



West Virginia WIC Vendor Advisory Board Quarterly Update

July 19, 2018

Participants: By telephone conference

Policy Updates: Heidi Staats, WV WIC Vendor Unit Manager, welcomed attendees to the phone conference. She provided an overview of policy revisions regarding participant access assessment (8.03), vendor training (8.10) and minimum stocking requirements and allowable exemptions (8.11). These policies are available on the website ons.wvdhhr.org.

- Participant access is determined and documented on a case-by-case basis when considering whether the WV WIC Program should:
 - Retain a retail store in lieu of termination or disqualification;
 - Make an authorization exception decision;
 - Waive the selection criteria for an applicant; or,
 - Provide financial assistance to obtain eWIC capability.
- Vendor Training will be conducted in interactive format in a location off site at initial authorization, and reauthorization. Attendees should be one store manager/supervisory staff and one store trainer for cashiers although exceptions will be made for stores with fewer than five (5) employees. If the store personnel is familiar with WV WIC (i.e. new store owner who kept all employees) training may occur during the preauthorize site visit.
- Minimum Stock Requirements and Allowed Exemptions:
 - Minimum stock will be released in August. Requirements will be specific to the store peer group classification.
 - Minimum stock exemptions may be provided for WIC products, individual food categories or to a lower peer group minimum stock requirement. Exemption approval is for a single store location, and for the duration of the current agreement. The minimum stock exemption approval letter must be on file at the vendor's location.
 - If the store has a minimum stock exemption for a WIC contract formula, the requested product will be ordered/purchased at once to have the product in inventory within 72 hours. If the item will not be available within 72 hours of the request, the vendor must notify the State WIC office.

Peer Group Classification: Group 1, 5, and 6 are finalized. State Agency needs to continue work on food basket analysis to define competitive, but fair market, price and business model differences of stores in class 2, 3 and 4. Advisory Board recommended implementation of new

peer group classification system as October 1, 2018. However, considering work still needs to occur to secure USDA FNS approval, this will probably be implemented spring 2019.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED VENDOR PEER GROUP SYSTEM

Vendor Peer Groups					Average Food Basket Cost (Child's Package) based on redemption	Min Food Basket Cost (Child's Package) based on redemption	Max Food Basket Cost (Child's Package) based on redemption
Peer Group No. (1)	Description (e.g., supermarkets, chain stores, pharmacies) (2)	Number of Vendors in Peer Group					
		Regular Vendors (3)	Above - 50% Vendors (4)	Total (5)			
1	Mass Merchandiser Retailer that sells a wide variety of merchandise but also carries groceries and owns a distribution center	38	0	38	\$36.85	\$32.69	\$40.96
2	Large Rural Chain Retailer that primarily sells groceries, has own distribution center, and operates in 2 or more states. Store located in population area >10,000	49	0	49	\$43.52	\$35.05	\$50.74
3	Small Rural Chain Retailer that primarily sells groceries, and orders from a corporate distribution center. Store located in population area 9,999 - 2,500	41	0	41	\$42.76	\$33.21	\$51.03
4	Isolated Chain Retailer that primarily sells groceries, and orders through corporate distribution center. Store located in population area <2,500	55	0	55	\$43.58	\$35.23	\$51.96
5	Rural Independent Grocery Retailer that primarily sells groceries and does not own a distribution center.	33	0	33	\$48.88	\$42.84	\$56.28
6	Isolated Independent Stores Retailer with a limited assortment of grocery items and uses third-party distribution center.	50	0	50	\$54.14	\$11.97	\$72.06

2018 WIC Approved Food List and APL: A new 2018 WIC Approved Food List will be effective on October 1, 2018. The 2018 new food list contains most of the same food categories and products as the 2015 version. However, many new additions will increase variety and availability of WIC foods. The Approved Product List (APL) will be released September 1, 2018 to allow stores the ability to download the file, apply it to their systems, and conduct testing within the West Virginia WIC Third Party Processor test bed environment. Please report additional products which may need to be added for food categories allowing any brand, and explore with your distributor options of ordering new products. Minimum stocking requirements will change effective October 1st in response to the new Approved Food List.

The changes by food category are:

- Infant Food and Cereal – organic varieties will be allowed;
- Infant Food – 2 ounce jars as single or combo pack
- Milk – quarts will no longer be allowed, and 8th Continent Vanilla Soy Milk Original will be an added option;
- Yogurt (NEW) – approved brands and flavors of 32 ounce containers, and multipacks of 4 ounce cup 4 pack, 4 ounce cup 8 pack, 2 ounce tube 8 pack, and 2 ounce tube 16 pack;
- Cheese – Swiss has been added as well as 8 ounce package sizes;
- Eggs – no change;
- Fruits and Vegetables – canned and frozen varieties will be allowed, and can be purchased in combination with fresh produce;
- Juice – Welch’s apple and grape 11.5 ounce shelf stable concentrate will be approved for women, and private label brands added to 64 ounce shelf stable options;
- Breakfast Cereals – private label and national brands added;
- Whole Wheat and Whole Grain Bread – approved brands include 16 ounce, 20 ounce and 24 ounce loaves;
- Whole Wheat and Whole Grain Buns – approved brands include package sizes of 12 to 16 ounces;
- Whole Wheat Tortillas – national brands added;
- Brown Rice – package sizes of 14 ounce to 32 ounce allowed;
- Corn Tortillas (NEW) – approved brands of 16 ounce white or yellow corn tortillas;
- Whole Wheat Pasta (NEW) – approved brands and types of 16 ounce boxes;
- Dried or Canned Beans, Peas and Lentils (legumes) – no change;
- Peanut Butter – no change;
- Canned Fish – 5 ounce, 6 ounce or 14.75 ounce cans of tuna and salmon will be allowed.

