

Helping Participants Optimize their WIC Benefits.

UPDATED 5/3/2023

First Step: Assess the household's benefit redemption.

Look at the household Benefit Transaction History. See [How to Assess Household Benefit Redemption](#) to identify foods the household did not purchase.

Second Step: Be aware of why benefits might not be used.

There are numerous reasons a household might not purchase all the benefits available to them. A few reasons may include:

- The participant does not understand what is allowable for a particular food item, e.g., the participant may be unaware that they can purchase other whole grain items besides bread.
- The store was out of the item or does not stock the preferred brands of an item.
- The family is unfamiliar with the food item or does not regularly use it.

Third Step: Assist family with fully using benefits.

Approach the topic as an “opportunity” to optimize the household’s benefits. The goal is to identify any barriers or issues with purchasing and using WIC foods. Avoid any statements that may seem critical of the participant’s non-use of any benefits.

One counseling technique to try is Explore-Offer-Explore.

Explore-Offer-Explore:

- **Explore** – Ask about the participant’s shopping experience, what they have tried, or would like to know. Open-ended questions work well for “exploring”. Here are some examples:
 - How did shopping for WIC foods go for you?
 - Which WIC foods would you like more information about finding in the store or using?
- **Offer** – Based on the participant’s response to your initial explore, tailor your offer of information. Ask permission and offer just one or two ideas. Here are some examples:
 - Since your child does not like whole wheat bread, could I show you a list of other whole grain items you might try?
 - You mentioned that you have plenty of peanut butter and have not been buying it. Can I share some ideas for using the bean options? We have lots of bean recipes if you are interested!
 - Yes, kids love Honey Bunches of Oats! Can I offer a suggestion? You can talk to the manager at your store and ask them to stock it.

- I am glad your WIC shopping trip went so well! I notice you had some fruit and vegetable dollars left over last month. Can I share a handout with some ideas for using fruits and vegetables?
- **Explore** – Ask the participant what they know or think about the information you offered. Here are some examples:
 - How could you see yourself using this information?
 - What do you think of these ideas for using fruits and vegetables?

Step Four: Offer continued support.

- Encourage participants to contact you with any questions or issues with using their benefits.
- Remind participants that the MN WIC app has many resources including the Food Finder, Store Locator and links to nutrition information and recipes.

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

How to Assess Household Benefit Redemption

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/benefits/redemption.pdf>)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 625 Robert St N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.