

Virginia WIC Retailer Advisory Meeting

January 21, 2009

Agenda Review and Rules of the Road - the agenda was reviewed by Ephraim Ewing, Meeting facilitator, with no new agenda items added. Ephraim conducted a “participatory” review of the meeting rules, which went over quite well.

Introductions and Expectations – a cross section of stores were represented at today’s meeting and a number of corporate contacts and stores participated via the 1-800 line as well (see listing of participants at the end of the minutes). Only one group documented their expectations but they were in line with what each site verbally expressed. Those expectations included:

- update on the Participant Survey (food list) results (on hold)
- update on future changes in the WIC Program
- learn more about food changes
- Is the number of WIC participants growing in my area
- Update on how overage for cash value vouchers will be handled?

Review of Next Steps from November Retailer’s Meeting (no outstanding issues)

Minimum Stocking Requirement (2009 Food List) - Assumptions and Issues for Discussion:

- o Look at what is reasonable for retailers; compliance readily enforceable by State agency. (Needs to be easy to monitor for all parties.)
- o Use an objective measure, i.e., family as a proxy to identify the quantity of food/formula to be part of the minimum stocking requirement (MSR).
- o A single minimum stocking standard-regardless of type of store (i.e., chain, independent, etc).
- o Philosophy - encourage participants to purchase and use store brands rather than national brand products, (cold and hot cereals, canned fruits and veggies).
- o Determine if a MSR should exist for reduced fat cheese
- o Offer waivers for stores with at least one year of prior WIC experience (would be subject to baby foods, formula, and baby cereal). Should waivers be an option and if yes, for what categories of foods?
- o All items listed as part of the MSR have a mandatory pricing requirement in RSMS
- o What cereals, including type and package size should mandatory prices be collected via RSMS? What makes sense?
- o How to collect pricing averages for new products, i.e., 64 ounce juices, grape juice (12 oz. frozen), etc.?
- o No immediate changes to food list now but that will not be the case as of 10/1/09
- o Need retailers to have direct input.
- o Need to establish baselines.
- o VA MSR vs. other state WIC Programs is quite low (i.e., infant formula).

Virginia WIC Retailer Advisory Meeting

January 21, 2009

Conclusions and Recommendations from MSR Discussion:

Donna asked for objective feedback as decisions will be made quickly

- MSR would be the same for all store types, i.e., chain store vs. independent or small store.
- Significant reduction in approved national brands after 10/1/09.
- Look @ DECA (Ralston) as outstanding issue.
- Quarts of milk will be prescribed as well as gallons.
- A separate stocking requirement will exist for quart size of milk
- Will no longer printing reduced fat cheese on FIs. The participant will have option to purchase this type of cheese. (Participants have had difficulty in finding reduced fat cheese in 1-lb size). Discussed may be an issue of availability of reduced fat cheese.
- How will WIC handle MSR for fresh fruit and veggies? WIC is currently not collecting prices on these items; once EBT is activated, WIC will need to do so.
- Took a vote on MSR-based comparison and agreed to “One Family” (per MS-comparison profile) as the standard.
- Sheila made suggestion for waiver for smaller stores not able to meet MSR (Smaller store operators need to contact VA WIC a.s.a.p.).
- When WIC moves to “Family” issuance of benefits, then MSR waivers may not be an option.
- Waivers will only be granted for baby items, i.e., baby formula, baby cereal, etc.

Update from Donna Seward, State WIC Director

- Twenty percent more slots available for stores; particularly more for rural areas
- An authorization exception category was added (did not get details)
- Donna fielded comments from retailers regarding the purpose of Retailer Advisory group.
- Monica Elliott recommended changing from “committee” which tends to sound like an elite group of retailers to “meeting” which gives the impression of more inclusiveness of all retailers. The recommendation was agreed upon by all.
- Other members, including Wal-Mart indicated that they felt that the meetings were meaningful
- Comments on MSR Pricing- Derry Rimmer suggested that VA WIC look at the PA WIC Program model and add an extra page to RSMS to gather prices and additional information.

