

**OMB BURDEN STATEMENT:** This information is being collected to assist the Food and Nutrition Service in improving the shopping experience for WIC participants. This is a voluntary collection and FNS will use the information to meet the needs and understand the challenges of current program participants. This collection does not request any personally identifiable information under the Privacy Act of 1974. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0611. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average .25 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place, 5th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22306 ATTN: PRA (0584-0611). Do not return the completed form to this address.

## In-Depth Interview Moderator Guide WIC Participants Target Time ≈ 60 minutes of discussion

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### *[MODERATOR INSTRUCTIONS:*

*Review the participants' diary in advance of the interview. Key items to note and probe during the interview:*

- *What, if any, difficulties does the participant mention at any point in the shopping journey?*
- *What, if any, apps does the participant use in the shopping journey?*
- *Does the participant receive any other benefits (e.g. SNAP)?*

*The goal of this interview is to expand our knowledge of the shopping experience both of the shopping trip that they used for the diary and in general. Please ask only questions that are appropriate for that participant. The questions we have below are just a guide, and we want the moderator to fully explore any pain points that might help us improve the shopping experience for WIC participants in the future.]*

### Section 1: Introduction (2 minutes)

- A. Moderator introduction
- B. Independence of moderator (honest opinion)
- C. Anonymity
- D. Rules for participation online (all opinions count, no wrong answers)
- E. Review of diary entries
- F. Introduction – Share your first name, what state you live in, with whom you live (people, pets, plants, etc.); [WHERE RELEVANT:] Also ask if participant is a first-time mom.
- G. Warm-Up Question: Outside of shopping for WIC...what is your favorite thing about grocery shopping and what is your least favorite thing about grocery shopping?

### Section 2: Receiving Monthly WIC Food Benefits (15-minutes)

#### A. WIC Appointment Shopping Instructions/Education for Participants

As I mentioned earlier, today we are mostly going to be talking about WIC shopping, but I want to back up just a little bit and talk about your WIC appointments.

- a. How often do you attend WIC appointments?
- b. Do you attend those in person, online, or a mix of both?
- c. Do you recall whether you received shopping instruction or guidance at your initial visit? Tell me about that.

- i. How did you receive that instruction? Video, in-person, etc.
    - ii. How helpful was that instruction?
    - iii. What, if anything, might have made it more helpful?
  - d. Do you talk about your food benefits and the food/items you can and cannot buy during your WIC appointments?
    - i. If yes, tell me about that. [PROBE FOR DETAILS]
      - 1. How helpful, if at all, is that to you?
      - 2. What, if anything, might have made it more helpful?
    - ii. If no, would that conversation be helpful to you? Why or why not? [PROBE FOR DETAILS]
  - e. Have you received any other instructions or assistance related to WIC shopping during your WIC appointments?
    - i. If yes, tell me about that. [PROBE FOR DETAILS]
      - 1. How did you receive that instruction? (Video, in-person, etc.)
      - 2. How helpful was that instruction?
      - 3. What, if anything, might have made it more helpful?
    - ii. If no, is that something that you've ever asked for? [PROBE FOR DETAILS]
  - f. If I put you in charge of training a new WIC participant about shopping with WIC, what do you think are the one or two most important things for them to know?

## B. WIC Shopper/WIC Program App Instructions

[MODERATOR: REVIEW IN ADVANCE IF PARTICIPANT USES AN APP IN DIARY]

- a. [IF USING A WIC APP FOR SHOPPING] I saw in your diary that you use a mobile app to help with WIC shopping.
  - i. Which app are you using? [IF NOT SURE, ASK THEM TO LOOK AT APP HOME SCREEN]
  - ii. How did you first learn about the app?
  - iii. What, if any, type of instruction was provided on using the app?
  - iv. Do you use the app to check your WIC food benefits or balance?
    - 1. IF YES: How does this change your shopping experience?
    - 2. IF NO: Why not?
  - v. Do you use the app to scan the UPC/bar codes of items while shopping to see if they are WIC-eligible?
    - 1. IF YES: How does this change your shopping experience?
    - 2. IF NO: Why not?
  - vi. What, if anything, could be done to improve the app and make your WIC shopping easier?
- b. [IF NOT USING A WIC APP FOR SHOPPING] Many states have WIC apps you can use to check your WIC food benefit balance or scan items while shopping to see if they are WIC-approved. Are you familiar with any WIC-related apps that can help you with shopping?
  - i. IF YES/Familiar:
    - 1. Which app(s) are you familiar with?
    - 2. How did you first learn about the app(s)?
    - 3. What, if any, type of instruction was provided on using the app?
    - 4. What types of things can you do with the app(s)?
    - 5. Have you ever used an app to check your WIC food benefits or balance?
      - a. IF YES: How did this change your WIC shopping experience, if at all?
      - b. IF NO: Why not?

