

**Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program
Retailer Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 27, 2008
1:00 PM – 3:00 PM**

Location: Holiday Inn – SeaTac, 17338 International Blvd, SeaTac (206) 248-1000

Attendees: WIC Retailer Advisory Committee Members

Facilitator: Janice K. Boden, Food Delivery/Retailer Management Team Manager
(360) 236-3610 janice.boden@doh.wa.gov

Agenda Topics

1. Welcome	Time: 1:00 PM	Lead: Janice Boden
-------------------	----------------------	---------------------------

Objectives: Welcome and Introductions

2. New Foods For WIC Clients in 2009 – Alternatives for Implementing a Cash Value Voucher Program	Lead: Kathy Chapman, New Food Choices 2009 Project Manager
--	---

Objectives: In December 2007, the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services issued a new rule that expands the WIC food package and allow for a cash value voucher (\$8 to \$10 for women and \$6 for children) for the purchase of fruits and vegetables. This discussion will explore the impact the cash value voucher will have on Washington WIC retailers and provide an opportunity for input to WIC on implementation strategies.

Notes:

Overview/ Purpose

- Provided a brief overview of upcoming food changes (Refer to New Food Choices 2009 Update handout – intro and section 1 & 2 – types of changes, timeline)
- Today’s focus is on the introduction of using a dollar amount instead of a quantity when fruits and vegetables are added to the program
- Opportunity to gather retailer input - identify questions, issues and concerns from your perspective
- Retailer input will help guide and influence our decision making about design, development, training, and implementation of the fruit/vegetable cash benefit

Background Information

- By Fall 2009, WIC clients will be able to buy fruits and vegetables using a cash benefit at WIC authorized retailers
- The cash benefit will be separate from WIC checks
- Not sure if we’ll allow canned and/or frozen forms in addition to fresh. Comments about food selection and authorization process handled separately.
- Monthly cash benefits range between 6 and 15 dollars for each client
- Monthly value of the cash benefit will be adjusted annually for inflation
- Current thinking for cash benefit – one check or multiple checks with dollar amounts on them
- Showed a sample, draft drawing of a fruit/vegetable check
- Retailer will enter actual purchase price and obtain WIC customer’s signature on the check(s)
- State WIC Programs have the option to allow WIC customers to pay the difference when the purchase of fruits and

vegetables exceeds the value of the cash benefit

- Retailers will not be allowed to give change to WIC customers if purchase amount is under the value of the cash benefit

Gathered Input – questions, issues or concerns

Any reactions, questions, issues or concerns based on background information just presented?

- Baby foods and juice - surprised you're moving to smaller containers!
- What about juice in 64 ounce containers?
- Will you include organic/natural baby foods?
- Reducing formula is a concern for babies and community. How much reduction?
- What's reasoning for the new foods? Concern about this – more free foods for people getting WIC. Already clients don't buy all the WIC foods listed on their checks.
- Whole grain tortillas allowed?
- Please address the timing of the new contract and the New Food project

Cash Value Benefit:

- What is entered as actual purchase if total exceeds \$ on check and client pays difference?
- How close to the dollar amount do stores have to get when weighing fruits and vegetables?
- Stores want state to allow customer to pay the difference if the amount goes over.
- White potatoes will not be allowed
- It will be difficult to control sale of white potatoes, when customer can pay over.
- Define "White potatoes" – any potato other than yam or sweet potato
- Use the words "yam and sweet potato only" in training materials
- What's different from the Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers?
- What client training will be done re: follow-up with client to purchase within the dollar amount?
- Customers would get more fruits and vegetables if they use store coupons, special discounts and "club" cards

Committee responded to the following specific scenarios/questions:

1. Scenario: A customer brings the following to the check stand: one WIC check with quantities of juice, eggs, milk, cheese and one check with dollar amount of fruit/vegetables. These are the only things the client is buying and the foods are separated out by each check.
 - a. Help us understand how you might process this transaction at your stores?
 - b. What is the capability and process of the cash register to handle these transactions?
 - 2 separate transactions
2. Scenario: In addition to WIC purchases the customer brings other food items and fruits and vegetables to the check stand. The customer does not separate out the foods by check. It appears like they have a lot of fruits and vegetables, as well as other WIC-like items (cereal, bread).

How would you process this transaction?

- Same as now- checker separates by check
 - Set non WIC item aside and ask, "Is this WIC?" or "Are you paying for this with...?"
3. Scenario: As part of a WIC transaction, a customer has one \$8 fruit/vegetable check, but has \$10 worth of fruits and vegetables. If WIC allows customers to pay for the difference what problems do you foresee or concerns do you have about this scenario?
 - Customer gets mad or checker does not pay attention to check.
 - Complaints at the checkstand
 - Must do all checks- closeout- before determining cash due from customer
 - Language Barrier- problems at check stand

- Do more research on: Use of Food Stamp Program EBT card - same as cash; may not be able to tender a check first, then Food Stamps, and /or cash
- May be better for some stores to not allow cash over check amount
- What will happen with checks that go through to the bookkeeper and the checker has written in an amount higher than the value of the check?
- Flag item as “WIC-able” - have to add fruits and vegetables

4. Scenario: Customer has three checks for 6, 6 and 8 dollars and fruit/vegetable purchases totaling \$11. The use of the two \$6 checks maximizes the benefit. If the purchases total \$13, would it be better for the client to use the \$6 checks and pay the extra dollar, thus retaining the value of the \$8 check for another day?

Discuss benefits and/or problems retailers would have with batching up the checks into one overall purchase total. Is there a possibility of creating confusion by forcing the client and clerk to get into a conversation about the most efficient use of the checks?

