

Authorizing the use of State funds to expand a special supplemental food program for women, infants and children.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Short title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Women's, Infants' and Children's Nutrition Improvement Act.

Section 2. Declaration of purpose.

It is the purpose of this act to allow for the provision of State funds for use in the expansion of the WIC Program to unserved women, infants and children experiencing nutritional deficiencies, nutritionally related health problems and other maladies which might adversely affect the proper growth and development of persons potentially eligible for WIC services.

Section 3. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this act shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Department." The Department of Health of the Commonwealth.

"eWIC card." The card issued to WIC eligibles for the purpose of purchasing allowed items through the WIC Program.

"program." The Remote eWIC Re-loading Pilot Program

"Secretary." The Secretary of Health of the Commonwealth.

"State WIC supplement." State funds which are added to the Commonwealth's Federal WIC grant for the expansion of services to WIC-eligible persons.

"WIC eligibles." Persons who meet Federal nutritional risk criteria, whose family income falls below 185% of poverty and who fall into one of the following categories:

- (1) Pregnant or postpartum and breast-feeding women.
- (2) Infants.
- (3) Children under five years of age.

"WIC Program." The special supplemental food program for women, infants and children, authorized by section 17 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-642, 42 U.S.C. § 1786).

Section 4. State supplement.

(a) Determination by General Assembly.--The General Assembly is hereby authorized to provide a State supplement to increase the percentage of WIC Program participation above the level which would be achieved without the State WIC supplement.

(b) Allocation of funds.--Of the funds appropriated by the General Assembly, at least 80% shall be utilized for food and no more than 20% shall be utilized for State and local administration and program services.

(c) Report by local WIC provider.--Each local WIC provider shall report to the department the information on the State-funded program in the same manner and within the same time period as required by the Federal WIC Program.

(d) Report by department.--The secretary shall provide an annual report to the General Assembly, no later than January 1 of each year, which covers the State-administered WIC program for the prior fiscal year.

(e) Outreach program.--From the moneys available for administration, the department shall fund a Statewide outreach project and an evaluation of the effectiveness of WIC services in meeting the stated goals of the program in this Commonwealth. Section 5. Program operation.

(a) Eligibility of participants.--Participants in the WIC Program enrolled through the use of funds available under the State supplement shall be subject to the same eligibility criteria prescribed by the Federal Government for the existing WIC Program.

(b) Areas for expansion.--The department shall utilize its expansion plan, as required by section 17 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-642, 42 U.S.C. § 1786) and published in its annual State Agency Plan of Program Operation and Administration, in allocating State funds.

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Remote eWIC Re-loading Pilot Program

Section 5. (a) Establishment. -- The Remote WIC Re-loading Pilot Program is established as a pilot program within the department.

(b) Funding. -- The department shall seek funding from the General Fund in order to carry out the provisions in this act.

(c) Notice. -- upon the initial appropriation of sufficient funds to carry out the provisions of this act, the department shall transmit notice of the appropriation to the Legislative Reference Bureau for publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

(d) Eligibility. -- Individuals deemed to be WIC-eligible living in Allegheny or Philadelphia Counties shall be eligible to enroll in the program.

(e) Administration.-- The program shall be administered by the department to empower WIC program administrators in Allegheny and Philadelphia Counties to collaboratively develop a system which allows WIC funds to be remotely re-loaded onto eWIC cards administered to WIC eligibles.

(1)The department shall develop a remote eWIC system to allow the virtual re-loading of WIC funds onto eWIC cards for the purpose of granting WIC eligibles the option of not reporting in-person to have funds re-loaded onto issued eWIC cards.

(2)the department shall promulgate regulations and shall seek any waivers necessary from the federal government in order to carry out the provisions within subsection (d).

(3) the program shall be operated for one year following the effective date of this act.

(f) Report. -- Upon the conclusion of the program, the department shall publish and deliver a report to the General Assembly no later than one year after the conclusion of the program.

(1) the report shall include the following information, but is not limited to:

(a) The overall participation rate of WIC services in each participating county.

(b)the participation and non-participation rates among WIC eligibles to the program.

(c) the participation rate of other services available to WIC eligibles that are offered to those who report in-person to have their eWIC card reloaded.

(d) the estimated funding necessary to carry out a remote eWIC re-loading system for all WIC eligibles living in the Commonwealth.

(e) any limitations or logistical barriers that may be present in the Commonwealth which could prevent a WIC eligible from participating in a remote eWIC re-loading program including, but not limited to, broadband connectivity and program and technological infrastructure.

(f) suggestions made by the department that would seek to address such limitations or logistical barriers

(1) the department shall seek information from public and private organizations related to best practices related to the improvement of WIC services in order to form suggestions included in the report delivered to the General Assembly.

(g) Nothing in this section shall prevent a WIC eligible from continuing to report in-person to have WIC funds re-loaded onto an issued eWIC card.

Section 6. Effective date.

This act shall take effect in 180 days.