6. Have you ever used an app to scan the UPC/bar codes of items while shopping to see if they are WIC-eligible?
  - a. IF YES: How did this change your WIC shopping experience, if at all?
  - b. IF NO: Why not?
7. Why are you not using a mobile app to help with WIC shopping now?
8. What improvements could be made to the(se) app(s) to make your WIC shopping easier?
  - i. If NO/Not familiar: Would you consider using a mobile app to help with WIC shopping?
    1. IF NO: Why not?
    2. What types of things could a mobile app offer to help with your WIC shopping? ALLOW RESPONSE AND THEN PROBE: Recipes? Your WIC food list? UPC/bar code scanner to identify WIC-approved items in store? Your current WIC food benefits and balance?
    3. If you could check your WIC food benefits and balance with a mobile app, how would that change your shopping experience, if at all?
    4. If you could use a mobile app to scan bar codes when shopping to identify WIC-eligible items, how would that change your experience, if at all?

### C. Other Information/Support Sources

- a. Have you used any other resources (besides WIC) to learn more about your WIC food benefits or tips on shopping for WIC items? Probe on:
  - i. Other WIC participants?
  - ii. Websites?
  - iii. Social media?
  - iv. Friends/Family?
  - v. [HIGH PRIORITY PROBE] Food list/pamphlet from WIC local agency

### D. Receiving Benefits

Ok. Let's get back to receiving your WIC food benefits.

- a. When do you receive your food benefits each month?
  - i. How do you feel when your WIC food benefits are issued each month?
  - ii. Is there anything that would make it easier for you to receive your WIC food benefits?
- b. [IF APPLICABLE] You mentioned in your video that you wait XX days/weeks to use your WIC food benefits. Why?

### E. [LOWER PRIORITY SECTION IF SHORT ON TIME] Unexpected Issues

- a. Have you ever not received your WIC food benefits when you were expecting them? Why do you think that happened?
  - i. What was the impact on you and your family?
  - ii. How did you resolve the issue?
  - iii. What might have prevented that from happening?

### F. Benefit Package Contents and Specific Dietary Needs

- a. How well does the WIC food benefits you receive fit with what you would normally eat? Cultural preferences? Dietary needs?
- b. Have you tried to make any changes to your WIC food benefits?
  - i. [IF SO] Why? How easy or difficult was that process? What could have made it easier?

- ii. [IF NOT] If you did need to make changes to your food benefits for a health reason (like your baby wasn't tolerating the formula well or a child was lactose intolerant), how would you go about doing that?

#### G. [PRIORITIZE THIS SECTION IF SHORT ON TIME] Shopping Trip Tips and Tricks

- a. Now that you have been shopping with your WIC food benefits, what additional information or instructions should be provided to new WIC participants about the shopping process?
- b. Are there tips and tricks that you would share with your younger self?
  - i. How did you learn about how to do that (on your own, from other WIC participants, from WIC staff, other)?

### Section 3: Pre-Shopping (15-minutes)

Now, I'd like to talk a little bit about what you do right before you go WIC shopping.

#### A. Store Availability

- a. Let's first talk about the stores around you that accept WIC. To your knowledge, can you give me any idea as to how many stores around you accept your WIC benefits?
- b. I'm going to read you a few statements about the store [or stores] that accept WIC. Please tell me if you would agree with them or not.  
The store(s) that accept my WIC benefits ...
  - i. Are nearby.
  - ii. Are easily accessible.
  - iii. Carry all of the WIC-approved items I need.
  - iv. Make it easy to find WIC-approved items.
  - v. [IF LEP] Offer assistance in my language.
  - vi. [ASK ONLY IF RECEIVE BOTH] Accept both WIC and SNAP.
- c. [PROBE ANY SCORES OF 3 OR LESS]
  - i. What does that mean for how you shop with your WIC benefits?
  - ii. What, if anything, might improve that for you?

