PURPOSE:
To guide local agencies (LA) in the remote issuance of food benefits.

POLICY:
I. Remote Issuance of Food Benefits
   A. Food benefit issuance should be coordinated with regularly scheduled WIC appointments for nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and other health services whenever possible. Food benefits should not be automatically issued remotely.

II. LAs can issue food benefits remotely under the following conditions:
   A. Each participant in the family must be current in their Nutritional Education Contacts (NEC), or have sufficient time remaining in the certification period to complete their required NECs.
   B. Participant must not be in a 30-day short certification period. All program-required documents (e.g. documentation of income, residency, ID, or pregnancy) must have been submitted to the LA prior to remote issuance of food benefits.
   C. Only if/when applicable, a caretaker is not available to attend the appointment.
   D. Participant must meet specific hardship circumstances described below. All other circumstances not listed require CDPH/WIC approval prior to remote issuance of benefits.
      1. A local weather/flood/fire/disaster “alert,” “warning,” or “advisory” has been declared by the National Weather Service (NWS), California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), or a county-based alert system. All other circumstances due to weather conditions without a NWS alert must be approved by CDPH/WIC prior to the remote issuance of food benefits.
      2. WIC WISE downtime.
      3. Imminent childbirth or recent postpartum.
      4. Lack of transportation.
      5. A local emergency situation that has been declared during which the area population has been advised to stay indoors by local authorities and/or the Emergency Broadcast System (e.g., a natural gas leak, poor air quality, etc.).
      6. Medically diagnosed illness, such as confinement to bed rest.
      7. Online nutrition education contact offered and documented.
8. Nutrition education contact offered via phone and documented.
9. Medically documented physical disability preventing travel or a family member with medically documented special health care needs.
10. Quarantine due to a potentially severe communicable disease (e.g., flu, chicken pox, etc.), and/or an immune disorder.
11. Site emergency resulting in closure.
12. Changed issued benefits – family representative/caretaker not present.

E. A participant’s request for remote food benefit issuance is allowable, however, all requirements in Policy II. A.-C. above must be met.

PROCEDURES:

I. Prior to remote issuance of food benefits, LA staff must:

A. Ensure that each participant in the family is current in their NECs, or have sufficient time remaining in their certification period to complete their required NECs.

B. Verify that participant is not in a 30-day short certification period by confirming that all program-required documents (e.g. documentation of income, residency, ID, or pregnancy) have been submitted to the LA prior to remote issuance of food benefits.

C. Contact the participant/family representative to confirm the appropriate food package for each participant.

D. Schedule the next appointment.

II. When issuing food benefits remotely, LA staff:

A. Must check the “Remote Benefit Issuance” checkbox in WIC WISE and select the appropriate reason from the dropdown menu.

B. Can issue up to three months of food benefits, as long as the requirements for triple issuance have been met. (Refer to WPPM 330-10).

III. Program Integrity – CDPH/WIC Oversight

A. CDPH/WIC will review the following indicators at least quarterly for all LAs:

1. The percentage of food benefits remotely issued by a LA compared to the average percentage remotely issued statewide.

2. The differences between a LA's redemption rates for remotely issued food benefits and those issued in-person.
B. CDPH/WIC will monitor for outliers and discrepancies in procedures and provide technical assistance to identified LAs as needed.

C. LAs that do not adhere to the procedures outlined in this policy will be required to complete the CDPH/WIC Remote Issuance Monitoring Log until correct remote issuance practices are achieved and maintained.

D. LAs that are unable to achieve and maintain correct remote issuance practices may be denied CDPH/WIC approval to remotely issue food benefits.

AUTHORITY:
7 CFR §246.12(r)(2) Signature Requirement
7 CFR §246.12(r)(4) Food instrument and cash-value voucher pick-up
22 CCR §40749(c) Participant use of food instruments

CROSS REFERENCE:
WPPM 330-10 Single/Double/Triple Issuance