Other Issues

- Sheila reviewed training schedule for 2009 to include new Train-the-Trainer and the refresher courses
- Participant survey has not been implemented yet and there is a moratorium on printing due to state budget restrictions.
- Allow alternate tender of fruits and veggies and no limit on dollar amount
- Farmers Market as we knew it is going away.

Virginia WIC Retailer Advisory Meeting

January 21, 2009

- “Working with WIC” will be on website. Working on exception for “once-per-year” printing and distributing this resource to stores.
- Encouraged retailers to check website regularly for new information
- Cashier Training guide is being updated to reflect new food changes.
- Discussed issues with Similac Advance Early shield; will have “or” statement
- Prices due by 2/1/09
- All (26) twenty six stores who applied as part of the reauthorization process have been resolved as of 12/18/08.

Benefits:

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| Norfolk | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• having Donna Seward participate.• clarification of MSR and healthy discussion surrounding the subject. |
| Fredericksburg | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good that we have input on issues• Can see upcoming problems- can be proactive |
| Richmond | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion of MSR and strategy for stocking. |
| Roanoke | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lots of food for thought related to the upcoming food choice changes |
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- Stocking Requirement discussion was very helpful
 - EWIC update
 - SNAP and what it stands for
 - Clarification provided on organic fruits and vegetables

Concerns:

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| All sites | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• System being able to handle overage of Cash Value Vouchers.• Participant education• Current video not detailed enough for new cashier training.• I wish I knew the timeline for implementing new stocking requirements.• I wish I knew if sufficient time to train staff on new requirements will be given.• I wish I knew when the 2009 Food List will be available to retail stores.• I wish I knew if a little store like mine survive and continue to participate in the WIC Program?• I wish I know how the WIC Program will build its pricing file for new products (i.e., 64 ounce juice, whole wheat bread, etc) |
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Virginia WIC Retailer Advisory Meeting

January 21, 2009

Next Steps:

- All sites
- Attend the March Retailer's Meeting (date to be determined either March 19th or March 25th.)
 - Receive an update from WIC Program on Training video progress.
 - Sheila will set up a separate meeting to discuss any unique minimum stocking issues related to DECA Commissaries.
 - The attendees recommended that Sheila scan the chart which identifies the family comparison and include this document in the minutes.
 - Provide an update on the RFP for EWIC at the March Retailer meeting.
 - Contact Sheila Brewer, a.s.a.p. if any stores applied in 2008 and did not get an authorization decision.
 - Follow up with system areas (if applicable) if scanning system can handle CVV food instruments (charges taxes on the amount that participants are liable for) (Retailer)?
 - Follow up with distributor/supplier on the availability of store brands for canned fruits and vegetables (Retailer)
 - Provide an update on the baby food RFP/selection process at the March meeting (WIC Program)

Meeting Attendees:

Bruce Market, Dahlgren Commissary, DECA, E & M Nester & Sons
Farm Fresh Food & Pharmacy, Fine Foods, Food Lion Corporate Office, Fort Belvoir
Commissary, Ft. Eustis Commissary, Fresh Pride (Camellia), Genes Supermarket, Giant
Corporate Office, Giant of PA (Martins), Grants Supermarket, H & H Grocery, Kroger
Food store, K-VA-T Corporate Office, Lowes Food Store #145, Millers Market, Oceana
Commissary, Portsmouth Commissary, Reid Supermarket, Safeway Corporate Office,
Save-A-Lot Corporate Office, Shoppers Food & Pharmacy, Slaughter's Supermarket,
Super K-Mart, T & M Grocery & Deli, Triplett's Grocery, Wades Supermarket #48,
Wades Supermarket #42, Wal-Mart Corporate office and Wilburn's Supermarket.