

6-1 Shopper Education and Tailoring Food Packages

The certifiers role

A big reason participants seek out WIC is because of the foods WIC provides. So, determining which WIC foods to assign to each participant is a very important part of what a WIC certifier does. In fact, only a WIC certifier can assign or tailor food packages for participants.



You learned all about WIC foods, food package assignment, and shopper education in:

- ***Introduction to WIC*** module
- ***Food Package*** module (Chapter 1)

You will learn more about tailoring food packages to specific participant needs in:

- ***Food Package*** module (Chapter 2)

Understanding the WIC shopping experience

Remember the WIC customer life cycle from [Lesson 2-2](#)? We talked about how the WIC experience is more than what happens in the WIC clinic. It also includes what happens when the participant shops for WIC foods at the grocery store. Participants only benefit from WIC foods if they can successfully purchase them – which is not always simple or easy.



You will do a much better job of helping participants if you have a good understanding of what is involved in shopping with a WIC food list, an eWIC card, checking your benefit balance, and using the WICShopper App on your phone.

Learning activity

If possible, download the free WICShopper App to your phone. If this is not possible, ask another WIC staff person to show you the app on their phone.



Explore the following features of the app:

- Use this eWIC card number to register a card - **6102870000115055**
- Look up the benefit balance
- Scan an item
- Use the find a store function and look for which stores in your area have pharmacies or accept eWIC at self-checkout
- Look at the WIC Food List and what languages are available
- Find recipes on Food Hero

What features could you use to help answer participant questions?

Learning activity

Arrange for a visit to a local grocery store to practice choosing WIC foods. Use the [Standard Food Packages](#) job aid, the WICShopper App and the WIC food list to find foods that you might purchase if you were a WIC participant.



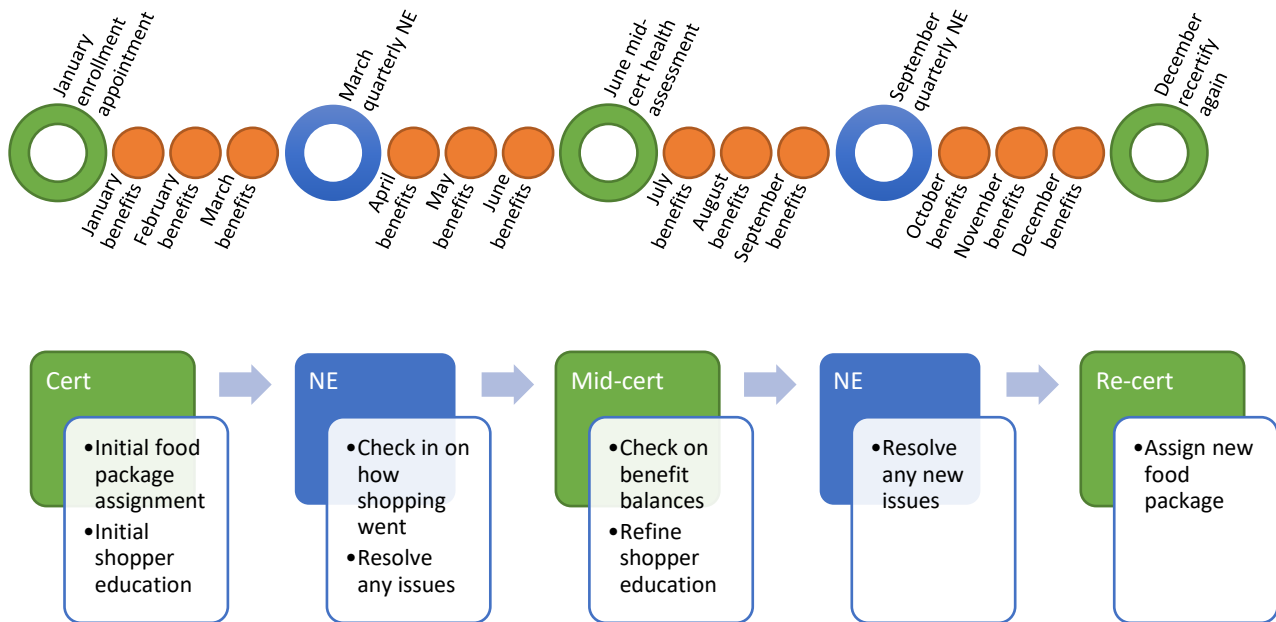
How did you know the foods you chose were WIC authorized foods?

What WIC foods were difficult to find or select?

What foods required mental math to make sure you got the right amount?

Shopping and food package follow-up

There is only so much information that a new WIC participant can absorb at their first WIC appointment. That means new participants often discover they have lots of questions during their first WIC shopping experience. You may not hear about those problems or issues unless you follow-up with newer participants during their quarterly contacts.



Considerations:

- At the first quarterly contact after enrollment check with the participant about how shopping went and resolve any issues.
 - How was your most recent shopping experience?
 - How are you checking your benefit balance?
- At the mid-certification health assessment part of your assessment should include a review of shopping and using the WIC foods. You can ask about foods they use, can't find, don't use, etc.
 - Review the benefit list to see what benefits have or haven't been purchased already this month.
 - What do you think about the WICShopper App?
 - Tell me about the WIC foods you are buying?
- As a certifier, you are in the perfect position to connect the WIC foods the participant is buying to nutrition-focused counseling.



- If the participant identifies any problems, help resolve them.
 - App Support can help answer questions about the participant's eWIC transactions.
 - The state Vendor Team can help locate hard-to-find items.
 - Always check the food list or WICShopper App to see if the food in question is WIC-authorized and is on the participant's benefit list.
 - As a certifier, you can help participant find the items they want. You can change, update, or tailor the food package at any time to better meet the participant's needs.

Learning activity

Observe how other certifiers check in with participants about their food package at mid-certification health assessments or quarterly nutrition contacts.



Tailoring food packages

There are many different situations when you will be tailoring a food package to meet the specific needs of a participant. The Food Package module describes them in detail, but there are a few situations that often raise questions. As you complete your training, you will want to pay special attention to the following situations.



Infant fruit and veggie benefit

- Half of the baby food fruits and veggies can be replaced with fresh starting at 9 months of age if an assessment shows the baby is developmentally ready.
- For more information see *Food Package Module [Lesson 2-1: Food package issues based on participant category](#)*.

Homeless participants

- Special consideration should be given to storage, refrigeration, and safe water supply.
- For more information see *Food Package Module [Lesson 2-3: Food package issues related to living situation](#)*.

Formulas requiring medical documentation from the health care provider

- One month of formulas requiring medical documentation can be issued while we wait for the medical documentation form from the health care provider.

- For more information see *Food Package Module [Lesson 2-5: Food package requiring medical documentation](#) and [Lesson 2-6: Formula warehouse](#).*

Talk It Over

Ask your training supervisor who to go to in your agency with questions about shopper education or tailoring food packages.



References

[Policy 769 – Assigning WIC Food Packages](#)

- Describes food packages for each WIC category
- Details food package in special circumstances:
 - When partial packages are assigned
 - When whole milk or 2% milk can be assigned
 - Assigning soy beverage and tofu
 - Food packages special living situations

[Policy 770 – Authorized Foods](#)

- Provides details about what foods are allowed and which are not
- Appendix B describes the WIC food authorization process

[Policy 733 – Formula Warehouse](#)

[Policy 735 – Exchange and Handling of Returned Formula](#)

[Policy 760 – Medical Formulas](#)

[Policy 765 – Medical Documentation](#)

- 733, 735, 760, 765 provide details for assigning and issuing special formulas

