

WIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES

October 27, 2015

Members Present: Maria Carunungan, Debra Celnik, Tracey Leef, Jacqueline Marlette-Boras, Shannon Meadows, and Joan Salim.

Members Absent: Kristen Hurley, Howard Klein, Rachael Parren, Heather Ross, Dana Silver, and Michael Wilson.

Others Present: Deborah Morgan, David Paige, and Shawn Darian.

Welcome

Jackie Marlette-Boras opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the May 12, 2015 meeting were approved by ballot in July with one minor correction. On page 2, change the heading from WIC Advisory County Bylaw Changes to WIC Advisory Council Bylaw Changes. A member asked that we consider posting the minutes on the Program's website. Jackie stated that the DHMH website is currently being revamped but would investigate the possibility once that project is complete.

Membership/Officers

Jackie announced that we still have some vacancies on the Council that we're trying to fill. One is for a small WIC vendor and the other for a current or previous WIC participant, since Whitney Dunlap from Anne Arundel County notified us that she was relocating out-of-state. If anyone knows of potential applicants to fill these positions please let Jackie or Debbie know at the state office.

Jackie announced that Tracey Leef (Chair) and Debi Celnick (Vice-Chair) have agreed to maintain their current positions with support from the Council. After a call for other nominees, council members in attendance voted unanimously to maintain these two officers.

WIC Advisory Council Bylaw Change

The proposed change to the WIC Advisory Council Bylaws, Article V. "Meetings" was approved by ballot in July. The amended bylaws read: *The Council shall meet as often as necessary, as determined by the Chairperson, or at the request of any five members, but no less than one time each year.*

As a reminder, the Council agreed to only schedule one in-person meeting per year; but the Chair or any five members can contact the Chair to schedule a meeting if they feel that the Council needs to meet. We will keep you up to date on legislation, progress with e-WIC as well as other pertinent programmatic issues/changes through Advisory Council Updates throughout the year. The in-person meeting will be held in October of each year.

Program Updates/Information

Participation

Members were directed to the Maryland WIC Participation Trends graph in their packet and noted that the program's participation numbers for 2015 have consistently been above our 2014 numbers, although we started to dip slightly in August. The program is continuing to advertise through mass transit outlets, which seemed to help earlier this year with maintaining Maryland's rates above the national average.

eWIC Update

Jackie announced that the Program signed a contract with an eWIC processor: Solutran, Inc. Solutran has been the Program's banking contractor for years and they have done off-line WIC EBT in Texas and some other states. Montana and Maryland will be their first on-line systems.

The eWIC kickoff meeting with Solutran is scheduled for December 8 and 9 and the timeline will be finalized then, but as of now the pilot is scheduled for late January of 2017.

A kickoff meeting of the Program's eWIC work groups was held this past week where representatives from the Local Agencies and the state will work together to discuss and develop processes and policies on:

- Clinic Operations & Training
- Marketing and Communication
- Management Information System
- Implementation
- Vendor & Retailer Certification

These groups will meet regularly to discuss preparations for participant and vendor readiness, policy changes, training needs, etc. Fortunately, there is a lot of information available from other states that will assist Maryland in the transition from paper checks to the eWIC benefit card. Staff are preparing to collect Universal Product Codes (UPCs) of all items eligible for purchase under Maryland's authorized food policies.

Overall, implementation is expected to take approximately two years from beginning to end.

State Plan Approval

Jackie explained that every year, the State Office submits a state plan to USDA that outlines our policies and procedures to ensure that we are meeting federal requirements. This must be completed and approved in order to continue to receive federal funding – we do not submit a grant application every year, since our funding is provided through legislation, but we do need to obtain approval of the state plan and of any updates to our policies and procedures for each federal fiscal year. Maryland's state plan was approved in September, 2015.

Funding and Reauthorization

Congress did not pass a budget so WIC is being funded via a continuing resolution along with the rest of government. December 11, 2015 is the current end date of the continuing resolution and the USDA is hopeful that we will have a budget by then.

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act that authorizes all of the federal child nutrition programs, including the School Breakfast, National School Lunch, Child and Adult Care Food, Summer Food Service, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Programs and WIC is up for reauthorization. The Program will continue to run by virtue of funding availability through the CR in the short-term while Congress works to complete and pass the latest version of the Act.

WIC's requests in regards to the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization were summarized in a letter from NWA in the handouts. Members discussed several items contained in the letter including changing the name from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) to the Special Supplemental **Public Health** Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC); protecting and preserving adjunctive eligibility which is continually being challenged; giving states the option to certify infants for two years; increasing the certification timeline for breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding women; extending the eligibility for children to age six; and increasing funding for electronic service benefit delivery so all states can transition by 2020. Dr. Paige noted that WIC should be working closer with Head Start and the school systems to knit these programs together.

October 1 Benefit Changes

The Cash Value Voucher (CVV) or Fruit and Vegetable Checks (FVCs) as they are known in Maryland, increased from \$10 to \$11 for all women effective October 1, 2015. Women Breastfeeding multiples receive \$16.50 per month. The CVV for children remains at \$8.

Also, beginning October 1, the contract Soy formula changed from Enfamil Prosobee (Mead Johnson) to Nestle Good Start Soy. Jackie explained that the program has had some issues with having enough stock in stores for our participants, but that we have been in touch with Gerber almost daily over the past 3 weeks and they have been working to improve the supply in Maryland and have shipped cases of formula to our Local Agencies so that we can give participants a can to hold them over if they were having problems finding it in stores.

Farmers' Markets

Members were given a handout summarizing a pilot project conducted by University of Maryland's Food Supplement Nutrition Education (FSNE) office and Baltimore County WIC titled Market to Mealtime (M2M). The pilot was held in July and August in conjunction with check pick-up and nutrition education classes where participants received Market to Mealtime education and food tastings, participated in a short survey, and then were able to shop at a Farmers' Market established outside of the WIC Clinic.

The results were that 83% of those participating reported that the M2M education influenced what they would buy at the market that day; and that on a scale of 1 to 10, participants rated the convenience of having a market on-site as a 9.17.

Results will be shared with other local agencies in the coming months with hopes of co-locating additional WIC and Farmers' Market locations for the 2017 season.

NY Times Article and Rebuttal

Members were directed to a recent NY Times article about breastfeeding that was distributed in their packets. In the article, the author expressed her views about the “overselling of breastfeeding” which is fine, but she misrepresented the WIC Program’s support of breastfeeding. NWA wrote a rebuttal to the article which clarified WIC’s approach.

Jackie announced that Maryland birthing hospitals are now bag-free! Maryland is the 4th state in the nation (DE, RI, MA) to become bag free.

Next Meeting

The next in-person meeting of the Advisory Council is scheduled for Tuesday, October 25, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. The location will be at the WIC Training and Temporary Services Center, 5503A Ritchie Highway, Brooklyn Park, MD 21225.