#### B. Deciding Where to Shop

[IF THERE IS ONLY ONE STORE THAT ACCEPTS WIC NEARBY, SKIP TO SECTION C]

- a. Have you tried using your WIC benefits at different stores? Tell me about that.
  - i. What types of stores? [PROBE FOR NAMES IF POSSIBLE]
  - ii. Do you still shop at all those different stores? Why or why not?
  - iii. [PROBE FOR WIC ONLY STORES - CA, TX, FL, OK, IL] Have you ever visited a store that sells only WIC items? What did you think of the store?
    - 1. How are they different from stores that sell a full range of items including non-WIC items?
    - 2. Do you still shop there? Why?/Why not?
- b. I want to understand how you decide what store you shop at for your WIC approved items. Talk me through how you make [or made] that decision. [PROBE FOR WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO THEM]
  - i. Does the shopping experience vary by store?
  - ii. Are some stores easier to find WIC items? How?
  - iii. Do the non-WIC items on your shopping list impact your decision?

- iv. Do you need to shop at different stores to use all of your WIC benefits?

### C. Pre-Shop Activities

Let's think about what else you do prior to going shopping with your WIC benefits.

*[MODERATOR PROBE ON ANYTHING MENTIONED IN THE DIARIES AND DO A QUICK CHECK TO SEE IF ANY OTHER SECTIONS APPLY; APP DISCUSSION, ABOVE, WILL INFORM RESPONDENT KNOWLEDGE/USE OF APPS]*

#### a. IF USES WIC Shopper/WIC Program Apps

- i. We've already touched on how you use an app for WIC shopping. Specifically, how do you use the app prior to shopping, if at all?
- ii. Would you be able to accomplish the same thing without the app? Why or why not?
- iii. Have there been challenges with the app in planning to shop? If so, explain.
- iv. Is there anything else that you wish the app could do to help you prepare for your WIC shopping?

#### b. [ASK ALL] Other Apps

- i. Aside from WIC Shopper or WIC Program apps, do you use any other apps for planning prior to shopping?
- ii. How do you use them?
- iii. Why do you use the app for this task?
- iv. Would you be able to accomplish the same thing without the app? Why or why not?
- v. Have there been challenges with these other apps in planning to shop using your WIC benefits? If so, explain.
- vi. Is there anything else that you wish an app could do to help you prepare for your shopping?

#### c. Printed WIC Food and Shopping Lists

- i. Do you typically use any other resources to help with planning/deciding which WIC food items you will be shopping for? [PROBE ON THE ITEMS BELOW IF NOT MENTIONED]
  - 1. Brochure or printed list of your WIC food benefits from your local WIC agency
  - 2. WIC agency website's food/benefits list
  - 3. Receipt from prior WIC shopping trip showing your remaining food benefits
  - 4. Printed list of your specific food benefits from the grocery store
    - a. How did you request this list? (Cashier, customer service)
    - b. Any challenges? Are some stores more accommodating than others?
- ii. How helpful are each of these resources?
- iii. What is the benefit of using a paper copy/brochure vs. using a printed list/receipt with your specific benefits vs. using the WIC shopper app when planning your WIC purchases?
- iv. Do you also use these printed lists in the store while you are shopping?
- v. IF DOESN'T USE ANY OF THESE RESOURCES: Would any of these be helpful to you? What makes you say that?

#### d. Other Considerations

- i. How do you decide when you are going to shop? Probe on:
  - 1. Work schedule

2. Childcare
3. Crowds at stores
4. When shelves tend to be stocked
- ii. Do you do any weekly planning before you shop? Probe on:
  1. Make a meal plan?
  2. Look for recipe ingredients?
- iii. Do you make any type of list? How? Of what?
- iv. Do you consider any sales, deals or coupons? Probe on:
  1. Weekly sales
  2. Coupons
  3. BOGO
- v. [IF ON SNAP] Do you typically plan to shop for WIC and SNAP at the same time? Why or why not?

