

Meeting Minutes

Subject: Retailer Advisory Teleconference

Date: October 19, 2017

Time: 11:00 AM

The meeting began at 11:00 AM (delayed one hour due to the scheduled earthquake drill). Organizations in attendance either in person or on the phone: Damon, Farm Fresh, Food Lion, Gerber, Giant of Landover, Houchens, Reid's Supermarket, Shop and Save, Virginia WIC Office (Paula Garrett, Alex Acharya, Bob Altermatt, Al Astley, Freda Bolling, Ephraim Ewing, Amy Romero & Brian Tun), and Wal-Mart.

Paula Garrett (WIC Program Manager) provided an update of the WIC program:

1. **New Director:** Dr. Mandeep Virk-Baker has been named the new Director of Community Nutrition, replacing Dr. Mike Welch. Dr. Virk-Baker had a scheduling conflict that prevented her from being in attendance today.
2. **Federal Budget:** The FFY 2018 budget is currently operating under a Continuing Resolution, which will provide level funding through 12/8/17.
3. **WIC on Wheels (WOW):** This program is well into Phase 1 of operation, providing grocery store tours at selected Farm Fresh, Wal-Mart and Food Lion stores in the Tidewater area. The Virginia Cooperative Extension is providing training to the WOW staff. Phase 2 will acquire a WOW van that will serve as a mobile WIC Clinic, and will be painted with fruits and vegetables and the WIC logo. The mobile clinic will provide all of the WIC capabilities available in traditional clinics from a participating store's parking lot. It will also be able to conduct store tours as a 'one-stop shop'. This pilot project will be extended to Virginia Beach and Eastern Shore areas, and then evaluated in terms of WIC Participation Rates, to determine if extending the pilot to the rest of the state is justified. There is an independent "Feet for Fleet" effort to evaluate mobile WIC clinics in the western part of the state.
4. **New Food List:** All applications have been received and evaluated manufacturers of newly approved products will be notified by mail within in the next few weeks. The new list will include national brands in addition to store brands, which is expected to have little impact on Virginia's WIC food costs while increasing the WIC participation rate. The new Food List is expected to go into effect on 4/1/2018.
5. **Thanks:** The Summer Food Programs want to thank those retailers who included the text message to help spread the news about this valuable program available to some of their customers.
6. **Participant Satisfaction Survey:** The survey has been completed recently and the results are being tabulated. More than 24,600 surveys were completed out of the more than 30,000 surveys distributed. The survey was 16 pages long and included 64 separate data points. Major findings include:

- a. More than 90% of the English-speaking participants indicated that the instruction they received from the WIC Staff was acceptable, but that they are not always able to determine the WIC eligible items from the non-eligible items, which indicates that there still may be some ‘teachable moments’.
- b. Most participants shop at the larger stores that are five to 15 minutes from their home, and that the retail store staff are extremely helpful.
- c. 52% indicate that they purchase all of the items on their eWIC prescription.
- d. Over 90% report as being technologically savvy, own a smart phone, and that their preferred modes of communication are text messages, Facebook, and email.

Alex Acharya (WIC Vendor Compliance Manager) provided an update of the Vendor Compliance Team:

1. Food List: The Vendor Team is actively working on plans to distribute the Food Lists to the retail stores, and to provide training. Current plans include communicating via the Working with WIC eBulletin, emails, the WIC Retailer Website, and Webinars that will be scheduled in February and/or March of 2018. Suggestions on how best to communicate plans, provide training and distribute the new Food List are always appreciated. As recommended by one of the attendees, the list of UPCs and descriptions that were added and deleted will be provided prior to the 4/1/2018 effective date. (**Note:** the active Approved Product List of all 11,600+ WIC-eligible UPCs and their descriptions is updated nightly and available on the Retailer ‘Resources’ web page at: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/44/2017/02/VAAPL.xlsx>).
2. Contract Reauthorization: All stores that completed the mandatory requirements were successfully reauthorized for the new contract period 10/1/2017 to 9/30/2020. We appreciate the support from all retail stores with the mandatory training and the completion of the paperwork required for the new contract period.
3. Retailer Agreement Distribution: Signed Retailer Agreements have been sent to all retail stores. If any store has yet to received their signed agreement, please notify Alex Acharya (alex.acharya@vdh.virginia.gov) or your assigned Vendor Liaison.
4. Contact list for EPPIC issues: We are investigating how best to notify retail stores when unexpected downtime for WIC processing is being experienced. We are currently sending an email to the primary contact collected from each retail store during reauthorization. If you have different or additional personnel to be notified in the event of an outage, please notify Alex Acharya (alex.acharya@vdh.virginia.gov) or your assigned Vendor Liaison.
5. Retail Binder at Stores: Store Monitoring Reviews are indicating that many stores are unable to locate their Retail Store Binder. This binder serves as an important resource to be able to quickly respond to WIC questions and issues.

Action: We ask that each store determine a single location for this binder, ensure that all store personnel are aware of its location, and that the binder is returned to this location when used.

6. Retailer Supply Request Web Form: A web version of the Retailer Supply Request Form is now available on the WIC Retailer ‘Resources’ web page. This form allows for a supply request to be

submitted directly from the link (<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/wic-retailers/retailer-supply-request-form>), eliminating the need for completing a separate form and returning it.

7. Working with WIC eBulletin: The next edition of our “newsletter” will go out in November and will cover a variety of topics. If you don’t receive it via email by early December, please provide your name, email address, with your request to be added to our distribution list to WIC_Retailer@vdh.virginia.gov.
8. MailChimp: As you may have noticed, we are using this commercial software to individualize our electronic communications. We are currently using MailChimp to email out our eBulletins, announcements, and other mass email items.
9. Future Plans: We are planning to continue to use Webinars in lieu of face-to-face training. We recognize that some retail stores do not have direct Internet connectivity, which will require us to use the corporate contact and/or corporate training for distribution of training materials. Please contact Alex Acharya directly if you have other suggestions for enhancing our communication capabilities.

Benefits: WIC on Wheels

Concerns: Continuing Resolution

The meeting ended at 11:30 AM

Next meeting: Thursday 1/18/18 at 10:00 AM. Minutes of this meeting will be distributed with the “Save the Date” email for our next meeting.