

Appendix A: Qualitative Data Collection Instruments

WIC Vendor Interview Protocol

ERS EBT WIC Redemptions Study

[STATE] WIC Vendor In-Person Interview Protocol

The following interview protocol is designed for use in WIC EBT states participating in the ERS EBT study and is to be completed on-site at selected stores. This protocol will be utilized with vendors that are interested and available to complete an interview.

Introduction

(This introduction assumes that the vendor has already been recruited to participate by phone and that the interviewer has already introduced him/herself upon entering the store.)

As a reminder, we are conducting interviews with store managers/owners of some of the WIC stores in [STATE]. We are interested in learning about your experience as a WIC vendor since your state has transitioned to EBT and how well you are adapting to the EBT system. The interview takes approximately 20 minutes. If you are not able to complete an interview today, you also have the option to complete an interview by phone at a later date.

All of your responses are completely confidential and will not in any way affect your WIC authorization status. Also, no information you provide in this interview will be shared with your competitors. We will combine your comments with other WIC vendors from Kentucky, Michigan, and Nevada for use in creating recommendations for implementation of WIC EBT systems in other states.

I would like to tape this interview today to have record of your responses but I would first like to ask permission to do so. Your name and the name of your store will not be used by me anywhere on the tape. Would it be okay for your responses to be taped? (If No, take notes throughout the interview.)

Background/Screening Questions

1. Are you familiar with how WIC EBT system works in your store and what happens to complete the WIC EBT transactions in your store?

[If the owner/manager is not familiar with the WIC EBT system then ask for someone working at the store that is more familiar with EBT.]

2. What is your position and role at this store?
3. Were you the owner/manager of this store when [STATE] transitioned to the EBT system for WIC purchases?

Transition to WIC EBT

4. How long have you had an EBT system for processing WIC transactions in your store?
5. What do you think are the major differences between WIC EBT and the paper checks?
Probe: What are the benefits to using EBT compared to the paper checks?
6. What was the process of implementing the EBT system in your store?
 - a. What were the steps in the process for your store? – (The technology changes, the database of UPC codes for the WIC foods and its maintenance, training of store personnel?)
 - b. Did you encounter any challenges during this process? If so, what?
 - c. What could the [STATE] WIC program have done to make this process easier?
7. Did you have any other EBT systems in your store prior to acquiring EBT for WIC?
 - a. If so, what EBT system did you have?
 - b. Did having an EBT system prior make the process of transitioning to WIC EBT easier?

Impact on WIC Redemptions

8. What changes, if any, have you seen in your overall WIC business since the switch to EBT?
Probe: Has the volume of WIC business increased or decreased since the switch to EBT?
9. What differences, if any, have you seen in the amount of regular food benefits being redeemed per month since you switched to the EBT system?
 - a. What has changed (i.e. increase or decrease in redemptions)?
10. What differences, if any, have you seen in the amount of fruits and vegetables being redeemed per month since you switched to the EBT system?
 - a. What has changed (i.e. increase or decrease in redemptions)?
11. The old paper WIC checks required participants to purchase all the foods on that particular check. Have you noticed different shopping patterns for participants with EBT as compared to the paper checks?
 - a. If so, what are the differences (i.e. decrease in quantities of WIC foods purchased at any one shopping trip; more trips to the store during the month)?
12. Have you noticed any specific WIC foods that are not being purchased at all since the switch to EBT?
 - a. If so, which foods?
13. Are there any WIC foods that you carry that are selling better now than they did before EBT was implemented?

Impact on WIC Customers

14. Have you seen any differences in the way WIC customers approach their WIC purchases since moving to EBT?

Probes: Are WIC customers more/less knowledgeable about allowable brands and sizes when making a purchase with their WIC EBT card? Are WIC customers still separating their items at check-out?

Impact on Store Infrastructure

15. What types of changes, if any, have you made to your store inventory since the implementation of WIC EBT?
- What types of changes have you had to make?
 - What caused you to make these changes?

EBT Training/Certification

16. Tell me about the process of becoming EBT certified.
- Was this process easy or difficult for this store?
 - What about the EBT certification process could have been improved?
17. What other training have you received through the [STATE] WIC program to assist you in implementing and utilizing WIC EBT in your store? Please describe.
18. What other resources and materials have you received from the [STATE] WIC program to aid you in implementing and utilizing WIC EBT in your store?
19. What could be improved about the EBT training you received from the State?
20. Have you trained all of the cashiers working in this store on how to conduct WIC transactions using EBT?
- If not, why not?
 - If so, please describe the training and key information that was communicated to cashiers.
21. What other resources would aid you in offering better EBT training for your cashiers?