Please keep in mind that how WIC benefits are issued to customers, it could be four to six months before all your customers will have yogurt in place of the quart of milk. Even though quarts of milk will no longer be issued beginning October 1, 2018, customers may still be purchasing this item (because they got their benefits September 30th or before) into the winter months. Quarts of milk will not be removed from the APL until February 2019.

Wholesalers and Distributors: A West Virginia WIC Vendor may provide only the authorized infant formula which the vendor has obtained from a source included on the enclosed list to WIC customers in exchange for food benefits specifying infant formula.

In addition, per Article 47 of the Vendor Agreement, West Virginia WIC Authorized Vendors must maintain and make available, upon request, purchasing records which show the source and date of purchase of all WIC approved formula. Please ensure these purchasing records match the manufacturer, wholesaler, distributor or retailer reported on your store’s most recent application.

Lastly, according to Article 10 of the Vendor Agreement, a West Virginia WIC Authorized Vendor must notify the Vendor Management Unit within 30 days if the primary source of WIC approved infant formula changes from what was reported at the time of application.

If the wholesaler or distributor utilized by your store is not included on the enclosed list, or if you have any questions or concerns regarding the rules and regulations of the West Virginia WIC

Program, please contact the West Virginia WIC Program's Vendor Management Unit by telephone at (304) 558-1115 or by email at dhhrwicvu@wv.gov.

Shelf Labelling: A reminder that shelf labelling is becoming mandatory with all tags in place by February 1, 2019. WIC shelf labels provided by the Vendor Management Unit, or custom WIC labels issued from your corporate parent, must be attached to the shelf price of all WIC Approved items [except infant formula NOT required for minimum stock, whole milk, lactose free milk, evaporated milk, powdered milk, or fresh produce]. Retailers can determine if they want to put WIC shelf labels on items in food categories that do not require shelf labels. However, if a shelf label is used on one or more items in a food category where shelf labels are optional, shelf labels are required for all items in that food category. The WV WIC Vendor Unit will be in stores assuring labeling correctly or setting up initial labels as follows:

- Berkeley, Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Jefferson, Mineral, Morgan, Pendleton and Tucker Counties: October 8-12, 2018;
- Calhoun, Gilmer, Jackson, Mason, Pleasants, Ritchie, Roane, Wirt and Wood Counties: October 22-26, 2018;
- Brooke, Hancock, Marshall, Ohio, Tyler and Wetzel Counties: November 12-16, 2018;
- Fayette, Logan, McDowell, Mercer, Mingo, Monroe, Raleigh, Summers, and Wyoming Counties: November 26-30, 2018;
- Barbour, Braxton, Clay, Greenbrier, Lewis, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Randolph, Upshur and Webster Counties: December 17-21, 2018;
- Boone, Cabell, Kanawha, Lincoln, Putnam and Wayne Counties: January 14-17, 2019; and
- Doddridge, Harrison, Marion, Monongalia, Preston and Taylor Counties: January 28-February 1, 2019.

Upcoming Events:

- Vendor Advisory Board phone conference October 18, 2018 and January 17, 2019.
- The 3rd Annual Vendor Advisory Board meeting will occur March 20, 2019. The meeting will be hosted by Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department WIC Program at 211 6th Street, Parkersburg, WV 26101.

Answers to Questions at the End of the Call:

- **What should a store do if it is policy to accept a return of formula without a receipt?** The West Virginia WIC Program would encourage stores to consider a policy of not accepting any returned formula because of uncertainty of how the product was stored or cared for while not in the store. However, in light of current store policies, a

best practice would be to ask if the product was purchased with WIC benefits. WIC sanctions will only be issued when a return or exchange is completed with a receipt.

- **Are stores permitted to promote WIC through store social media accounts?** A vendor may share that they are a WIC Authorized Vendor, post photos of the door decal, and shelf labelling. But a store cannot highlight a specific brand of WIC foods or post pictures of WIC customers.
- **Are 4 count packs of yogurt containers authorized for WIC?** Yes there are some brands offering 4 count 4 packs which may be purchased with WIC benefits. All authorized yogurt is approved by brand and flavor because of federal criteria of foods. Keep in mind customers will receive 32 ounces of yogurt. They may mix and match approved products to match their benefits just like the cereal or whole grains category.