

## **Crossroads Design, Development and Implementation WIC System Status Report Item 295-D of Chapter 806 of the 2013 Virginia Acts of Assembly**

The Virginia Department of Health's Division of Community Nutrition is a partner with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) programs in Alabama, North Carolina, and West Virginia in the Crossroads Consortium. The Consortium is one of three groups working in conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to design, develop, and implement State Agency Model management information systems which will be available for transfer to WIC programs in other states and territories.

This report details the project's progress and is submitted to comply with Item 295-D of the 2013 Appropriations Act (see appendix). Item 295-D requires that the State Health Commissioner provide written reports annually to the Chairpersons of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees on the progress of the multi-state procurement of a database formally known as the Crossroads Design, Development and Implementation WIC System. The written report must describe the division's efforts to ensure that through system design and procurement, adequate participant access can be achieved without the current use of slotting or other similar vendor limiting criteria and that the new system allows peer groups to be changed to reflect marketplace dynamics and ensure a more equitable vendor comparison. The division's efforts to coordinate and collaborate with stakeholders must also be included in the report.

The Crossroads system pilot successfully began on November 18, 2013, following a five month user acceptance testing phase. The system will pilot in the Crater Health District, which includes the cities of Emporia, Hopewell and Petersburg as well as the counties of Dinwiddie, Greenville, Prince George, Surry, Sussex and the Fort Lee military installation. This area includes 22 retail stores and serves approximately 5,000 WIC Program participants. Pilot operations will be observed for 12 weeks. Statewide rollout will begin in March 2014.

The Crossroads system is being developed to issue food benefits via electronic benefits transfer (eWIC), similar to the system now being utilized for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. When Virginia implements the use of the Crossroads system, food benefits will no longer be issued on paper vouchers, but will use electronic benefit cards. The cards will contain the specific food package that was designed for the clients as well as other information regarding their benefits, such as food items remaining and last date to spend. There is also an advantage to vendors as they will be reimbursed the next business day, instead of waiting for Food Instruments to clear the bank as in the present system.

Crossroads has been developed in conjunction with eWIC and both have been deployed in the Crater Health District. Prior to the launch of the pilot, the eWIC vendor, Xerox, conducted live testing of electronic benefit transactions at each retail store located in the Crater Health District. WIC participants will receive training regarding the use of the eWIC card at retail stores. Virginia WIC program staff and its quality assurance contractor, MAXIMUS, will be closely monitoring the pilot at the WIC clinics and retail stores.

The Crossroads system will pilot without the use of vendor limiting criteria such as slots. The Virginia WIC Program eliminated the use of slots on October 1, 2011 and does not intend to use slots with the new Crossroads system.

The Division of Community Nutrition continues to hold quarterly Retailer Advisory Committee as well as monthly eWIC Retailer Workgroup meetings. Every Retailer Advisory Committee meeting includes an eWIC update, as well as an opportunity for retailers to ask questions related to the Program's future direction pertaining to Crossroads and eWIC. In addition, the eWIC Retailer Workgroup represents the

Virginia WIC retailer community as an advocacy group to identify questions, concerns, and issues impacting retailers during pilot and rollout of eWIC.