State Policies

22. What [STATE] WIC policies/regulations have changed since the implementation of EBT?

Probes: Are mixed purchases allowed? What is required in terms of uploading and maintaining authorized product /UPC lists? Are self checkout lanes allowed for WIC EBT purchases?

23. Have any of these policies benefited you as a WIC vendor?
24. Have any of these policies made it more challenging for you as a WIC vendor?
 - a. If so, what policies and why?
25. What changes would you like to see in [STATE] WIC program policies related to WIC EBT?
26. What other recommendations do you have for improving the WIC EBT system and related WIC program regulations that guide it?
27. Do you have any other comments you'd like to make about the impact the move to WIC EBT has had on your store?

WIC State Key Informant Interview Protocol

ERS EBT WIC Redemptions Study

[State] WIC State Key Informant Interview Protocol

The following interview protocol is designed for use in WIC EBT states participating in the ERS EBT study and is to be completed on-site at state WIC offices. This protocol will be use to interview the state WIC director and the WIC vendor manager and/or others as determined by the state WIC director.

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time for this interview. As mentioned previously, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has contracted with Altarum Institute to conduct a study to examine WIC participant redemption patterns before and after EBT implementation. We are interested in learning about your state's experience transitioning to EBT and challenges you've encountered during the implementation process. We will also be discussing lessons learned and your feedback on how EBT may be improved. I expect that this interview will take about 1 hour.

All of your responses are completely confidential and nothing said today will be attached to you. We will combine your comments with other WIC state officials for use in creating recommendations for implementation of WIC EBT systems in other states.

I would like to tape this interview today to have record of your responses but I would first like to ask permission to do so. Would it be okay for your responses to be taped? (If No, take notes throughout the interview.)

Before I begin, do you have any questions?

Background

1. Before we begin, please indicate your position title and your role in the EBT implementation process.

Transition to WIC EBT

2. We are aware of the PAPD/ IAPD process with FNS. Generally speaking, how long before you implemented EBT did you start the planning process?
3. What would you say is the ideal amount of time required for planning and implementing EBT in a state?
4. Getting into a bit more specifics, in your IAPD approval process for EBT:
 - a. Did you encounter any challenges during this process? If so, what?
 - b. What key steps in the process helped you successfully implement EBT?

- c. Do you have any recommendations about the IAPD approval process related to the efficiency and effectiveness of implementing EBT?

Impact on WIC Redemptions

5. Have you looked at redemption patterns in your state since the transition to EBT?

[If YES, move to question #6. If NO, move to question #11.]

6. What changes, if any, have you seen in the overall WIC redemptions in your state since the transition to EBT?
 - a. What has changed (i.e. increase or decrease in redemptions)?
 - b. Do you believe these changes are the result of EBT? Why or why not?
7. What changes, if any, have you seen in the amount of regular food benefits (without CVB fruits and vegetables) being redeemed since the transition to EBT?
 - a. What has changed (i.e. increase or decrease in redemptions)?
 - b. Do you believe these changes are the result of EBT or other influences? Why or why not?
8. What changes, if any, have you seen in the amount of CVB fruit and vegetable benefits being redeemed since the transition to EBT?
 - a. What has changed (i.e. increase or decrease in redemptions)?
 - b. Do you believe these changes are the result of EBT or other influences? Why or why not?
9. If you have noticed more partial redemptions of a full month's worth of benefits, which foods are not being fully redeemed?
10. Are there any specific WIC foods that are not being redeemed at all since the switch to EBT?
 - a. If so, which foods?

Impact on Vendors

11. What specific EBT-related policies have been created that impact vendors?
 - a. Are you allowing mixed basket purchases?
 - b. How are promotional items/coupons handled?
 - c. Are self-checkout lanes allowed for EBT purchases? If so, what policies have been created to address this type of checkout?
 - d. What policies have been created that address the uploading and maintaining of the authorized product/UPC lists? What are repercussions to the vendor if uploads are not done on the recommended schedule?

12. What feedback have you received from vendors about EBT and EBT-related policies?
 - a. Are there any reports of reduced challenges by vendors? If so, what?
 - b. Are there any reports of new challenges by vendors? If so, what?
13. Have you noticed any change in the number of authorized vendors as result of EBT implementation?
 - a. If so, what was the different in numbers from pre- to post-implementation?
 - b. What policies/practices may have caused this shift in participation?
14. What EBT-related policies/practices do you think have benefited vendors?
15. What EBT-related policies/practices do you think have created challenges for vendors?

