



West Virginia WIC Vendor Advisory Board Meeting Notes

March 20, 2019

Participants: Dameta Brown Carter (TSN WIC), Cheyenne Davis (Kroger), Ronda Davis (Mid-Ohio Valley WIC), Nicole Ellington (Food Lion), Sherri Easter (State Vendor Authorization and Monitoring Specialist), Denise Ferris (State WIC Director), Sue Hines (State WIC Vendor Operations and Training Specialist), Jackie Keller (James Country Store), Jodi Kyle- Morgan (Randolph-Elkins WIC), Becky Oppe (Oppe's Piggly Wiggly's), Trista Runion (Food Lion), Heidi Staats (State WIC Vendor Manager), Catherine Starcher (Cunningham Motors), Cindy Tanner (State WIC EBT Coordinator), Brenda Wheatley (Walmart)

Results:

- Interactive small- and large-group review and recommendations for edits concerning Cashier Training Handbook and Vendor Manual.
- Breakdown of National WIC Association Vendor Roundtable Sessions.
- Discussion concerning new Peer Group Classification System.
- Introduction of WIC Customer Service Survey and "How to Apply for WIC" brochure.

Opening and Welcome: Denise Ferris, Director, Office of Nutrition Services welcomed attendees to the meeting. She provided an overview of the WIC Vendor Roundtable Sessions hosted by the National WIC Association on March 6, 2019. Sherri Easter, Vendor Monitor and Authorization Specialist, WV WIC Program reviewed folder contents and facilitated introductions of all attendees.

Review Agenda, Consensus Decision-Making, and Mutual Understandings: Sherri walked participants through the day's agenda within the context of the need for an Advisory Board. Consensus decision-making and the use of 'thumbs' to express personal positions related to group decisions was introduced. The following mutual understandings were presented to the group as parameters for individual conduct.

- Stay focused and on task - use "parking lot"
- Be positive and solution oriented
- Everyone has the chance to participate
- Respect others views and opinions
- Be creative, flexible and energetic
- Have fun and get it done!!!

Cashier Training Tools: Participants were divided into three small groups. They were asked to use the following materials:

- Cashier Training Manual
- Participant Education Video

Small groups reviewed a draft to offer comments and suggestions for the Cashier Training Manual. Suggested revisions are:

Section 1:

- Expand Local Agency definition to include all eligible sub-receipt grantee types in addition to “county health department”;
- Include adjunct eligibility programs, including foster child, in bulleted participant requirement listing;
- Add food choices to lower portion of right-hand column (from choices outreach handouts)

Section 2:

- Correct baby food fruits and vegetables, “...2 oz or 4 oz containers”
- Reword bullet under baby food fruits and vegetables to read “Participants may purchase single or multipacks”
- Delete “See WIC Program Booklet for specific brands” under infant formula
- Delete “gallon, half gallon” from milk
- Delete “half gallon size only” from soy milk and delete “any other size” from cannot buy
- Revise “Yogurt – approved brands only, fat content specified in the participant’s benefits, single container or multipacks totaling 32 oz.”
- Revise to “ Any brand, 100% natural block, shredded...”
- Add “Blends of any of these cheeses” as bullet
- Fruits and Vegetables delete “approved brands only, 11 oz- 36 oz. packages”
- Juice to read “Approved brands only*, 11.5 oz shelf stable concentrate (for women only), 12 oz frozen (for women only), 64 oz or 128 oz shelf-stable or refrigerated ready to serve (for children only)
- Bullet statement under juice should be black, italic font and change bullet to *
- Revise “100% Whole Wheat Tortillas – Approved brands only, 8 – 16 oz. packages”
- Revise “Soft Corn Tortillas – Approved brands only, 8 – 16 oz. packages”
- Brown rice delete “(14 oz)” beside instant
- Remove “ & FISH” from LEGUMES category
- Add to peanut butter bullet list “natural without palm oil” and “organic”
- Delete “or organic” from peanut butter cannot buy but add “varieties containing palm oil”

- Revise “FISH – Any brand, 5, 6, 7.5, or 14.75 oz single cans or multiple packs packed in water or oil (for breastfeeding women only)” with “chunk light tuna” and “pink salmon” as bullets underneath (like types of cheese list)
- “WIC Program Booklet” should read “WIC Shopping Guide” throughout the document

Section 3:

- Pg 6, 2nd paragraph of right hand column, 3rd sentence delete “contact their local WIC clinic or”
- Pg 6, add as last sentence under mixed basket transactions, “**The only exception is for foster families which are provided an eWIC card for each foster child in their care.**”
- Pg 6, first sentence under WIC Transactions & Receipts, “Self-checkout lanes are allowed for WIC purchases if available.”
- Pg 7, update receipt to say “WV”

Section 4:

- Pg 9, 2nd bullet, show a register receipt example of whole/lowfat milk after this bullet example
- Pg 9, right hand column, Include instructions for how to download WICShopper app as 2nd paragraph (same as Shopping Guide)
- Pg 10, last sentence of 1st paragraph, revise to read, “The WIC participant then receives a replacement of infant formula for the same number of containers, type and brand as what was returned to the store.”
- Pg 10, first sentence of 2nd paragraph, revise, “...or the container is damaged at the time of purchase.”

