting NTE/MARLs and adjusting minimum stocking requirements (including granting exceptions) based on store redemption data; • Development of reports.
Staffing/ Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifying staff position descriptions and adding more data analytic capacity, and the learning curve for transaction problems (assisting with error messages, manual adjustments, and resolving shopping issues); • Matching expectations of perfection with real technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations evaluation, target LA trainings. • Revision of Capacity Building strategies- to ID main messages and tools for training locals and retailers.



What are the major changes and/or surprises after eWIC rolled out?

How much follow up is required for getting stand besides working correctly.
The biggest surprise was that fact that the stores had been allowing the wrong items and sizes in the Paper WIC World. Participant and stores were both calling trying to get non-authorized items added to the APL.
NTE calculation became more nuanced. Vendors did not update their APLs daily. Vendor special formula ordering issues became more apparent. We learned new insights from more detailed redemption rates.
Since WIC was delivered to families homes prior to eWIC, families and grocers needed a lot of information for successful shopping to occur. We were surprised that the order in which items are scanned through the register can impact the WIC transaction. We use all authorized for some of our categories such as legumes. If a . . scans a can of WIC-eligible beans through the register first, then the peanut butter, when they swipe their WIC card it takes the 1 can of beans off their benefit and they no longer have enough benefit for the peanut butter so it is rejected by WIC.
eWIC isn't always easy, new shopping issues, shift in vendor management/customer service (there are more players in the game - ECR providers, vendor IT, VARs, eWIC processor, new ongoing responsibility with POS system testing (level 3 certifications happen regularly)).
eWIC has proved to be faster and convenient; being able to change or replace food packages remotely saves time for both the participants and WIC staff.
Families along with cashiers weren't sure how to handle the transaction with eWIC, what to do if there were card issues, locked PIN's. Cashiers want to rush through transactions and don't allow participant to finish entering PIN and will cause an error code to happen causing them to think it's a card issue when it's not.
Since rollout, the number of store-specific actions that can cause a transaction to fail was a surprise.
Everything was a major change.
It is so much easier.
eWIC hurt small vendors in our state because it significantly decreased redemptions (not the number of customers served, but the amount purchased at the store). This has led to more participant access issues.
The MIS issues with recalculation of benefits when reissuing.
Surprises - continuing to hear about clients selecting the wrong items or trying to buy food without benefits after they have been using eWIC for 6+ months.
Change - vendor manager now spends time daily resolving issues that didn't occur in paper, surprises - how often POS systems get new releases (at least quarterly) or change POS equipment like PIN pads that affect eWIC functionality even though no WIC code changed and that stores need to buy an update to receive the "fix" when something breaks and how little communication happens between the store/reseller/developer/contractor and state.
Time needed for vendor management.
Participants not knowing the allowable foods and having unrealistic shopping expectations.
Expectations of others that all problems would be melted away.
It's been very difficult for the selected Contractor to modify another Contractor's system—no way to get around that as that is who won the bid.



Please share two to three of your best tips and/or recommendations on coordinating your vendor management operations with eWIC.

Establish good relationships with integration specialists from your EBT provider. For CDP/FIS these contacts have been Steven Jeantet and Jim Chilcoat, they are experts in this area and have good contacts with many of the larger chains to work towards resolving issues with configuration of the intergrated POS systems. Be prepared to frequently test transactions at stores who are intergrating. These tests should be conducted in the store and should be performed by swiping the card. When conducting these tests be sure to have benefits across all categories to ensure they are all mapping correctly. In cases where descriptions for certain categories are not appearing or have n/a there is more than likely a whitelist issue.

Meet with vendors on a regular basis prior to eWIC rollout. Get familiar with data that is available to you. Be an advocate for transaction education in the store and in the clinic.

Have someone extremely competent in data analysis, procurement, and output. Have a strong compliance team, working with other SA, to address issues as they arise.

Require picture of the UPC for any new item that is being requested to be added to the APL file. Have seen way to many UPC numbers that have been transposed or just completely wrong when written out or typed out for submission. Also, if you don't already work super closed with your grocery wholesalers and product manufacturers, you need to get those line of communication open as they will be of big help in maintaining a solid APL file.

Communicate frequently with vendors and don't assume that they understand WIC EBT policy changes. 2. Stress the importance of correctly performing PLU mapping and discuss cashier workarounds when issues occur.

We have local WIC staff act as Grocery Liaisons who were available during the roll out of eWIC in their area. They created relationships with the grocery stores and were a quick point of contact for questions and assistance. The messages for a transaction that is declined are not always a WIC issue. But stores seem to always blame WIC first, even though after doing research the issue sometimes was on the grocers end or with their 3rd party processor. Seems like cashiers are very quick to put the blame on WIC.

Form relationships with VARs, ECR providers, vendor IT staff, learn different POS systems (this will be needed for training), recommend that new shoppers keep WIC separate.

Create and send out to retailers a new training video to view and test on same month eWIC rolls out.

Document everything! Especially the resolution of customer service-transaction issues - it will save a ton of time the inevitable next time the issue comes up.



Making sure local agency retailer staff communicate well with the stores; continuing good communication between our agency and State WIC.

test every system even if certified because we have found rarely are the systems setup the same and ready to roll - it also presents an on hands training for staff; release new food list APLs 4-6 weeks prior to implementation of a new food list because even though corporate offices download the file within the required 48 hours, it is usually not ready to go in their system.

Having a practice card, and practice buys so staff can see how easy it is to use the app and to use the card.

Taking advantage of data and reports available to make decisions for adding/removing food, keeping track of max prices, researching program integrity and more.

Continue to meet regularly with steering team/account manager to address issues and help desk tickets, be proactive to assist participants to manually void transactions with problems and monitor transaction errors to improve the shopping experience, and allow vendors to contact state to resolve issues rather than using the TPP route which was not timely or consistent.

Use redemption reporting tools in every way possible.

Set-up a way for any one to submit missing UPC's & offer updated trainings.

Keep others abreast of hurdles and challenges.

WIC professionals may be required to do emotion-based counseling with vendors and staff.

“If your contractor believes the system transfer process will be streamlined, test, test, test, test and test some more -- early, thoroughly, and often.” We want to emphasize that when transferring an in-house system, recognize that it might be harder than you think to marry your certification system with that of the new EBT system – that has been our biggest headache.

“Ensure that an on-site, dedicated, savvy IT support person with project “buy-in” is available to your project at all times if possible.”

Due to ongoing retailer technology changes, retailer (re)certifications will be part of WIC vendor oversight indefinitely

Stay strong and firm when many people want to notify the public immediately every time there is a report of an issue at a cash register.