Impact on WIC Customers

16. What specific EBT-related policies were created to improve ease of use and participant accessibility to EBT?
 - a. If mixed basket purchases are allowed, what has participants' reaction been?
 - b. If self-checkout lanes are allowed for EBT purchases, do you have any way of determining the extent to which participants are using this option at checkout? Have participants been receptive to self-checkout option?
 - c. We've seen remaining balance of WIC foods printed on store receipts. Do you think that participants retain their receipts to help them at their next WIC shopping? Have you heard any feedback about the extent to which participants get a printout at the 'kiosk' prior to their next WIC shopping?
 - d. Are there any online systems or phone numbers that participants can call to check their food balance?
17. What feedback have you received about participant experiences using EBT?
 - a. Are there any reports of reduced challenges by participants? If so, what?
 - b. Are there any reports of new challenges by participants? If so, what?
18. What policy changes could be made to improve participant use and experience of WIC EBT?

EBT Training/Certification

19. Tell me about the process a vendor must go through to become WIC EBT certified.
 - a. What about the certification process do you think works well?
 - b. What about the certification process could be improved?

20. What training opportunities does the state provide vendors about the implementation and operation of EBT? Please describe.
 - a. Do you provide training, resources/materials to vendors for training cashiers on EBT?
21. What other resources and materials does the state provide vendors about the operation and maintenance of EBT? Please describe.
22. What do you think works well about the EBT training and resources you provide to vendors?
23. What do you think could be improved about the EBT training and resources you provide to vendors?
24. Understanding the challenges vendors have with cashier turnover and the complexity of a WIC transaction, do you have ideas about what other resources or processes that could be offered to ensure better EBT training for cashiers?

State and Local Agency Policies

25. Did EBT implementation require changes to state policies or regulations? Were new state regulations required? If so, what were they?
26. What policies have changed or have been created that impact local agency staff?
27. Are there EBT-related policies/practices that you are planning to change moving forward?
28. Would you do anything differently in implementing EBT in your state?
29. What recommendations do you have for other states that are planning for the EBT-implementation process?
30. Do you have any other comments you'd like to make about the transition to EBT and lessons learned from this experience, and with the maintenance and operation of WIC EBT?

WIC Participant Focus Group Discussion Guide

Evaluation of EBT Redemption Patterns

[STATE] WIC Participant Focus Group Discussion Guide

Date of group: _____	
Location of group: _____	
Facilitated by: _____	Note taker: _____
Number of participants: _____	
Start time: _____	End time: _____
Language of group: _____	

Introduction

Welcome! My name is _____, I am here with my co-worker: _____. Thank you for taking the time for this group discussion. It is really important to hear from you! We work for Altarum is a health research institute and our work focuses on helping improve the health of children, families, and adults. I do not work for WIC, but am travelling through KY, MI and NV because the WIC program asked us to find out more about EBT [**use what the EBT card is called in that state—e.g., Kentucky uses the “eWIC” card. Also hold up a copy of the card used in that state**]. We are interested in hearing your thoughts about EBT and how you shop with the EBT card. We want to hear your thoughts and ideas to help make improvements to the EBT card in the WIC program.

We will be using first names only today. Everything you say during this session is private. After we conduct several of these group discussions, we will write a report for the Economic Research Service of the USDA. Your name will not appear anywhere in the report. Nothing said today will be attached to your name at any point. Nothing that you say will affect the services you receive through WIC or other public assistance programs.

Have any of you ever been in a focus group before? The purpose of focus groups is to get the honest opinions of a small group of people about a specific topic.

I would like to review these ground rules now:

- There are no right or wrong answers. Remember that we don't work for WIC, so please feel free to say whatever you think. No one at the clinic will know what you have said.
- Also, it is okay to have ideas or opinions that are different from each other. We want to hear everyone's point of view.

- It would be helpful to have only one person talking at a time. We are tape recording this session so that we don't miss anything important. If two people talk at once, we can't understand what anyone is saying. We may remind you of this during the group discussion.
- We would like everyone to participate. But, you each don't have to answer every question. You don't have to raise your hand either. If, however, some of you are shy or we really want to know what you think about a particular question, we may ask you what you think.
- We just want to emphasize what we said earlier: we will be using first names only. Everything you say is private. What you say today will not be attached to your name at any point. Nothing that you say will affect the benefits you receive.

