

WIC Advisory Council Meeting
December 9, 2020
2:00 – 3:00 pm
Meeting Minutes

Council Members Present: Barbara Postler (SMOC), Cynthia Arroyo (DTA), Brian Houghton (MA Food Association), Kevin Reed (MOC), Gadyflor St. Clair (East Boston WIC), Kinnari Chitalia (Dorchester North WIC), Paul Geltman (UCHC), Joshua Trautwien (Fresh Truck), Katherine Truscott (BMC), Kate Audette (WIC participant), Adriene Worthington (GBFB), Khara Burns (Project Bread)

WIC Staff: Rachel Colchamiro, (WIC Program Director), Diana Hoek (Director for Policy, Marketing & Training), Mary Blocksidge (Vendor Manager), Karan DiMartino (Marketing Manager)

Projected Funding:

- State funding:
 - Level funding expected. The conference budget went to the Governor last week.
 - State funding supplements WIC food dollars through contributing additional \$2/month fruits/vegetables for children as well as supporting local agency contracts.
- Federal FY21 WIC Funding
 - The Continuing Resolution was extended until December 18th at midnight. If there is a government shutdown, the WIC program will be OK, as the program already received some funding from USDA.
 - The program is currently operating under last year's budget. Level funding is expected. The breastfeeding peer counselor program funding is expected to stay at last year's higher level.
- Local Program Budget Negotiations
 - Meetings were held from November to December. This is an opportunity to talk with WIC management staff and parent agency leadership about WIC caseload assignment, quality improvement, outreach strategies and budget concerns.

WIC COVID-19 Operations

- USDA Waivers: The waiver expiration date is now aligned with the end of the HHS declared public health emergency plus 30 days. The current waivers will be in place until at least Feb. 21, 2021.
- WIC Shopping Experience
 - MA WIC is participating in a subgroup of the National WIC Association's 'Online Ordering, Curbside Pickup, and Home Delivery WIC COVID-19 Working Group' which is outlining potential processes and requirements for a phase approach that ends with online ordering.

- MA has a waiver to the USDA regulation requiring the WIC Card PIN to be entered in the presence of a cashier. While MA WIC does not currently have the ability to implement online ordering, this waiver will allow MA WIC to continue to work towards it.
- MA WIC intends to apply for USDA's WIC online ordering grant.
- Council members made recommendations to improve access to nutritious foods.
 - Allow different milk alternatives
 - Explore delivery of special formulas
- Annual participant survey to be conducted summer 2021.

Program Participation

- Program caseload has increased to over 114,000 participants. This represents about a 9% growth.
- All local WIC programs continue to provide remote services.
- MassHealth and SNAP matches: Quarterly match will send WIC outreach texts with link to the online application to likely eligible but non-participating households.
- The numbers of online applications spike on the days when the text messages are sent.

WIC Needs Assessment

- 203,077 women, infants and children estimated to be eligible
- Data is based on 2019 births and participants served in 2019
 - Serving 53.1% of estimated need
 - Serving 42.4% of all infants living in MA

Marketing & Outreach

- Facebook ads and Geofencing ads generally bring the most people to the website.
- The 2020 Marketing Plan included new videos for Facebook ads and new banner ads for Geofencing.
 - Geofencing PINs are moved based on the number of hits, and what is opening and closing in the state.
- In August launched the new WIC Breastfeeding Support Campaign.
 - Noted increased online applications in response to banner ads sent to cell phones.

Public Hearing Comments

- Requests that WIC continue to pursue facilitating the shopping experience through online ordering, home delivery, and curbside pickup
- Requests to increase program access through advertising the program with ACOs and developing a phone app similar to the DTA Mobile App
- Concerns expressed regarding the state budget and food availability for participants

Staff Development

- Currently using a hybrid model to train staff with Webex recordings and in-person training.
- Provided leadership and management training for local agency management staff
- Upcoming one hour sessions: Lunch and Learns and Racial Dialogues

Next meeting: Spring 2021

Department of Public Health
250 Washington St.
Boston, MA 02108