Section 5:

- Pg 14, delete #4

The work of the small groups along with the comments of all other participants during large group discussion yielded a consensus of approval with recommendation to introduce cashier training manual FY 2020 with consideration for a training guide specific to integrated stores and another for stores equipped with stand-beside equipment. Vendors would also like a “practice account or eWIC card” for training purposes.

Large group review and facilitate discussion following viewing the Participant Education Video identified initial content for a Cashier Training Video.

Recommendations are:

- Highlight the WICShopper app but not as much detail as provided to participants

- Approved Food List
- UPC reporting
- Completing a transaction – including mixed basket with approved and not approved items; using mid-transaction receipt to determine what was not approved; split tender; removing an item not approved from a transaction; correcting a duplicate transaction
- Appropriate exchange and not allowed exchange
- How to handle lost, stolen, damaged cards
- Card must be present and PIN manually entered
- Family may have more than one card, but must be separate transaction
- Overview of confidentiality
- No discrimination
- Ability to make a complaint against participant

Vendor Handbook: Participants were divided into six small groups to offer comments and suggestions on one section each of the Vendor Handbook. Suggested revisions are:

- Pg 4, Department definition, remove period after Health
- Pg 6, Delete “, known in West Virginia as FoodShare” from SNAP definition
- Pg 6, Add definition, “Local WIC Liaison”: The primary contact between the local WIC clinic and the retailer which assists the State WIC Vendor Management Unit in carrying out the vendor management policies and procedures in a fair and consistent manner.
- Pg 7, Special Medical Foods, change “are” to “is”
- Pg 7, Vendor Price Survey (VPS), capitalize State
- Pg 7, Add definition, “Violation”: Any intentional or unintentional actions of a vendor’s current owners, officers, managers, agents, employees or representatives (with or without knowledge of management) which violates the vendor agreement or federal or state statutes, regulations, policies and procedures governing the WIC Program.
- Pg 8, Vendor Agreement, 3rd paragraph, add as 2nd sentence “It is imperative the store and management emails are up to date as the majority of communication will be sent via email.” Make a new paragraph, “Vendors are responsible for ensuring cashiers and other employees are advised of program changes. Vendors are responsible for any violations committed by their employees which affect WIC Program authorization.”
- Pg 8, Vendor Contract Period, 2nd sentence revise to “All vendor authorizations will expire on the last day of the month.” 2nd paragraph of same section, delete last sentence
- Pg 10, Add “Room 519” to address
- Pg 16, 1st paragraph, last bullet revise “project” to “clinic”
- Pg 16, Delete “/Compliance Review” from 1st tile in right hand column; 6th bullet revise to “Verify WIC Authorized Vendor door decals are posted on the entrance

- and can be seen from outside the store.”; 8th bullet, delete “fresh and”; 9th bullet, “Review use of shelf tags/labels identify all required food items.”
- Pg 17, Records Audit, 2nd sentence change “...United States, any eWIC cards...”; 6th bullet, revise “Woodman’s” to “Kroger”
 - Pg 18, 1st paragraph needs “;” after compliance visit; change reapplication to reauthorization; change local WIC project to local WIC clinic
 - Pg 18, Annual Training, 2nd sentence revise to read, “If a vendor has completed reauthorization training during the current fiscal year (October 1 through September 30), the vendor is not required to complete annual training.
 - Pg 18, right hand column, last bullet revise Handbook to “Manual”
 - Pg 19, revise “shall” to “must”; left hand column, last bullet should read, “...participants to return or exchange food purchased with WIC benefits for other food items.”
 - Pg 20, revise benefit start: 10/1/2019 and Benefits End Midnight: 10/30/2019; #8 remove 2%;
 - Pg 21, #8 delete 2%; change Approved Food Booklet to WIC Approved Shopping Guide
 - Pg 22, 2nd paragraph change project to clinic; 3rd paragraph, 1st sentence read “Vendors must display a WIC Authorized Vendor decal in an area visible....”; right-hand column, paragraph after bullets, 2nd sentence change project to clinic; add Room 519 to address
 - Pg 23, Recordkeeping, 2nd sentence add “FNS” after the Department; delete 2nd paragraph of this subsection
 - Pg 24, revise subtitle to “Change of Ownership or Closings”; change project to clinic; Reporting Participant Complaints and Fraud, 2nd sentence change local WIC project to Vendor Management Unit.; update website to <https://dhhr.wv.gov/WIC>. Change your local WIC liaison to “the Vendor Management Unit”
 - Pg 25, delete Approved: April 3, 2017

