

# Recapping the 2013 WIC Technology and Program Integrity Conference

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The National Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Association (NWA) held its biannual WIC technology conference Sept. 17-20, 2013, at the Sheraton Hotel in Dallas, Texas. New this year, the conference incorporated program integrity into its traditionally technology-centric agenda. With a theme of “Empowering Minds for a Better Future,” sessions focused on implementing electronic benefits transfer (EBT) systems, enhancing management information systems (MIS), the value of data mining, benefits of WIC mobile applications, and the increasing role of technology in vendor management and program integrity.

There was no shortage of presentations, demonstrations or buzz about EBT systems. With the October 1, 2020, deadline to implement EBT systems, states still in the planning stages are really starting to sink their teeth into the process. There was a lot to be said about states that have already implemented EBT, and WIC agency officials were very interested in talking to these states’ representatives to learn about the EBT implementation process and the possibility of transferring their EBT system. Jerilyn Malliet, chief of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) State Technology Branch, reported that 72 percent of states are in some stage of EBT, be it planning or implementation (i.e. they have an approved Implementation Advanced Planning Document [IAPD]). This represents a 22 percent increase from the number reported at the 2011 WIC Technology Conference. Of the 90 individual WIC programs nationwide, 34 are in the planning phase, 21 in the implementation phase, and 10 are rolled out statewide.

Data mining was another hot topic at this year’s conference. The data mining capabilities of an EBT system could not be realized with paper vouchers. With EBT, state agencies are able to collect and analyze many facets of client redemption down to a granular level. For example, Michigan uses data from its EBT system to identify which local WIC clinics or retailers are over-issuing specific products and can then use this data to mitigate the problem, thus improving program integrity. In Kentucky, CDP is partnering with the state to develop a standalone WIC data warehouse that collects and houses data from their WIC Direct EBT solution as well as any Universal Interface capable EBT system in the state. Like its WIC Direct EBT solution, CDP is embracing the “build it once” mentality for its business intelligence solution and hopes it can one day be transferred to other state agencies and used in other public assistance programs. As EBT systems become more prevalent, and data analytics technology more advanced, I envision WIC state agencies will increasingly look to vendors to build and deploy data mining solutions for their WIC programs.

A comprehensive recap of the WIC Technology & Program Integrity Conference is available for download [here](#).