

Section 7.14: Food Package Options for Homeless Participants

8/2026

References: 7 CFR 246.10

Policy: Local agencies must make food package adjustments as requested to accommodate participants who are homeless.

Purpose: To provide foods that are suited to a homeless individual's resources and needs.

Procedures

Assess the participant's circumstances, including availability of food storage and refrigeration, transportation, access to grocery stores, and use of specific foods, to determine what food package adjustments are needed to accommodate the participant's situation. Additional considerations include:

- Residence in a shelter or other living quarters that lack cooking facilities or with very limited cooking and food preparation facilities.
- Inconsistent access to sanitary food storage and preparation facilities and/or unsanitary or restricted water supply.
- Residence in a homeless facility, provided that:
 - The homeless facility does not accrue financial or in-kind benefit from a person's participation in the Program.
 - Foods provided by the WIC Program are not subsumed into a communal food service, but available *exclusively* to the WIC participant for whom they are issued.
 - The homeless facility places no constraints on the ability of the participant to partake of the supplemental foods from WIC, breastfeeding support, or nutrition education. WIC staff should assist the participant with determining which WIC foods will best meet the facility's storage or refrigeration requirements.
- Living "between" places, including migrants.

Residency in a homeless facility or other institution does not automatically determine need for food package adjustments. A standard food package may be appropriate for homeless participants that have adequate food storage and preparation facilities.

Determine the appropriate benefit issuance schedule based on the individual's needs/circumstances and when follow up is needed.

See [Section 5.6: Homeless Applicants and Participants](#) for more information.

Guidance

- Homeless participants represent a higher risk population. The homeless condition may predispose participants to health and nutritional risks.
- Provide what the participant can actually use. Share information about options such as:
 - Fluid milk available in half-gallon containers
 - Powdered or evaporated milk
 - Option to receive all dairy as milk, rather than including yogurt and cheese
 - Soy beverage in shelf-stable packaging. (Note: there are only a few brands, and they may not be widely available. Check local availability before recommending.)
 - Canned beans
 - Canned fruits and vegetables
- Assess the participant's situation at each benefit issuance and whether homeless-friendly food options are needed. Revise the food package as circumstances and resources change.
- Provide counseling on ways to best use, prepare, and keep foods safe, taking into consideration the participant's situation.
- Refer to community assistance programs as appropriate.

Reference – complete listing of hyperlinks

[Section 5.6: Homeless Applicants and Participants](#)

(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch5/sctn5_6.pdf)

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