

WIC Local Agency Conference Call

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2023, 8:30-9:30 AM

Agenda and Summary Notes

Agenda Items:

- National Updates
- Infant Formula Waivers Ending – Rebecca, Jessie
- Coeffective Update – Rosie
- Local Agencies Funding Opportunities – Rosie, Megan, Rebecca

National Updates- Kate

WIC ARPA Grant Waivers – Policy Memo February 1, 2023

USDA issued guidance through the ARPA – [Additional WIC Flexibilities to Support Outreach, Innovation, and Modernization Efforts through ARPA Nationwide Waivers – Supporting Remote WIC Operations](#)

The provision of remote services over the past several years has proven to be an effective and efficient way to provide WIC services to eligible families. Initial research suggests that remote services reduced the administrative burdens faced by eligible individuals to accessing and maintaining benefits and that participants were satisfied with remote services.

As the circumstances of COVID-19 evolve, USDA recognizes that remote services have become foundational to offering a modern WIC experience to participants. State agencies learned a great deal under FFCRA waivers that can be used to modernize the Program via longer-term waivers of in-person requirements. USDA will waive the requirements below for all State agencies that elect to use each waiver (i.e., Physical Presence and/or Remote Benefit Issuance). Unless superseded by statute or FNS determines the waivers are no longer necessary or appropriate, including a situation where the State agency fails to meet the conditions under which waivers are approved, these waivers will remain in effect until: September 30, 2026 or for active projects reliant on these waivers after September 30, 2026, the date that FNS ends its evaluation efforts.

Physical Presence: 42 U.S.C. 1786(d)(3)(C)(i) and 7 CFR 246.7(o)(1), which require that each individual seeking to participate in the WIC program must be physically present at each certification or recertification in order to determine program eligibility. The approval to waive the physical presence requirement includes the deferral of anthropometric and bloodwork measurements (as required in 7 CFR 246.7 (e)(1)) no later than 60 days. However, a nutrition risk assessment, which may be based on information available through online communication and/or referral data, must be completed at certification by the Competent Professional Authority (CPA). To the extent possible, State and/or local agencies must make concerted efforts to obtain referral data for anthropometric and blood iron level measurements in advance of or at the time of the appointment.

Remote Benefit Issuance: 7 CFR 246.12(r)(4), which requires in-person pick up of food instruments when a participant is scheduled for nutrition education or has a subsequent certification appointment.

State agencies electing to use one or both of these waivers must continue to meet all other Federal WIC requirements unless additional waivers are obtained. Additionally, the State agency must provide the option for participants to obtain in-person services. To ensure that these new waivers support modernization of the WIC Program, the State agency must ensure their State Plan includes a description of how the State agency will provide the option for participants to obtain in-person services. The State agency must also ensure that their State Plan amendment includes a description of how the State agency will provide remote and in-person services. State agencies should include their policies and procedures for obtaining and documenting all certification requirements including applicant/participant anthropometric and blood iron level data.

Expect USDA Online Shopping Proposed Rule to be Published Soon

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service is working proactively with program stakeholders to make online ordering and transactions a reality in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC Program). This proposed rule would address key regulatory barriers to online ordering in the WIC Program by making changes to the provisions that prevent online transactions and types of online capable stores from participating in the Program.

USDA Food Package Updates – Last week to share your comments

[Submit comments on the WIC Food Package to USDA](#) and let them know your thoughts on the proposed WIC Food Package changes. You can view comments already submitted at: [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\): Revisions in the WIC Food Packages](#)

The National WIC Association has prepared [National WIC Association Talking Points and Template Language](#) to support you in crafting your comments, as well as [WIC Food Package Rule Comments Social Media Toolkit](#) to spread the word. Comments are due by February 21, 2023. *Please note that submitting a public comment is NOT a lobbying activity.*

Summary of USDA WIC Coverage Report for 2020

[National and State Level Estimates of WIC Eligibility and Program Reach in 2020](#)

Other Program Updates

Infant formula Waivers Ending – Jessie & Rebecca

Timeline:

- Current formula substitutions for contract formula are through February 27. This is the last day participants can purchase Enfamil formula substitutions including Similac, Gerber and store brands.
- Starting February 28 and after, participants will only be allowed to purchase the WIC contract Mead Johnson or Similac Soy Isomil formula on their benefits, store and non-contract formula will no longer be allowed.
- Alternate can sizes for contract formula will be available February 27 through April 29, 2023.
- Substitutions for medical formula will be available through June.

