

Vendor Quarterly Call

07/27/2022

Meeting Notes

Formula Recall Update

Since the beginning of the Similac Recall, WV WIC has added over 100 Infant Formulas to our Approved Product List.

We extended alternatives to Similac Isomil in June 2022.

Within the Similac Fussiness and Gas Category (orange can), the 12oz Similac F&G can made up 75% of sales in July 2022.

Within the Similac Advance category (blue can), the 12oz Similac Advance can made 80% of all the sales in the category.

Both Advance and Fussiness and Gas have rebounded in stores, as far as the data is concerned.

The categories for Similac Total Comfort (Purple Can), Similac Spit-Up (Green Can), and Similac Alimentum (Gold Can) sales are still non-existent. We have added alternatives in Enfamil, Gerber, and Store Brand formulas, but sales continue to dwindle as other formula makers struggle to replace Abbott's footprint.

How are things looking in stores? Are your orders being fulfilled? Receiving half packages?

Sharon Pitt with Walmart commented that what WIC reports show bear what is being seen in the store

No other responses from retailers were logged regarding how orders are being fulfilled or receiving only half packages.

With Abbott reopening of the Sturgis plant in Michigan (for the second time) they are looking to increase production, but the focus for the next few weeks is a special formula Elecare. The state of West Virginia has looked into adding imports, but the last we heard is that many retailers and distributors did not have a firm answer on the amount or time frame they would receive imported formula.

Has your store received any imported formula? Are you able to order Nido, Bubs, etc.
No responses

Because of the delays in Abbott's rebound, a week ago Abbott released a statement saying they would continue rebating alternative formulas until at least September 30, 2022 instead of their original deadline of August 31, 2022.

So it is very important that stores keep their APL up to date. We have created a report at the state office that looks at the newest item in our APL and items that were sold at the store. We have several stores that appear to have last updated their APL at the start of the Formula Crisis on 02/22 and not received a new APL since then. After hearing several issues from stores with selling new alternative formulas, it may be worth contacting your register systems technical team to pull down new APLs. From what we are hearing, some technical teams will push an APL update as far as Fruits and Vegetables, but may not download other categories. Asked if stores have reported problems with participants unable to purchase alternatives?

No response

Additions/Deletions to shopping guide

Read through the addition deletion tool. No questions were asked regarding what items were added or discontinued.

Susan Stoneking with MOVHD wanted to know when clinics and stores would receive the Addition/Deletion Tool? Brent did not have an ETA on the printed material.

Ask about feelings on keeping shopping guides at registers as per policy. There is talk that some stores are reducing the amount of paper, etc being kept at each register.

No response from retailers. Susan Stoneking commented on the usefulness at each register.

Ask vendors what, if any, **advertising they are willing or able to put at their registers**. Other states are developing stickers/flyers/talkers to promote WIC to hang at registers.

Sharon Pitt responded to this question, by referring to corporate's opinion on shopping guides. Having less at the register is always preferred.

There is a **grant opportunity for improving the WIC shopping experience**. Some ideas given by the feds were online ordering, having "WIC sections" in grocery stores, expanding self-checkout, creating store maps, more/bigger signage for WIC items. Get feedback from vendor as to what, if any, ideas they may have.

No response from Vendors. Brent threw out the idea of the Little Debbie stands in stores and how they promote products. Darry Rimmer with Food Lion commented the corporate office cannot say what each retailer does, but asking stores to maintain foods in two locations is a large task for stores and would probably not be a favorable

configuration. Darry also mentioned that any ideas WIC had that we could email her and she could poll their stores if a request would be do-able.

Vince D'onofrio with Giant Eagles in two states mentioned that Pennsylvania WIC worked with an advertiser to put WIC advertisements on the front of all Giant Eagle shopping carts to promote WIC. Vince asked if this is a grant to promote WIC to potential participants?

Brent mentioned that most grants are structured around making the WIC shopping experience easier for participants. Promotion is always great though.

Vince D'onofrio mentioned that Giant Eagles do have store maps available, normally near their weekly ad, but they are guessing they will slowly phase out for the use of Giant Eagles phone app with a built-in map.

Brent asked if store maps are ever included in hand baskets or mostly kept in a single location. Vince commented that maps are kept in a single location.

Brent asked about how stores feel about WIC sections in stores. Vince commented that when WIC changes are requested that Giant Eagle follows the guidelines on not identifying WIC participants any more than what is needed. Vince was afraid that creating a WIC Food Section would cross the line of identifying participants as separate from normal customers. Vince commented that Giant Eagle has worked to make WIC signs bigger on WIC food items which has seemed to alleviate some struggles with finding WIC Foods.

Ask about interest in online ordering. We can partner with a third party company that would create an online grocery store for stores. Condensed version—participant shops at the online store, selects items, store is notified to pull the items, participant picks up items and pays at store. With the grant funds, the state could possibly pay for initial setup and a few months of service, but then stores would contract directly with the outside company. There is a monthly subscription and per transaction fee.

Darry Rimmer commented that many stores are hesitant to incorporate WIC in their online platform until they have final rules and regulations from the USDA. Darry believes that once the rules are solidified then many retailers will expand their existing online shops.

Vince D'onofrio commented that Giant Eagle has ordering online, but would need WIC to find a way to integrate their system with how Giant Eagle's application already performs.

Janie Sine with Shenandoah asked for more elaboration on how an online store would be made and how that process worked.

Brent commented that this grant would be more geared towards middle to smaller sized stores who don't already have an online presence.

Janie commented on how easy the Quick Shop in Martinsburg (?) is for WIC participants because they have an entire section carved out for just WIC foods. Participants comment all the time on how easy it is to find the items they are looking for. Could see the benefit in an online store that only offered WIC foods and believes it would reduce the confusion that comes from many stores.

Brent referenced DHHRWICVU@WV.gov for sharing any ideas that may not have been mentioned on the calls.