**Include Reporting Participant Complaints and Fraud in Cashier Training Manual*

Vendor Outreach: Heidi introduced a draft design of “How to Become a WIC Vendor” mailer brochure as developed by State Agency and Local Agency Vendor Liaisons. In West Virginia, only 13% of eligible SNAP retail locations participate in the WIC Program which may contribute to access issues in some areas. This brochure will be sent to all SNAP authorized stores in state, and seems to be a logical starting point for vendor outreach efforts prior to transitioning to WIC outreach materials in retail locations.

Peer Group Classification System: Heidi shared the updated draft proposal following initial review by Regional Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Office. FNS recommends creating more variance in the average food basket cost between Peer Group 2, 3, and 4. While the class would be too large for combining the three types of stores, the average food basket cost between peer groups should be significantly different. Heidi will continue to work with FNS with final draft (or approved system) presented at FY 2020 Advisory Board Meeting (May 13, 2020).

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED VENDOR PEER GROUP SYSTEM

Peer Group 1: Mass Merchandisers – Retailer that a) sells a wide variety of merchandise but also carries groceries, b) owns a distribution center, and c) operates nationwide.

Peer Group 2: National Grocery Chains – Retailer that a) primarily sells groceries, b) has own distribution center, and c) operates in 10 or more states.

Peer Group 3: Regional Grocery Chains – Retailer that a) primarily sells groceries, b) orders from a corporate or national grocer distribution center, and c) operates in 4-9 states and/or corporate headquarters not in West Virginia.

Peer Group 4: Local Grocery Chains – Retailer that a) primarily sells groceries, b) orders through corporate or national grocer distribution center, and c) operates in 3 or less states and/or in more than one WIC region of West Virginia.

Peer Group 5: Rural Independent Grocers – Retailer that a) primarily sells groceries, b) uses a third-party distribution center, and c) operates in only one WIC region of West Virginia. *May include franchisee of national grocer.

Peer Group 6: Isolated Independent Stores – Retailer that a) sells a wide variety of merchandise but has a limited assortment of grocery items, b) uses third-party distribution center, and c) operates in only one WIC region of West Virginia.

Next Steps: The purpose of 'Next Steps' is to highlight the tasks, persons responsible and timelines identified within the meeting. Some tasks, persons responsible and timelines may be found in the body of the notes. However, every attempt should be made to repeat the tasks, timelines and responsible parties in the 'Next Steps' section of the notes for ease of reference and accountability by all staff.

- Heidi will develop meeting minutes and send to attendees, all WIC Vendors and Local Agency Directors by 4/20/19.
- The 4th Annual **Vendor Advisory Board meeting** will occur **May 13, 2020**. The meeting will be hosted by the TSN WIC Program in **Beckley, WV** with specific meeting location TBD. The meeting will introduce draft in-store outreach materials as well as 2020 WV Approved Food List.
- **Vendor Advisory Board quarterly phone calls** will continue with scheduled dates of: **April 25, 2019, July 25, 2019, October 24, 2019, January 23, 2020**. All calls will begin at 9:30 am by calling 1-877-302-0757; use conference ID 7232679. Calls will offer the ability for all vendors to stay up to date on status of

policy and procedure changes recommended by the Board as well as federal or state regulation changes which could influence vendor operations.

- Vendor Management Unit will mail “How to Become a WIC Vendor” brochure to all West Virginia authorized SNAP retailers as kick-off to outreach efforts. Focus of Advisory Board in FY 2019 will remain as identifying in-store tools and methods to increase benefit redemption, healthy food access and WIC customer outreach.
- Vendor Management Unit will update redemption prices and number of stores in each proposed peer group for resubmission of proposed vendor peer group system to FNS in hopes of October 1, 2019 implementation date.
- Vendor Management Unit will facilitate revisions of the Cashier Training Manual and Vendor Handbook in hopes of October 1, 2020 effective date. Cashier Training Manual will be on a two year revision cycle with the Approved Food List, and Vendor Handbook will be a three year revision cycle.

Parking Lot: The purpose of the parking lot is ‘park’ important ideas, thoughts and concepts that need attention, but are not within the scope of the current meeting. Participants should plan time for addressing the issues on the parking lot in a way that is meaningful and timely for the group. The following issues were placed on the parking lot at the meeting.

- Update participant education video concerning proxy and foster children up to age 5.
- Recommend the mid-transaction receipt not only list individual items, but also total item count
- Would like off-line capability for WICShopper app
- Consider developing shopping guides/tools which are store specific (contain only the specific WIC approved products carried by that chain)