

NEWS RELEASE

Public Health - Madison & Dane County

(PHMDC)

Contact: Jeff Golden

(608) 243-0302

Public Health's WIC Program Launches new Payment Initiative

eWIC Debit Card will Simplify Food Purchases

Madison WI – August 24, 2015 - The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children or WIC has been helping low income pregnant and postpartum women and their children under 5 years of age to purchase healthy and nutritious food for 40 years. WIC has been one of the most consistently successful anti-poverty programs with the further advantage of returning to the economy \$2-3 for every dollar spent. By supporting the health of those most at risk, more money is saved by reducing healthcare costs.

In addition to this food assistance, WIC also provides nutrition and health assessments and education for mothers and their families, breastfeeding education and support, and important connections to other public health and community programs and services.

Starting this month, WIC is moving to an alternative to the paper checks with the use of a debit card similar to the Quest card used for the FoodShare program. This system is called eWIC, and is being phased in at grocery stores and pharmacies throughout Madison and Dane County. During this transition period, the current WIC paper checks will also continue to be accepted through the end of 2015.

The new eWIC card will combine the food benefits for all WIC family participants on one card. WIC clients will be able to purchase any amount of WIC approved foods they want, up to the total monthly benefits available on the card, at each store visit. The clients can see the total food benefits that remain on that month's balance, and the expiration date for that month's food benefits on the grocery receipt they receive.

In most stores that accept WIC, the eWIC card allows the check out process to automatically sort WIC and non-WIC purchases by using scanned UPC codes. This makes the check out process much easier and more discreet for the client. A few smaller stores may need to have WIC clients separate WIC foods from other purchases and check them out in a separate transaction.

The WIC program is excited about this new eWIC innovation and is actively working to educate WIC stores and clients. WIC will also continue to provide regular nutrition education for WIC clients, since this remains a key element of the WIC program's mission. Those needing more information about this program should call the WIC office at (608) 267-1111.

For more information on WIC benefits and eligibility, check out our website at <http://www.publichealthmdc.com/family/wic/>

-END-

An online version of this release is available at

<http://www.cityofmadison.com/news/public-healths-wic-program-launches-new-payment-initiative>