



January 15, 2008

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Food and
Nutrition
Service

3101 Park
Center Drive
Alexandria, VA
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SUBJECT: WIC Policy Memorandum 2008-1
WIC Program Explanation for Participants

TO: Regional Directors
Supplemental Food Programs
All Regions

This policy memorandum supersedes and replaces WIC Policy Memorandum 92-5: WIC Program Explanation. The policy regarding the WIC Program explanation is being updated to align more effectively with the participant-centered, positive approach emphasized in the Value Enhanced Nutrition Assessment (VENA) initiative. Please transmit this memorandum to all WIC State agencies in your region.

Background

This policy memorandum provides guidance about WIC Program information to be provided to participants during the certification process. It is important for participants to receive an explanation of the Program's purpose and key operational features to minimize misunderstandings about the nature of WIC and the benefits it provides. WIC State agencies may determine how the information is communicated to participants, provided that it is reflective of the VENA philosophy. That is, the information is provided to participants as part of a positive, participant-centered assessment process.

WIC Program Explanation to Participants

State agencies must establish policy and procedures to ensure that their local staffs provide the following information to each participant:

- The purpose of the WIC Program is to provide nutritional support, i.e., education and strategies for a healthy diet, supplemental foods, referrals and breastfeeding promotion and support, during critical times of growth and development, to improve health and achieve positive health outcomes.
- The nutrition assessment process is necessary to identify nutrition needs (e.g., medical conditions, dietary practices) and interests so that WIC can provide benefits that are responsive to the participant's wants and needs.
- The relationship between WIC staff and the participant is a partnership – with open dialogue and two-way communication – working to achieve positive health outcomes.
- WIC food benefits are prescribed for the individual, to promote and support the nutritional well-being of the participant and to help meet the recommended intake of important nutrients or foods.

Guidance documents lack the force and effect of law, unless expressly authorized by statute or incorporated into a contract. USDA may not cite, use, or rely on any guidance that is not available through their guidance portal, except to establish historical facts.

- The food provided by the Program is supplemental, i.e., it is not intended to provide all of the participant's daily food requirements.
- Each participant must reapply at the end of the certification period and be reassessed for Program eligibility.
- The nature of the WIC priority system and the priority designation for the individual, if the local agency is not serving all priorities.

As part of VENA implementation, as well as in ongoing new local agency employee training, State agencies should ensure that the key concepts described above are addressed. In addition, it is important to evaluate how well these points are being communicated during the course of local agency management evaluations, and to adjust or modify the procedures as necessary.

This information is critical for proper participant orientation to the WIC Program. However, it does not by itself satisfy the requirement to provide nutrition education during the certification period.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia N. Daniels". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

PATRICIA N. DANIELS
Director
Supplemental Food Programs Division