The group will last no more than 1.5 hours. You will not get out any later than _____.

We will not be taking a formal break, but if you need to leave for a restroom break, the bathrooms are _____. And feel free to get snacks.

As a thank you for participating, and to help you with any child care or transportation costs for this meeting, you will receive \$20 cash. Accepting this money will not affect any public benefits you get.

For this session, I will read a question and then listen to your responses. I also may ask follow up questions to get some more detail.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Let's get started! I can't wait to hear what you have to say.

Icebreaker

[Start with the participant to your right and have them respond in round robin fashion.]

ROUND-ROBIN: I'd like to start with a couple of quick questions that I would like everyone to respond to. Please tell me: your first name and how many children you have. Also, what is your favorite thing to eat for dinner?

Transition to EBT

We'll start off talking generally about using the [Name of EBT card for State].

1. So how long have you been using the WIC EBT card?
2. ***[For MI and NV only]*** Think back to the first time you used your EBT card. How prepared were you to use the card?
 - a. How did you learn about using the card in the store?
3. ***[For KY only]*** So now that you've been using the EBT card for a while, let me ask you:
 - a. Did it take a while to get used to the EBT card for you?
 - b. Did it take a while for the stores to get used to the EBT card?

- c. Did the cashiers know what they were doing?
4. **[For KY only]** With the EBT card, you no longer have the WIC foods printed on the checks (i.e. the WIC foods aren't right at your fingertips like it was with the paper checks). Did having it this way take a lot of getting used to?
 5. What do you think are the major differences in using the EBT card at the store compared to the paper checks?
 - a. What are the biggest benefits of using the EBT cards?
 - b. Are there any drawbacks? Is anything more difficult with EBT than it was with paper checks?
 - c. Did you change your approach for buying foods at the store with the EBT card?
 - d. [If participants don't bring this up] With the EBT card, do you find yourself going to the store more often or less often to do your WIC shopping, as compared to the paper WIC checks?
 6. Some people have told me they think they buy more of their WIC foods they get each month with the EBT card and then some people tell me they buy less and they end up with unused foods on their card. What do you think?
 - a. Why do you think you buy more/less?
 - b. Do you think you buy more of less with your EBT card as compared with the paper WIC checks? Why?

Shopping with EBT

Let's talk how you prepare for your WIC shopping before getting to the store.

7. I know you get a certain amount of WIC foods for one month. How do you decide what WIC foods you will buy and when you will buy them?
 - a. With paper checks, participants really had to buy what was listed on the WIC check (e.g. you had to buy 2 gallons of milk, a couple boxes of cereal, and some juice). Do you still do that or do you buy the WIC foods differently now with the WIC EBT card?
 - i. Do you do your WIC shopping with your regular food shopping and has this changed from when you had the paper checks?
 - b. How do you know when new benefits are available to you? (e.g., you used to have checks with dates printed on them, so do you have to remember the date or is there some other way?
8. Let's talk about the process of shopping with the EBT card and how it works in the store. Don't leave anything out.
9. Do you have any problems finding the WIC foods in the store?

10. How does the cashier handle the checkout process? What happens?
11. Are you able to get through the checkout lane / process faster with the EBT card?
12. When you go down the checkout line, do you separate your WIC foods from other foods you are buying during that shopping trip?
13. Do you shop for WIC foods at a store that has the WIC transaction go through their main cash register system? If so, does that WIC transaction go smoothly? What's your experience in the checkout lane?
14. Do you shop for WIC foods at a store that has a 'stand beside unit' where the clerk has to enter in the WIC transaction on another device? If so, does this WIC transaction go smoothly? What's your experience?
15. How do the receipts work?
16. What challenges have you had using the EBT card at the store?
 - a. Were those challenges surprises?
 - b. Are any of those challenges still an issue?
17. Tell me about how you are treated by grocery store employees when using the EBT card.
18. Have you ever been in a checkout line when a WIC food is scanned as unallowable? What happens?
 - a. What did you do (or what happened)?
 - b. Did you still make that purchase?
 - c. What did the cash register clerk do? Did the clerk tell you that it "wasn't in the system"?
 - d. Has it happened more than once?
 - e. Did anyone contact their local WIC agency to report it?
19. Do you know of anyone who's been able to buy non-WIC foods with the WIC EBT card?
20. Do you use coupons at the store?
 - a. If yes, what was the process like when using the coupon with the EBT?
 - b. What happens if there is a 'buy one, get one free' promotion? Does the cashier allow you to get the 2nd item (say another jar of peanut butter) free when you're using your EBT card or is it taken out of your monthly benefit?
21. Do you have the option to use a self-checkout lane? Have any of you used the self-checkout lane?
 - a. Did you know you could use your EBT card at self-checkout lanes?
 - b. If yes, can you please tell me why you chose the self-checkout lane?
 - c. What did you like about the self-checkout lane?

