ONLINE EBT OPERATIONS:
The Future of Retail POS Recertification – Who, What, When, Why, and How

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PANEL

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HISTORY
WHAT IS A RETAIL SYSTEM CERTIFICATION?

- Testing is performed to ensure a retail system operates in accordance with WIC regulations, operating rules, and technical specifications
- Three levels of certification

  - **Level 1** – Typically handled remotely, certification between the Electronic Cash Register (ECR) System and the Third Party Processor (TPP)
  - **Level 2** – Conducted in the retailers testing lab, certification between the ECR and the EBT Processor
  - **Level 3** – Conducted live in the lane (at a storefront)
• **Smart card** states (NM, TX, and WY) were first to perform certifications

• All smart card states used the same card technology
• Smart card states typically worked together certify systems
• Generally used common scripts with state specific scenarios
• Testing performed onsite in developer lab
RETAIL CERTIFICATION HISTORY

• Online states followed the smart card model but...

  • Initially processors interpreted the X9.93 specs differently
  • Separate certifications were done by each processor (3 different processors)
  • Multi-state certifications were performed under one processor
  • No common set of test scripts used across processors
ONLINE CERTIFICATION BEGINNINGS

• In 2008, work began to align the online processors to a single implementation of the X9.93 resulting in:
  • WIC EBT Technical Implementation Guidance (TIG) Document
  • WIC EBT Operating Rules

• In 2011, FNS initiated a project through the State of Kentucky to develop a standard set of certification test scripts
  • Scripts were obtained from the three processors and the smart card states
  • Consolidated scripts were developed by MAXIMUS
• In 2013, a workgroup convened to discuss retail certifications
  • Limited progress was made
  • One output was the consolidated online certification scripts
• Since the end of the original certification work group and publishing of the test scripts
  • One processor exited the market, another entered.
  • Integrated system interface standards and operating rules have become further solidified.
  • Certifications continue to be processor specific.
  • The FNS test scripts are now used by all three processors, but only for the last 2 years. New Scenarios have been added.
  • States using the same processor have (in most cases) agreed to accept certifications performed by their processor on behalf of another state.
  • Some states using a different processor have in some cases agree to accept a certification done by another processor with additional test environment and production environment testing.
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES
ONLINE CERTIFICATIONS CHALLENGES

• Still processor specific – no easy way to support certifications for multiple processors.
• No central repository of information about past certification.
• No governing body.
• No clear criteria for when a recertification is needed.
• Scripts require updating to be current.
• With over 50 states operating eWIC systems, the burden for stakeholders is increasing.
• However, issues are still being found in production.
CURRENT EFFORTS

✓ Consolidated list of completed certifications.
✓ Engaging stakeholders in discussions of how best to address challenges.
✓ Reviewing test scripts and obtaining stakeholder feedback.
OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE
WIC EBT TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS GROUP

- Monthly Call hosted by FNS/Erin McBride
- First Wednesday of the month 1-3 pm EST
PARTNERWEB.USDA.GOV

- Operating Rules
- TIG – Technical Implementation Guide
- WUMEI – WIC Universal MIS-EBT Interface
- Change Requests
- Bulletins
ONLINE USERS GROUP

• Kickoff Meeting July 23, 2019
• Hosted by Melanie (MJ) Roberts from Colorado WIC
eGOVERNMENT PAYMENT COUNCIL (eGPC)

• Online Retailer Recertification Workgroup
• Membership required
PROBLEM SOLVING DISCUSSION
CENTRAL REPOSITORY

- Who is responsible?
- Where is this housed?
- How is this funded?
- What is the process for updating?
CERTIFYING ENTITY

• Who could serve in this role?
• How would it be funded?
• How to ensure compliance?
RECERTIFICATION TIMING AND SCOPE

• What system changes trigger recertification?
• Should recertification be performed on regular basis (i.e. annually?)
• When are onsite certifications required? When is remote certification considered sufficient?
• Should certifications always use the full test scripts or allow parred down versions in some situations?
• What can be done to improve communication about completed or pending certifications/recertifications?

