

WIC Vendor Advisory Council (WVAC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Location: Connecticut Department of Transportation Conference Room B

Start Time: 2:00 pm

End Time: 4:00 pm

Recorder: Harriet Dennis

IN ATTENDANCE: Brian Andrikis, Dennis Banks, Bruce Betros, Donna Brewer, Kimberly Boulette, Ron Esposito, Jannett Haughton, Kevin Krusz, Adam Osmond, Janet Rankin, Kumi Sato, Pat Sullivan, Joanne White

Kim Boulette WIC Vendor Specialist for the Connecticut WIC Program opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.

Topics for discussion:

• ***Client Abuse -***

-WIC Check usage. Kim Boulette went over the proper procedure for using a WIC check and reported that both the store cashier and the participant are responsible for checking WIC checks before cashing with regard to the date, amount of food allowed, etc..

Complaints- Kim handed out a list of local agencies where participants pick up WIC checks and it included the site numbers that they would be associated with. Stores can look at the site number to the left of the date on a WIC check and call that agency to file a complaint regarding the participant. Pat and Joanne added that participants are warned if they don't follow program rules and they can be disqualified for fraud and abuse.

• ***Nestle Formula Availability –***

Kim asked if this is still an issue and it has improved. There is still some problem in the Vernon/Rockville area finding Nestle Soy. Bruce said that there are no issues with production. Someone offered that if formula is being stolen off the shelves, stores might not be immediately re-ordering the products. Big Y has emailed all of their grocery managers and they have the Good Start products. C & S is the biggest distributor and Bruce works with Bozzutos. If we give him names of distributors, he can tell us if they buy directly from Nestle and may be able to figure out who their suppliers are.

Kim suggested maybe the participant should call the store ahead of time for formula availability or perhaps stores should increase their inventory during the beginning of the month or during a particular time period to accommodate WIC participants' WIC checks depending on the need in their area.

• ***Application process –***

Open enrollment- Due to the backlog of open enrollment for new vendors from last year, the process will be delayed until possibly August 2007 so that training, filling out the application and monitoring are closer together. New vendors requesting applications for this year must do so by April 30th. First time applicants receive a 1year contract. Dennis explained which stores receive 1, 2, and 3-year contracts, which is based on the length of time that a store has been authorized, the store's compliance history and application status.

We are in the process of requesting and inputting all authorized vendors' prices, so we can correctly assign all applicant vendors and authorized stores to a peer group. If the applicant vendor's prices are higher than the average for the peer group, the store will be non-selected. If

the store's prices are equal to or lower, then the store can be authorized. After all prices have been entered, we can make decisions on stores who applied last year.

Renewals - Every WIC vendor's contract ends on Sept 30th and those whose are expiring this year are going through the renewal process. All renewals must re-apply and go through training and monitoring as if they were a new store. Kevin is the only one handling all the monitoring for the authorization of WIC vendors.

Open Discussion/ Suggestions for future agenda items:

Minimum Inventory Requirements

All authorized WIC vendors must meet the minimum inventory requirements. The group was asked what changes they would like to see. Some suggested the removal of hot cereal and soy formula due to slow sales. In our first meeting we discovered that the ratio for sales of regular to soy formula is 4:1. The agencies prescribe much less soy formula and much less concentrate over powder. Powder also has a longer shelf life, so it's not as much of a problem to stock.

Review of food list

Kim reported that the WIC Food List is going to be revised. The group was asked to look over the food list and suggest any changes with regard to issues that they have come across in using the document. It was explained that "Buy the least expensive brand" applies to everything on the panel or a particular section, which was confusing. Pat asked if we were saving a lot of money by not allowing deli cheese. The dollar amount was not known, but for all of the kinds of cheese we allow, overall, deli was more expensive than prepackaged cheese. It was then discussed about possibly going back to deli if it was less expensive than the prepackaged for a particular kind of cheese. The WIC Program will entertain going back to allowing only American cheese to be purchased in the deli, since it is the most desirable by participants and sometimes less expensive in the smaller stores. Kevin has had a request for Queso Blanco, white cheese.

Kumi asked if we have considered how the "Bottle Bill" might affect the WIC Program because we allow orange juice in half-gallon containers. The proposal is to require bottle deposits on containers sized 2 liters and under. The equivalent would be 67.6 oz, so it may have an impact on the program providing 64 oz containers of orange juice.

Janet inquired about store brand cereals possibly being allowed. Kim explained that right now, only items named Toasted Oats or Tasteos are allowed in the least expensive brands and we wouldn't be looking to add cereals to the list if a similar type is already allowed in a national brand. We need to be careful about authorizing similar types of cereals when one brand meets our requirements and another doesn't. If a "generic" brand meets our criteria, but the national brand does not, we might not approve the item at all because it may cause participant confusion.

Janet also requested for Big Y a list of WIC items, the sizes allowed and the UPC codes for any new cereals approved in Connecticut. We will not have UPCs, but the other info will be available. The Connecticut Food Association will be added to the distribution list when the new food list comes out, so they may put something in their newsletter.

Website input

The WIC Website will be revised and suggestions are welcome. Members thought it would be helpful to post the wholesalers list from which vendors can purchase infant formula and a training guide for the use of WIC checks. It was also suggested to provide a way to request a price stock/survey or a form to use for price changes.

Development of Cashier training guide

During the time of hire, Big Y has a computer-based training that's used, then a hands-on training piece. DVD/Video training would not be helpful; documents are better. The group agreed that it would be beneficial to have a training guide together with the food list. A quick reference guide on WIC approved items should be kept at the cash register for all cashiers handling WIC checks.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00. Members were directed to the bottom of the agenda for future meeting dates, times and locations. Currently the next meeting is scheduled for May 29, 2-4 pm.