**e. Improvements**

- i. Is there anything else that would make it easier for you to plan your WIC shopping trip?

## Section 4: Grocery Shopping (15-minutes)

You're doing great. We are going to talk about grocery shopping now. I want to talk about your shopping trip that you shared with us in your diary, but I also want to hear about any challenges you've had when shopping for your WIC items on any other trip.

### A. Shopping Challenges for New WIC Participants

- a. Try to think back to the first few times that you went shopping using your WIC food benefits. What do you know now that would have been helpful to know back then?
- b. What was the most difficult part of learning how to shop with your WIC food benefits?
  - i. How did you figure out how to overcome those challenges?
  - ii. What specific resources did you use to learn?
- c. Did you ever ask anyone at the store how to solve these issues? Why or why not? IF YES: Who specifically have you asked for help? (cashier, store staff, customer service)
- d. Did you ever call the WIC office from the store, or ask anyone a WIC appointment how to solve these issues? Why or why not?

### B. Attitude About WIC Shopping

- a. Please remind me...you go shopping using your WIC food benefits about how often?
- b. How do you feel as you are walking into the store knowing that you are going to use your WIC food benefits?
  - i. Is there anything about a certain WIC shopping trip that makes you more optimistic or pessimistic as to how it's going to go? What?
  - ii. What do you anticipate as the most frustrating part about the trip? How often do you actually experience that frustration?

### C. WIC Signage/Shelf Talkers

- a. When you think about the store(s) that you shop at using your WIC food benefits, how easy or difficult is it to find WIC approved products?
  - i. What makes it easier or more difficult?

- ii. How do you figure it out?
  - iii. Are any foods easier/more difficult to shop for?
- b. What store(s) have you seen that have good/bad WIC signage? What makes it good/bad in your opinion?
- c. If there was no sign on the shelf or product, how would you know if something was WIC approved?
- d. Have you had any difficulty with things being mislabeled?
  - i. Where?
  - ii. How often?
  - iii. When did you know that the item was mislabeled? If at checkout, what happened?
  - iv. How do you resolve the issue?
  - v. Do you ever tell anyone about the issue? If so: How does that conversation usually go?

#### D. [ASK IF USING WIC SHOPPER APP OTHERWISE SKIP] WIC Shopper App Usage/Scanner Tool

- a. We touched on some of this earlier, but which parts/tools in the WIC shopper app have you used while you are shopping?
- b. IF USES UPC/BARCODE SCANNER:
  - i. How often do you use it?
  - ii. In what circumstance/for all items or just some items?
  - iii. IF NOT PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED: What are the benefits/drawbacks to using that tool?
  - iv. How accurate do you find the results of your scanning?

#### E. Other App Usage In-Store

- a. What, if any, other apps do you use while you are shopping?
  - i. Why or why not?
  - ii. How often do you use it/them?
  - iii. In what circumstance?
  - iv. What are the benefits/drawbacks to using that app?
  - v. What does this app do that the WIC shopper app does not?
  - vi. Is this a feature that you think should be incorporated into the WIC app?

#### F. Buying Specific Products

- a. Formula [ASK ONLY OF THOSE RECEIVING FORMULA BENEFIT]
  - i. To what extent does being able to buy formula through WIC impact your opinion of the program?
    - 1. How does this part of the benefit impact you and your family?
  - ii. Eventually as your child gets older, they are not going to need formula. What, if any, benefit are you getting out of WIC other than formula?
    - 1. Do you plan to stay on WIC when your baby no longer needs formula? Why or why not? [MODERATOR – TRY TO DISCERN TO WHAT EXTENT THE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE IMPACTS THEIR DECISION]
- b. Fruits and Vegetables
  - i. What specific items do you purchase using your fruits and vegetables cash value benefit?
    - 1. Do you buy fresh, canned, frozen, and/or dried fruits and vegetables? Why?
    - 2. Is the food list clear about what types of fruits and vegetables you can and cannot buy with WIC? Why or why not?

