

WIC Vendor Advisory Council (WVAC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 31, 2007

Location: Connecticut Department of Transportation Conference Room B

Start Time: 2:00 pm

End Time: 3:05 pm

Recorder: Harriet Dennis

IN ATTENDANCE: Bruce Betros, Dennis Banks, Kimberly Boulette, Diane Buzzetti, Renee Coleman-Mitchell, Harriet Dennis, Dr. Norma Gyle, Jannett Haughton, Adam Osmond, Janet Rankin, Kumi Sato, Pat Sullivan, Joanne White

Kim Boulette WIC Vendor Specialist for the Connecticut WIC Program opened the meeting and welcomed everyone for attending. The day's agenda was distributed.

Topics for discussion:

▪ ***Chairperson -***

Kim reported that Dick Edmonds, Chief of the Public Health Initiatives Branch, suggested that we select a new chairperson. If there are any volunteers, please contact Kim. The chosen chairperson will be responsible for putting together the meeting agenda with the State WIC Office Update being a standard agenda item. Renee explained that the State WIC office would continue to schedule the location and book conference rooms in addition to making copies of materials needed. Kim suggested that if no one person wants to take the lead of this group, then maybe two people could be assigned to organize each meeting with a rotating schedule of all members. Agenda items are always welcome from members of the council.

▪ ***Price Increases -***

Kim reported it is important for the vendors to send in writing their price changes on all WIC approved items because it affects the maximum prices allowed. Janet Rankin (Big Y Supermarkets) asked if price changes could be sent electronically. Kim answered that we don't have the capability of having vendors do this because our computer system is old and there is no way to automatically upload vendor prices directly into the system. All price changes are to be faxed or mailed to the State WIC Office. There is not a specific form for price updates, so our price stock survey can be used as a template also for submission of price changes listing products and prices.

Dennis stated that you must submit price increases for WIC approved items before charging WIC customers. Kim offered that the WIC Price Stock Survey information can be downloaded into Excel and she can e-mail the spreadsheet to Janet Rankin.

▪ ***New Food Package Presentation -***

Kim gave a PowerPoint presentation along with copies of the slides titled "WIC Food Package Gearing Up For Implementation" in September 2008. The proposed changes largely reflect recommendations made by Institute of Medicine (IOM). The comment period for the proposed rule closed on November 2006 and FNS received over 47,000 comments. The presentation will be emailed to all members, so they can access the website listed on the last page to view the entire proposed rule, IOM recommendations and all comments received by the USDA.

Anticipated release date of the interim final rule is September 2007. The WIC food packages will be redesigned and will include food items that have not been approved in the past. We may require stores to maintain a greater variety of WIC foods in the minimum inventory, including fruits and vegetables being added to the program. All WIC authorized vendors; local agency staff and participants will receive training with regard to the new food packages.

- *Food List Changes –*

Kim reported deli-sliced American cheese would again be included as a WIC–approved food upon the printing of the next food list. There have been no additional suggestions for changes needed to the draft food list that was handed out at the last meeting.

Janet asked about Kosher foods being allowed which typically cost more than the least expensive brands. The State WIC Office is looking into this issue, but right now, a specifically Kosher brand of food is not allowed if it is not the least expensive brand. Dennis stated that Shoprite of Waterbury is a store where many participants shop that would like Kosher foods and their store brands are Kosher. Information is currently being collected from our local agencies regarding the need and the acceptable levels of Kosher foods. Until the need is known, we cannot develop a policy on Kosher items.

Open Discussion/ Suggestions for future agenda items:

Dr. Gyle asked how the vendors were doing with the issue of formula theft. Formula theft is an ongoing problem among many of the WIC authorized vendors. Vendors say this problem has grown and they will continue to keep their formula locked up behind the counters, which Adam agreed works very well.

Pat Sullivan reported that participant complaints are down, but there are still some problems with the hospitals sending participants home with formula that's not Nestle brand. Dr. Gyle stated that hospitals should be giving WIC participants Nestle formula and she wanted to know about any hospitals not doing so. Bruce Betros (Nestle) added that Nestle is continuing to supply WIC vendors with the Good Start Supreme (GSS) formulas and they have had no issues in manufacturing.

Janet Rankin asked what should she do with WIC checks that are rejected and returned from the bank. Dennis answered you can return the rejected WIC check to the State WIC office for reimbursement. All checks must be accompanied with a letter stating the reason for reimbursement. WIC checks rejected and returned for missing vendor stamp are the only checks that can be stamped and redeposit by the vendor.

The meeting adjourned at 3:05p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 30, 2007 from 2-4 pm at the DOT Building in Newington. Meetings will continue to be held on the last Tuesday on a quarterly basis. Dr. Gyle thanked everyone for attending.