



For Immediate Release

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WIC Program to provide benefits electronically

Galveston County and Cities - Effective August 1, the Galveston County Health District (GCHD) Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program will no longer issue benefits using a paper voucher system. Instead, benefits will be loaded onto a computer chip on the WIC Lone Star Smart Card, a process known as Electronic Benefits Transfer or EBT says Tiffany Rice, WIC manager for the district.

The EBT system is designed to improve the delivery of benefits to WIC participants and improves the processing of WIC program information throughout the state. Benefits will be "loaded" on the card for each client by a WIC staff member.

The electronic system works much like a debit card. WIC approved food items are deducted as the card is used. Store computers identify WIC approved items based on scanned product codes. The system will provide participants greater convenience and makes it easier for cashiers to ensure that only approved foods are purchased.

Currently grocery stores may have to wait as long as five weeks to receive their redemptions but with the new system it should take only a week or less.

"This is a great improvement to our program," says Rice, "It's a win for WIC participants, staff and local grocery stores in that it makes using WIC benefits easier."

The switch to the EBT system requires that the issuing of WIC benefits be suspended August 4 – 8 at all Galveston County Health District WIC clinics. However, WIC will continue to offer breastfeeding support services during that week at each clinic for clients.

All WIC clinics will resume normal operations on August 11, 2008 to serve participants with the new system.

Anyone with questions can contact any of the following WIC offices for more information.

Galveston: Island Community Center
4700 Broadway
(409) 763-7207

Galveston: University Hospital Clinics (UHC) Building 7th floor
(409) 747-5590

Texas City: Community Family Center
2000 Texas Avenue
(409) 949-3471

Dickinson: 905 FM 517 E
(281) 337-7606

The GCHD WIC program provides nutrition education and health foods for pregnant women, new mothers, infants and children up to five years old. WIC programs are also instrumental in the promotion of children's health through breastfeeding by observing World Breastfeeding Day annually in August.

This June WIC served 7389 clients – the highest number of clients on record for the local program. For more information about the EBT system or the WIC Lone Star Smart Card, please refer to <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/wichd/ebt/ebt1.shtm>.