New substitutions lists are now posted to the WIC website to this page: [Formula Guidance - WIC Staff - MN Dept. of Health](#)

Website locations:

- For WIC Staff - WIC Home >> Local Agencies >> What you need to know >>Formula Guidance
- For Participants - WIC Home >> Shopping Help >> WIC Formula

What are we hearing?

- A few Abbott states are telling us that Total Comfort and Sensitive stock is thin, and many states are utilizing Gentlease until March 1, 2023. This is just background info to explain why we may not see a large volume of stock yet in MN
- We have had to place some direct ship orders for Gentlease in MN over the past 2 weeks. 12% of families are still purchasing Total Comfort or Sensitive and this could be because of availability OR preference.
- Mead Johnson reports there is enough production of Gentlease. When Abbott states like WI and ND no longer allow substitutes, it should help with supply to MN. It will take some time for shipments to adjust and make their way into MN.
- Mead Johnson did state that we may see a slight shortage of Enfamil AR as this is the only rice starch product now that Similac Spit Up is discontinued. Abbott and Nestle states may all be using this product beyond March 1, but this has been the case for the past 6 months.
- Mead Johnson confirmed that we will still see majority of formula use as 12oz cans; the larger cans will vary depending on retailer and wholesaler supply.
- Walgreens has confirmed to MN that they will not have adequate supply of Enfamil products.
- Other major retailers in MN are getting allocations and we are told they have healthy inventory levels now and for early March.
- Lastly, the MN WIC APL excel file won't be updated online until 3/1. This won't impact stores but be aware logistically it won't be posted until 3/1.

What to do if you have issues in your area?

- If you get reports that families cannot find Enfamil products, 12oz or the larger can sizes, don't hesitate to place an order to allow direct ship on the [Medical Formula Order form](#).
- Be sure that you inform the participant that they will need to pick up at the WIC clinic. We want to be sure formula is picked up and utilized.
- You don't need to reach out to your consultant before ordering unless you are getting a larger volume of calls and need larger shipments.
- We can work with Mead Johnson and distributors to resolve issues in an area. This can take time so utilize the order form through the state to get formula for direct ship.
- Contract formula orders do not need to be tied directly to a participant, but we are asking that you continue to order medical formula specifically for each participant.
- If you have questions about formula, please talk with your consultant and/or you can add me to your email to help respond to formula transition questions.

Coffective Community Partnership Collaborative – Rosie

Power Point was shared highlighting the projects from 2022. If you would like a copy of the slides or have questions reach out to Rosie.Pierce-Martin@state.mn.us.

WIC LOCAL AGENCY CONFERENCE CALL

The Community Partnership Collaborative is an opportunity to get support with implementing a new lactation-related project or accelerating a project you're already working on, and this year's interest form is due next month.

Join us for an informational webinar on February 22, 2023, 8:30-9:30 a.m. to learn more about this opportunity!

- Register for the [Coffective 2023 Minnesota Community Partnership Collaborative Information Webinar](#)

Coffective can provide:

- Coaching
- Technical assistance
- A \$5,000 stipend
- Opportunities to connect and learn from other WIC agencies across the Midwest region as you work on the project of your choice.

The timeframe is Spring 2023 – September 30, 2023, and the time commitment is on average 3-4 hours per month. To apply complete the [Community Partnership Collaborative 2023](#) interest form by Friday, March 10, 2023.

See some of the projects from last year in the Community Collaborative Overview for 2023, [Community Partnership Collaborative Increasing families' equitable access to care](#).

Local Agencies Funding Opportunities – Rosie, Megan, Rebecca

Refer to the [Additional Funding for Local WIC Agencies](#) page for information about the following grants:

[Funding Opportunity for Paraprofessional Staff](#)

[Local Agency Vendor Partnership and WIC Customer Satisfaction Project](#)

[Promoting Equity in Lactation](#)

[WIC Promotion and Outreach Grants](#)

Minnesota's Equity in Lactation Grants were featured in the Midwest region newsletter. To read the highlight or subscribe to the newsletter refer to these links: [Order Up! At the Midwest Table. Serving up Cooking Videos, Partner Spotlights and News \(govdelivery.com\)](#)

[Midwest WIC Programs take Breastfeeding Initiatives to the Next Level!](#)

Questions & Answers

With the new waivers, if no existing measurements are available from a health care provider, then do you envision that local agencies would issue 1 month of benefits at a time in order to collect measurements?

