

May 2015 Update

Vermont WIC is proud and excited to announce that USDA-Food and Nutrition Service has given us “Go to Pilot” approval for our migration from 35-year old computer mainframe-based record-keeping to a new “paperless” WIC management information system, and our migration from home delivery of WIC foods to a retail grocery store EBT, or “eWIC” system. The pilot of both systems will take place in the Rutland District Office of the Vermont Department of Health, with the support of retail grocers in that region.

Planning for the project began in 2010. With USDA-FNS approval in 2012, VT WIC launched planning, procurement, design, development, and testing phases. Hard work by WIC staff, contractors Ciber (for transfer of the WIC MIS developed by the Mountain Plains States WIC Consortium) and Xerox (for eWIC) culminated in User Acceptance Testing from January through April of this year.

At the end of testing, a “Go to Pilot” request was filed with USDA-FNS. The response came May 8th, with an unconditional “Go!”

WIC staffs in the Central Office and the Rutland District Office have been preparing the WIC clinic and WIC participants for the launch since January. Announcements and educational materials were prepared, a “WIC Carnival” and “eWIC Learning Sessions” are being held to introduce families to the changes. The new eWIC system brings profound changes for WIC families, who instead of getting two home deliveries of WIC foods each month, will be able to shop for the foods in any of the major chains stores and many of the independent grocery retailers in the region. There will be significantly more food choices, and the purchases can be made when the family needs the food, rather than receiving foods on a fixed delivery schedule. More choice, more convenience.

Retailers have also been busy preparing. New agreements between WIC and the retailers needed to be executed; site visits are necessary to confirm the necessary inventory of WIC foods are stocked; WIC needs to confirm that the store is ready for the WIC families’ eWIC cards. All of this will also be completed by the end of May.

It’s important to note that from the start, this combined MIS/EBT project has been:

- ✓ On time
- ✓ Under budget
- ✓ Within scope

Moreover, the most important stakeholders for this project - WIC participants, WIC staff, and WIC retail grocers --- all strongly support and are eager for pilot implementation. .

The pilot will continue through July, August, and September. If pilot is successful, statewide rollout of Ceres and eWIC will commence in October 2015, starting with the Bennington and Springfield district offices, and continuing through the fall and winter. Rollout will be complete by the end of March 2016.