

Virginia WIC Advisory Meeting Notes:
May 1, 2008
(10:00a.m. – 1:00p.m.)

On Thursday, May 1, 2008, the quarterly Virginia WIC Advisory meeting was held via video conference amongst four locations; Fredericksburg (Site Facilitator June Thompson), Roanoke (Site Facilitator Gregory Chappell), Richmond (Site Facilitator Ephraim Ewing and Vendor Manager Sheila Brewer) and Norfolk, Virginia (Site Facilitator Freda Bolling). An “800” line was also available to corporate and independent stores. Minutes recorded by Jennifer Siegle, Camellia Foods. The following is a summary of agenda items discussed.

****Attendees –**

**Wal-Mart, NOB Commissary, Speedy Mart, Camellia Foods, Spartan Market, Farm Fresh, Giant, Foodway Market, Imadgen, Triplets, Grants Supermarket, Community Market #2, Kroger, Reids Supersaver, Whites Fresh Foods, Payless Supermarket, K-VA-T, Food Country, Farmer’s Foods, Super K-Mart, Shoppers Food Warehouse, Safeway, Food Lion, Martins, Best Value, Bryant Grocery & Supply, Fork Union Town & Country*

****Summary: Site Expectations –**

- *New updates/changes to WIC Program*
- *Minimum Stocking Requirements*
- *Update on status of Retailer Authorization*
- *EBT (E-WIC) update*
- *USDA Rule on new food package*
- *Increases in dairy prices, etc. and impact on WIC*

****Review of Next Steps from January Meeting –**

**Issue was addressed regarding a different method and more frequent ability for WIC to collect prices...program is not looking to change current method of price collection.*

****Introduction of Prevention Specialist: Alex Acharya –**

**Alex Acharya has been in the Prevention Specialist position for 2 months. His responsibilities include working with secret shoppers and compliance buys - investigations. Introduction letters will be sent to retailers. Contact information 804-864-7811*

****Retailer Selection and Authorization Update –**

- *Unexpected delays with selection process have been unavoidable due to staffing availability and administrative review by management and the Attorney General.*
- *Phase I evaluation of 200 stores completed in February based on prices received in January 2008. Denial letters went out to affected stores, those not requesting Informal Settlement/Appeal Hearings were terminated from program in March. 15 new stores were enrolled in the program.*
- *Phase 2 schedule rolled out in March. 200 stores were to be reviewed in*

April, delays pushed evaluation process to May. Retailer Agreement was extended to June 30, 2008

**Low volume letters were sent to Retailers in March if number of unique WIC participants served were less than 60 per month. About 100 stores received letters.*

***Once a store has been authorized for a 6 month period, they are expected to serve 60+ unique participants per month*

***Stores will not be “terminated” for low volume, however, this will have an effect on reauthorization and selection decisions.*

***Stores designated as “low volume” will not be eligible for reauthorization unless pricing score = 100% (100% of score is competitive pricing in comparison to other stores in peer group BEA.*

****Prices need to be at least 10% below peer group average for BEA based on woman/infant mandatory item packages...independently & collectively, and is based on prices submitted via RSMS.*

*** WIC will identify impact to participants. An “authorized exception” may be awarded if hardship is present under WIC policy standards.*

**Stores that applied for authorization in March needed to have prices submitted by May 2, 2008*

**Phase 3 evaluation process expected to be finalized in June, with updated Retailer Agreements to be distributed to retailers and corporate contacts by July 1, 2008.*

***For corporate stores, 1 contract agreement will cover all authorized stores in the same BEA...this means there is a possibility that stores in the same chain may have different contracts*

***2008 Retailer Agreement Changes: Effective July 1, 2008 –*

**Sanction Classification System (Policy 15.0) – change to threshold of qualifying number of incidents to establish a pattern of violations. Current pattern of 3 incidents will be changed to 4 (1yr. disqualification).*

**All price submissions will have to be electronic via RSMS (no paper surveys)*

**Store authorization will be at risk for high number of food instruments deposited without a valid vendor stamp...3 separate warnings over a specified period of time (to be established), can equal a 1yr. disqualification.*

***“No vendor stamp” does not include food instruments returned with an illegible stamp impression*

**Participants will be able to exchange contract formula at the retail store location with a valid receipt. This is only for errors made at the store and an incorrect type of contract formula was purchased by the participant.*

**All deposited food instruments must be processed within 60 days from 1st. date to spend, even those rejected for no/illegible vendor stamp.*

***Food instruments presented more than 67 days from 1st. date-to-spend will be rejected and unpaid by the banking contractor.*

****Mandatory Training: Contract Reauthorization –**

- *Warning letters sent to stores and corporate contacts by May 12th for not having received training reporting forms*
- *Final training session to be held at Eastern Henrico Government Center June 12, 2008 at 1:00p.m.*

