

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 25, 2014

Contact: DOH Communications
(850) 245-4111

**FLORIDA'S WIC PROGRAM FIRST TO COMPLETE
STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW DATA SYSTEM AND
ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (EBT)**

Tallahassee - The Florida Department of Health's Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program announced today completion of its statewide implementation of a new data system that supports clients receiving WIC food benefits. The new system uses an electronic card much like a credit or debit card rather than the paper checks used previously. Florida is the first state to simultaneously implement a new WIC participant data system and bring Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) services online.

"Connecting Florida's families with nutritious and affordable food options allows parents to make healthier food choices for their children," said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. "The implementation of the new WIC data system and EBT services demonstrate innovative steps toward better health for Florida."

WIC EBT will provide participants with greater flexibility in redeeming benefits and increase benefit security. The WIC vendor community anticipates a decrease in paper-based errors that result in banking fees and loss of payment, automated recognition of WIC items at the point of sale, and a reduction in the time it takes to receive payments for WIC EBT purchases. The WIC Program anticipates greater accuracy and detail in transaction information.

Implementation of WIC EBT realizes significant benefits for approximately 450,000 WIC participants, 2,000 WIC grocers, the WIC Program, and the taxpayer. WIC EBT provides the participant with greater shopping flexibility to obtain their prescriptive foods throughout the month. It eliminates extensive manual reviews and settlement procedures necessary under the paper check system garnering strong support from WIC grocers. The WIC Program and the taxpayer realize significant benefits through improved WIC program integrity by enabling efficient detection of fraud and abuse.

WIC is a federally funded program that provides healthy food, as well as breastfeeding education and nutrition counseling to needy families. Florida's WIC Program operates 220 sites throughout the state where families improve their diet and food choices with the assistance of licensed nutritionists and nutrition educators. WIC aims to improve the health of pregnant women, new mothers, and their children from birth to five years of age by providing the best nutrition possible to help them learn and be successful in school and society.

The Department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.floridahealth.gov.

###