3. To what extent does being able to buy those items impact your opinion of WIC?
4. How does it impact you and your family?
  - ii. How often are you surprised to discover a produce item is, or is not, approved?
  - iii. Have you had any challenges in shopping or paying for WIC-approved fruits and vegetables?
  - iv. To what extent does this benefit impact your desire to continue your WIC benefits in the future?

#### G. Other Considerations

- a. Are you typically shopping for non-WIC items at the same time that you are shopping for WIC-approved items?
  - i. What is your strategy for accomplishing both?
  - ii. Do you typically keep your WIC items separated from your non-WIC items in your cart? Why or why not?
- b. Have you ever left a store without checking out because of an issue with WIC? Explain.
- c. Have you ever tried to reach WIC staff outside of your scheduled meetings if an issue arises when shopping/checkout? If yes, please provide some details about when, how and what issues.

### Section 5: Checkout (5-minutes)

Let's talk about what happens when you go to checkout using your WIC food benefits, still thinking about the store where you did your shopping, but also any other store where you do WIC shopping.

#### A. Checkout Options

- a. Are there any restrictions as to what checkout lanes you can use? Can you use self-checkout? Express lanes?
- b. Has this changed over time? Is it more or less restrictive than it was in the past?
- c. Does the type of checkout lane(s) you can use play any role in the store you choose?

#### B. Checkout Experience

- a. How do you feel when you go to checkout using your WIC food benefits?
  - i. Do you ever see or hear other shoppers react to you using your WIC food benefits? If so, please explain when and what their reaction is.
- b. What is your typical checkout process?

#### C. Checkout Challenges

- a. Have you had any challenges using your WIC food benefits at checkout? If so, please explain in detail?
  - i. What happened?
  - ii. What might have prevented that situation from happening?
  - iii. What could the store have done differently? What about the WIC staff? Yourself?
  - iv. Do you still shop at that store? Why or why not?
- b. Do cashiers appear knowledgeable about what can or cannot buy with WIC?
- c. Have you ever forgotten your PIN, what's the process to get a new pin (via phone or have to wait for new card)?



- d. Have you ever had something that you thought was WIC approved, not ring up as WIC approved? What do you do in those situations? How does the cashier handle that situation?

#### **D. Other WIC Challenges and Possible Improvements**

- a. Before we wrap up talking about shopping, I want to ask you to share with me any other challenges that you've faced using your WIC food benefits in-store.
  - i. What happened?
  - ii. What might have prevented that situation from happening?
  - iii. What could the store have done differently? What about the WIC staff? Yourself?

### **Section 6: Post-Shopping Evaluation (5-minutes)**

Let's talk about what happens after you finish your WIC shopping.

#### **A. Shopping Wrap-Up**

- a. What happens after you checkout?
- b. How often do you have to go to another store to finish up your WIC shopping?
  - i. Why do you have to go to multiple stores?
  - ii. How many different trips does it take you to use all of your WIC food benefits during a month?
  - iii. What happens if you do not use all of your WIC food benefits in a month? How does that make you feel?

#### **B. Shopping Success**

- a. How do you evaluate if a shopping trip is a success?
- b. How often do you consider your WIC shopping trips a success?
- c. Are WIC shopping trips ever a failure? When? How often?

#### **C. Using the WIC Items Purchased**

- a. To what extent has what you buy at the store changed because of the WIC program? If it has changed, how?
- b. What, if any, recipes do you make with WIC products? How did you find out about that recipe?

### **Section 7: Wrap-up (5-minutes)**

Just a few quick questions to wrap up.

#### **A. Other WIC Info Sources**

- a. Are there any other sources (e.g. friends, family, WIC staff, social media) that have helped you with your WIC shopping that we have not already talked about?

#### **B. WIC Again**

- a. Knowing everything you know now about the WIC program, if you had to reapply today, would you? Why or why not?

**C. WIC Changes**

- a. I'm going to give you a WIC magic wand now. Thinking about everything that we've talked about today and everything that you've experienced shopping for WIC items, what are the three things that you would change to make it easier for you and other WIC participants in the future?

That is all of my questions for today. To thank you for your time, you will receive a \$75 gift card as a token of appreciation. Have a great rest of your day!