We are uncertain of the flexibilities that will be allowed with the waivers at this time and will share more details when we have additional direction from USDA.

How do these new waivers impact measurement requirements at midcertification appointments?

The information USDA provided has addressed WIC certification and has not addressed midcertification appointments. We will ask questions to get clarification in this area from USDA.

Will local agencies have any say in how we choose to implement the waivers or will MDH dictate how we need to implement them?

We will need to follow parameters set by USDA; however, we do plan to allow flexibilities for agencies within those parameters.

Does the app notification go out to all registered HH or only those with formula issued?

The app notification goes out to all registered Households.

Is this data available at the local level?

No.

Is the lowest coverage (USDA WIC Coverage Report for 2020) in reference of total eligible or total population?

Total eligible.

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[Additional WIC Flexibilities to Support Outreach, Innovation, and Modernization Efforts through ARPA Nationwide Waivers – Supporting Remote WIC Operations \(https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/WIC-ARPA-Waivers-to-Support-Nationwide-Remote-Certification.pdf\)](https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/WIC-ARPA-Waivers-to-Support-Nationwide-Remote-Certification.pdf)

[Submit comments on the WIC Food Package to USDA \(https://nwica.salsalabs.org/WICFoodPackageComments/index.html?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=1a22869d-a257-4f2e-9acb-6e7de32de160\)](https://nwica.salsalabs.org/WICFoodPackageComments/index.html?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=1a22869d-a257-4f2e-9acb-6e7de32de160)

[Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\): Revisions in the WIC Food Packages \(https://www.regulations.gov/docket/FNS-2006-0037/comments\)](https://www.regulations.gov/docket/FNS-2006-0037/comments)

[National WIC Association Talking Points and Template Language \(https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/wic%20food%20package_template%20comments.docx\)](https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/wic%20food%20package_template%20comments.docx)

[WIC Food Package Rule Comments Social Media Toolkit \(https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/wic-food-package-comments-toolkit.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=d25d27aa-136c-4016-a90e-eff93643986f\)](https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/wic-food-package-comments-toolkit.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=d25d27aa-136c-4016-a90e-eff93643986f)

[WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Project \(https://frac.org/wic-ciao\)](https://frac.org/wic-ciao)

[National and State Level Estimates of WIC Eligibility and Program Reach in 2020 \(https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/eligibility-and-program-reach-estimates-2020\)](https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/eligibility-and-program-reach-estimates-2020)

[Formula Guidance - WIC Staff - MN Dept. of Health \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/contract.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/contract.html)

[Medical Formula Order form \(https://survey.vovici.com/se/56206EE346B198E1\)](https://survey.vovici.com/se/56206EE346B198E1)

[Coffective 2023 Minnesota Community Partnership Collaborative Information Webinar \(https://airtable.com/shroWPWVJBadD3efj\)](https://airtable.com/shroWPWVJBadD3efj)

[Community Partnership Collaborative 2023 \(https://airtable.com/shrKvkN9GApvF82bg\)](https://airtable.com/shrKvkN9GApvF82bg)

WIC LOCAL AGENCY CONFERENCE CALL

Community Partnership Collaborative Increasing families' equitable access to care

(<https://coffective.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CommunityPartnershipCollaborative-Overview-MN-2023.pdf>)

Additional Funding for Local WIC Agencies

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/addfunding.html>)

Funding Opportunity for Paraprofessional Staff

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/addfunding.html#paraprofessional>)

Local Agency Vendor Partnership and WIC Customer Satisfaction Project

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/addfunding.html#satisfaction>)

Promoting Equity in Lactation

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/addfunding.html#equity>)

WIC Promotion and Outreach Grants

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/addfunding.html#outreach>)

Order Up! At the Midwest Table. Serving up Cooking Videos, Partner Spotlights and News

(<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFNS/bulletins/347a48f?reqfrom=share>)

Midwest WIC Programs take Breastfeeding Initiatives to the Next Level!

(https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/USFNS/2023/02/07/file_attachments/2402730/Midwest-WIC-Programs-take-Breastfeeding-Initiatives-to-the-Next-Level!-%282%29.pdf)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 625 Robert St N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.