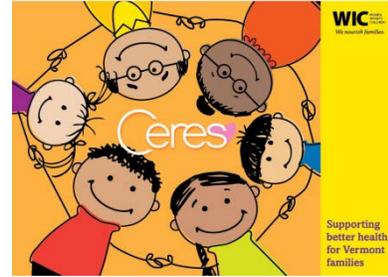


Vermont WIC MIS/EBT Implementation

FAQ September 2014



What is the schedule for MIS/EBT implementation?

As of the beginning of September 2014, our MIS/EBT implementation is still on the same schedule we announced at the kick-off one year ago! We've completed the Planning and Design phases, and are currently in Development and Testing, which will continue through May 2015. We expect our Pilot to start in late May 2015 and continue for three months, followed by a month of evaluation. With a "Go" from USDA/FNS, we will start statewide roll-out in October 2015. Completion of rollout is expected in March 2016.

Who are the contractors?

Ciber is the contractor for transfer of the Mountain Plains States Consortium (MPSC) State Agency Model (SAM) MIS. Xerox is the contractor for implementation and hosting of online WIC EBT.

What functions will the MIS perform for WIC?

The MIS functionality includes all local WIC clinic operations such as appointment scheduling, enrollment, eligibility determination, nutrition assessment and education documentation, inventory control, and EBT card issuance, and at the statewide level includes vendor (retail grocer) management, food management, caseload management, program administration and reporting, including federal reporting. Vermont WIC's version of the MPSC MIS is called "Ceres," in honor of the goddess of agriculture and maternal love, whose statue is atop the Vermont state capitol dome.

How will Ceres keep participant information secure?

Access to Ceres is strictly role-based – only WIC staff permitted to log in to state networks can access Ceres, and can access only those Ceres functions specifically authorized. WIC staff will have the ability to access only the information they need to perform their specific job duties. All staff activities of the Department of Health are conducted using Vermont Agency of Human Services standards, including HIPAA standards, with which all employees must comply.

It's also important to note that Ceres is replacing a current paper-based WIC operation, where participant records are paper files. Ceres provides much greater security and access control.

Why can't Vermont WIC continue home delivery of WIC foods?

There are several reasons why Vermont WIC must transition from home delivery. First, many delivery vendors throughout the state are approaching retirement age, and we find it very difficult to find replacement contractors. Their vehicles also are aging and nearly obsolete. Finally, the US Congress has mandated that all states implement WIC EBT by 2020. We've

determined that because we had to implement a new MIS, it made sense to implement EBT at the same time, rather than use paper vouchers as an intermediate step.

WIC EBT is an improvement for participants in many ways: families can use the card to purchase foods when they need them, and not be tied to a home delivery schedule. The foods are safer, not left on the porch if the delivery happens when no one is home. The system is paperless; no signing and returning a Proof of Delivery to the local WIC office.

There will be vastly more choices, also – instead of being limited to the home delivery brands of bread, cereal, and peanut butter, for example, families will be able to select from a variety of approved foods in the store, when they do their regular shopping.

Will WIC and SNAP (3squaresVT) use the same EBT card?

No, Vermont WIC will issue a WIC-only card. There is only an approximately 30% overlap between WIC and SNAP eligibility, and the two programs are operated by different agencies in state government. The WIC card must use a more complicated EBT system to redeem benefits: while SNAP is a fixed cash value each month (e.g. \$130 of any eligible foods each month), our WIC card will authorize specific quantities of specific foods each month (e.g. 4 gallons of low-fat milk each month).

How will the two systems be implemented statewide?

Ceres and EBT will be implemented first as a three-month pilot in the Rutland District Office, now scheduled to start in May 2015. Home delivery will be phased out, and retail grocers authorized in that region as WIC participants receive their new EBT cards. Following a successful pilot, Ceres and WIC EBT will be implemented in the remaining District Offices one by one, using a two-week schedule for each DO roll-out. Statewide roll-out should be complete by April 2016.

How are the grocers going to be prepared to accept a WIC EBT card?

Our contractor for EBT, Xerox, will be in direct contact with all grocers Vermont WIC has identified as our retail network. Some grocers will need some software changes to be able to identify and accept the Vermont WIC EBT card; others (generally the small independent stores without electronic cash register systems) will receive a scanner/card reader device to use for WIC transactions. Vermont WIC will provide lists of authorized grocers to participants, the list will be available on the WIC website, and stores will be identified as authorized by posters and door decals.