- Help customer to maximize check
- Some stores are limited to 5 types of tender per order (i.e. Safeway - Portland)
- Confusion for checker
- Problem for bookkeeper to count number of checks
- Issue checks in simple denominations (i.e. \$1, \$5, \$10), like old Food Stamps vouchers
- Smaller denomination to help customer
- Nightmare for checker to determine best value for customer
- Group checks into 1 transaction like old FSP paper.

5. What would be different, easier, or harder if there were cards (i.e. EBT, debit card) instead of checks for fruit/vegetable cash benefits?

- Great to have debit card. If goes thru current Point of Sale (POS) machines, it must be EBT
- Family card versus individual cards per client
- Put all WIC on EBT card
- Put on card, go to different check stand to take overage off card so it does not hold up lane
- What are banking processing costs for paper checks?
- What are printing and paper costs for checks?

Wrap-up

- For future updates, questions or comments - Review # 4 on Update handout

3. 2009 WIC Retailer Contract Cycle

**Lead: Janice Boden,
Food Delivery-
Retailer
Management
Team Manager**

Objectives: Applications for the 2009 WIC retailer contracting period will be accepted beginning September 2008. Current contracts expire March 31, 2009. A number of issues must be decided before that date. Discussion of these issues will assist the state WIC office in making policy decisions.

Notes:

1. What improvements need to be made to the store application process?
 - Requested that WIC share its selection criteria before implementation.
 - Make more data about clients available to retailers, such as the number of clients served by a particular store.
2. Should new retailer applications be accepted continuously or continue to be accepted only once in a contracting cycle?
 - YES! Continuously
 - Replacement stores? Restrictions exist; continuous application would resolve this issue

3. Clients expect to be able to spend WIC checks at all locations of a retail chain – yet, some corporations choose not to seek authorization for every store location. This results in clients being turned away without purchasing their WIC foods. How can this be remedied so clients can easily know which stores in a chain are WIC authorized? Should all locations in a chain be authorized?
 - No, not necessarily.
 - Clinics should share list of authorized stores with clients
 - Fred Meyer – all should be authorized. Safeway agreed.
 - Assume all within a chain are authorized
4. We have difficulty obtaining price updates from many of our retailers. This causes checks not to be paid. How can we improve that process and response rate?
 - Don't require email price updates;
 - Make copies and enter by hand. Keep the copies in the store.
 - Like e-mail
 - Confusion about e-mail versus manual price updates received or not received at state; don't limit option to manual updates
 - Retailer responsibility to ensure prices updated
 - Check state e-mail filters make sure no email prices updates are rejected
 - Fruit/Vegetable minimum stock - may impact selection criteria for stores
 - What frequency of price updates seems reasonable? Quarterly
 - Is form accurate? Is it easy to use?
5. Shelf tags useful?
 - Yes
 - Everyone understands "WIC" (don't need another language printed)
6. Is a 48-hour turnaround enough time for getting special formula ordered and delivered?
 - Not enough time; tribal store - 1 delivery in 2 weeks
 - Islands – 1 delivery per 1 week
 - Write contract in a way to address stores in remote areas...more time for deliveries. For most, 48 hrs is enough, but have a provision for special situations. Good goal to keep the 48-hour rule so retailers don't stretch out time.
 - Get clinics to communicate the number of cans of formula issued to stores (report?). Helps retailers to keep up inventory. Can we do this now that we print checks for any authorized store (AAS)?
 - State WIC office has redeemed/ food quantity purchased reports for previous month which can be provided to retailers
7. Shelf space an issue?
 - Depends in size of store
 - Depends on what is selling the most
8. Minimum stock levels for formula?
 - Store-by-store; small stores can't compete with larger stores for same inventory.
 - Customer service
9. Health Inspections?
 - Local health departments do them about quarterly
 - If have problem, then inspect more frequently

Should health inspections be part of WIC application?

 - Not health inspection reports; but have health permits
 - Tribal store- no health inspections, fire rules, etc.
 - Is "health inspection" a WIC issue?

- If state runs into cleanliness/health issues work with local health department; go with them on the inspection.

10. How do stores document training for new checkers?

- Training checklist with a sign off (part of personnel file)
- Training list at check stand
- Some stores have developed a training packet. The employee signs off that they've read and understand it.

Training documentation available at store level or corporate level?

- Copy at store
- Documentation at Corporate level, too
- Smaller stores documentation may be less

IDEA: Retailer handbook: include a simple check off list for training. Would be helpful for smaller stores

11. Record keeping requirement – no standardized way records kept... part of application process – how records are kept? Send sample invoice?

- No printed invoices – all electronic
- Costs money to get invoices printed
- Stores could highlight WIC information on invoice

12. Are there retailer industry resources with customer data (i.e. how far will customers go to shop)?

- Clinic survey clients?
- Why is this important to state if we don't limit number of stores?
- WIC has significant impact on community, independent stores.
- Stores will have data to decide where to open new stores
- Protective of data
- Work with Association or large chains (real estate, construction) if have specific questions. May be able to provide us with aggregate data
- Not supportive of limiting stores
- Urban vs. rural

Other comments:

- Before retailer contracting, give stores a checklist of new and existing requirements
- Timing of new contract and new foods project implementation not planned to be at the same time - how will that work?
- Is Similac advance working for WIC moms- noticing more special formula sales (Similac Sensitive)?
- Will the state penalize stores if not enough inventory or outdated prices?
- Is Similac still a high- theft item?

4. Meeting Debrief and Adjournment	Time: 3:00 PM	Lead: Janice Boden
---	----------------------	---------------------------

Objectives: Learn what could be improved about the meeting process.

Notes:

How was meeting by phone?

- Hard to hear
- Send handouts to phone attendees in advance
- Great opportunity