• Should there be a committee of stakeholders (similar to technical documents group)?
• What needs to be considered for future technology (i.e. self checkout, mobile payments, and online shopping)?

• Would a certification summit be useful to address the challenges and determine a standard process?
QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU!
A STRONG APL STARTS WITH A SOLID UNDERSTANDING OF CATEGORIES, SUBCATEGORIES, AND BROADBAND DESIGNATION.
Background

- Categories/Subcategories were first established for the Wyoming project and have evolved from there.
- FNS began publishing a “National” list around 2007 and requiring state agencies to use the “National” list around 2010.
- Some states still make minor modifications, to address state-specific situations or needs.
WIC EBT Food Categorization

- Foods are represented by:
  - Category
  - Subcategory
  - Quantity
  - Unit of measure

- In an EBT account, each individual food (Cat/Subcat) has its own balance
Categories and Subcategories

- **Cat** is the high level food group, examples:
  - Low Fat/Fat Free Milk - Category 52
  - Legumes (Beans) - Category 6

- **Subcat** is the specific food within a the Cat group, examples:
  - Skim milk; powdered milk; lactose free milk
  - Peanut butter; dry beans/peas; canned beans
## Unit of Measure

- In addition, each subcat is associated with a Unit of Measure (UOM):
  - Gallon (GAL)
  - Container (CTR)
  - Ounce (OZ)
  - Pound (LB)
  - Dozen (DOZ)
  - Can/Bottle (CBL)
## Food Item | Cat | Subcat | Description | Unit of Measure
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
**Cheese** | 02 | 000 | Cheese all types | Pound
|  | 001 | Cheese | Pound
|  | 002 | Reduced Fat Cheese | Pound
|  | 003 | Low Sodium Cheese | Pound
|  | 004 | Tofu | Pound
**Eggs** | 03 | 000 | Eggs all types | Dozen
|  | 001 | Fresh eggs in Dozen Cartons | Dozen
**Cereal** | 05 | 000 | Cereal all types | Ounce
|  | 001 | Cereal - hot and cold | Ounce
**Legumes/Beans** | 06 | 000 | Legumes/Beans all types | Cont
|  | 001 | Peanut Butter 18 oz | Cont
|  | 002 | Dry or Can Beans/Peas 16 oz | Cont
|  | 003 | Canned Beans (4 cans = 1 Container) | Cont
Specific vs. 000 Subcategory

- Specific Subcategories: Any subcategory except 000
  - Enforces redemption of specific foods, eliminates choice
Specific vs. 000 Subcategory

- **000 Subcategory:** “Broadband,” “Wild Card,” or “Any”
  - Allows cardholders to choose between items in multiple subcategories at the grocery store
  - 000 is used in issuance only, UPCs are never assigned to 000, they are assigned to a specific subcategory and may be flagged as purchasable with 000
Legumes Example

- Category 06 – Legumes
  - [001] Peanut Butter
  - [002] Dry Beans/Peas
  - [003] Canned Beans

Each subcategory can be flagged for Broadband/000.
Cat/Subcat/UOM Rules

- A UPC/PLU only can reside in one Category, e.g., bananas can only be in Category 19 (CVB), they cannot be in both Category 12 (infant fruits and vegetables) & Category 19.
- UPCs must be associated with only one specific subcategory.
- UPCs within a subcategory must have the same UOM.
UOM for specific subcategories associated with the broadband subcategory **must be the same**, for example in legumes the UOM for peanut butter, dry beans/peas and canned beans is usually ‘Container’ if all can be purchased with broadband.
Considerations

- How well Participants will understand UOM and size conversions (.25 = 1 quart)
- How benefits will be issued
  - Choice at issuance
    - less items in broadband, set up potentially less complicated
  - Choice in-lane
    - more items in broadband, set up potentially more complicated
Considerations

- Typically this is a discussion that needs to occur across the program.
- Broadband designation (or not) will have ramifications for clinic staff education, participant training materials, food costs, etc.
Selecting a UPC collection tool

- Use a tool that was used by another SA using the same MIS my alleviate data formatting and importing issues.
- Important to consider your program’s IT support (both internally and externally).
Questions?

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Category / Subcategory - NTE Discussion