****VA WIC Vendor Manual and Distribution –**

- *New Vendor Manual will be CD with PDF of Vendor Manual*
 - **Most current policies and procedures can be accessed electronically via internet*
 - **Updated policies can be printed from online version and filed in Vendor Manual*
- *Replacement Manual CD ROM will be mailed to stores and Corporate Contacts for distribution, mid June.*
- *Replacement Manual will consist of:*
 - **Acknowledgement form to be signed and mailed back to WIC by August 1, 2008*
 - **How to Contact Us Reference Page*
 - **Sanction Classification System Policy & Schedule*
 - **CD ROM with PDF of Vendor Manual...this must be retained in vendor manual along with the following:*
 - ***Section Dividers*
 - ***Annual “Working With WIC Retailer Bulletins”*
 - ***Teal colored “Cashier Training Guide”*
 - ***Current WIC Approved Foods List*
 - ***Cashier Tip Cards*

****EWIC Presentation – Cheryl Owens (Imadgen) –**

- *Electronic WIC Pilot – looking for at least 2 store volunteers to observe WIC transaction at.*
- *Shortly, an Online Retailer survey will be available - vovici.com/wsb.dll/s/f4ecg338cc*
- *Contact information – (571) 218-5214*
 - *email – cherylowens@imadgen.com*

****Miscellaneous –**

- *Warning letters sent to stores depositing food instruments without authorized WIC stamps (i.e. no stamp or illegible stamp)*
- *New stamp design – stores can order 1 new stamp per year at no charge (Acorn)*

****Benefits –**

- *Informative venue which allows retailers to voice concerns*
- *Imadgen presentation - EWIC*
- *Online submission of prices – RSMS*
 - **Allows retailers to review newly calculated PGA (peer group average) and make price adjustments before final calculations of PGA. This will be*

benefit to WIC Customers since retailers will reduce prices to maintain compliance.

****Concerns –**

- *Authorization process using total store square footage as tie breaker:
 - **Gives unfair advantage to super centers since extra square footage is typically devoted to non-food items that do not benefit the WIC Customer.*
 - **Final selection decisions should be based on:
 - ***Food square footage*
 - ***"Full-Service" grocer where WIC customer can make non-wic purchases as well*
 - ***Transportation availability*
 - ***Years of service in serving the community***
- *Large number of food instruments returned that can not be resubmitted to the bank due to water marks of original document (food instrument)*
- *Skippy peanut butter will be produced in a 16.3oz. size and will not meet the Virginia WIC Program required container size. This size will not be an authorized food.*
- *Pricing*
- *Low Volume Stores*
- *Vendor Manual on CD as opposed to print version...majority of stores do not have computers/internet access at store locations*
- *Returning formula to stores:
 - **How would you know which food instrument was used to purchase formula being returned?*
 - **Most stores deposit food instruments daily, how would this situation be handled after food instruments have left premises?**
- *May 2 prices being compared to April price averages and impact on stores*
- *Virginia has not moved forward with new food list – other 9 states have contacted retailers to ensure vendors are involved.*

****Next Steps –**

- *Address square footage issue (non-grocery stores versus grocery only stores)
Stores can submit additional thoughts on this issue in writing to Sheila.*
- *Phase 2 evaluation of stores during May and resubmission of prices from store applicants received in March.*
- *Retailer to notify Sheila with information regarding convenient state methods for collecting prices (i.e. Pennsylvania)
 - **Suggestion made to have WIC require Retailers to submit prices as of a specific date with a few days leeway for most accurate price submissions. Retailers will feel more comfortable that everyone in State is on same playing field – prices will reflect increases.*
 - **Sheila stated this will go out with letter for June authorization Phase 3, with a 5-day window.**
- *Sheila to check Sanction Policy for the "specified period of time" in which 3 repeat*

offenses = pattern (food instruments deposited without vendor stamp = 1yr. disqualification)

**Suggestion – When updates/revisions/changes are made to vendor manual policies, WIC should send notice to Corporate Contacts so stores can receive those updates via hard copy...most stores do not have access to CD ROM capabilities.*

**Stores who DO NOT want Corporate Contacts to receive CD ROM manuals for store distribution, and who need more than 2 extra copies aside from number of stores, should email Sheila by June 14, 2008.*

**Cheryl Owens of Imadgen will email Sheila link to Retailer Survey to be forwarded to Retailers.*

**Make training commitment to Fall Certified Trainer training sessions and send to Retailers.*

**Suggestion – have compliance buy certified letters also copied to Corporate Contacts via email for a quicker response.*

**Next Retailer Advisory Meeting scheduled for Thursday, August 14, 2008 at 10:00a.m.*