- d. How was it different from going to a regular lane?
- e. If you could change anything about the self-checkout lane, what would you change?
- f. Have you ever chosen to go to a store because it has a self-checkout lane?

[Facilitator shows a copy of a store receipt, if available]

- 22. Let's talk about the sales receipt you get after you pay.
- 23. What information on the receipt do you usually look at?
- 24. Is the information on the receipt easy to understand? Is it useful to you?
- 25. What do you do with the receipt after you get it? (i.e. do you save it or throw it away?)
 - a. What do you like about the receipts (i.e. does it help keep track of items bought)?
- 26. After you've bought some of your WIC foods, how do you remember which foods you have left to buy with your month's benefit?
 - a. Do you save store receipts?
 - b. Do you use the EBT card reader in the store where you can get a print-out receipt of the remaining foods on your card?
 - i. If yes, do you do this before you shop? At other times? ***[In KY, they can go to their clinic to use the EBT card reader there. Ask if anyone does this.]***
 - c. Do you ever forget that you have foods left?
 - i. If yes, find out if they remember how much (what types of foods/how much CVB) was left on their card unused.
- 27. Do you have ideas for helping you or others keep track of what WIC foods you have left to buy for the month?
- 28. If you could change *anything* how would you change the way you buy your WIC foods?
- 29. What ideas would you have for helping new WIC participants learn to use the EBT card?

Where Participants Shop

For the next set of questions we'll talk about where you go to do your WIC shopping and why.

- 30. What kind of stores do you choose to shop in to use your WIC EBT card (e.g. corner bodega/store, gas station, supermarket, large chain store)? ***[Use names of supermarkets in area.]***
 - a. How many different stores do you shop at to buy your WIC foods?
 - b. Do you shop in the same store for your other groceries?
 - c. Do you have a favorite store or stores you usually shop in for your WIC foods?

31. What do you think of the number and type of stores where you can use the EBT card?
- Are there enough? Too many? Too few?
 - How do you know which stores will take the WIC EBT card? (e.g. signage?)
 - Do you ever have trouble finding a store that accepts WIC EBT?
 - [KY focus groups ONLY]** Are the stores you shop at with the EBT card different than the stores you shopped at when you had paper checks?
32. When you have used up your WIC benefits for the month and you are doing grocery shopping for your family, do you shop at the same store that you did your WIC shopping in, or do you go to a different store? Tell me about that.

Food Choices with EBT

33. With the fruit and vegetable cash benefit with WIC, sometimes called “cash value benefit”:
- Which fruits and vegetables do you most often buy at the store?
 - Do the WIC stores you shop at have good quality fruits and vegetables?
 - Is it easy or difficult to buy the fruits and vegetables during the month to use up the dollar value? [Note to facilitator: \$6 value for child; \$10 value for pregnant woman]
 - Do you buy fruits and vegetables over the WIC dollar amount and end up paying the rest with other funds? Is that easy or difficult to do in the checkout lane?
34. Are there food items in your WIC EBT card benefit that you usually don't buy?
- Which foods and why? **[Get list and see if other participants also don't buy.]**
 - How often do you not buy them?
35. Are there any WIC foods that you feel your family gets too much of?
- [If participants have infants]** Do any of you purchase all of the infant food benefits for your infant?
 - Do any of you make your own infant foods?
 - If so, what do you make?
 - Do you prefer to make infant foods instead of purchasing them?
 - [If peanut butter and beans not mentioned]** We have heard from participants in other places that they don't always purchase all of their family's peanut butter and bean benefits. Have you had that experience?

Recommendations and Summary

36. Some states are in the planning stages for getting the WIC EBT card. What advice would you have for participants like you in those states?
- What advice would you have for the people who make the WIC rules in those states?

Let me summarize what we talked about today. [Summarize the discussion to assure that the participants agree with the summary.]

CLOSING

Thank you very much for participating in this discussion group today. We have learned a lot from your experiences and recommendations. In appreciation of your time today, we have \$20 for each of you. Before you leave, please take one of these envelopes and sign the form indicating you have received one of these envelopes.