



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
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WIC Advisory Council Meeting
January 4, 2023
2:00 – 3:00 pm
Meeting Minutes

Council Members Present: Cynthia Arroyo (DTA), Brian Houghton (MA Food Association), Katherine Truscott (Childrens Hospital), Khara Burns (Project Bread), Rebecca Davidson (MDAR), Paul Geltman (Uphams Corner Health Center), Katelyn Jones, Hajar Bounhach, Alysa Nellen, Mary Feuer (Berkshire South WIC), Rachel Burgun (Greater Boston Food Bank)

WIC Staff: Rachel Colchamiro (WIC Program Director), Diana Hoek (Director for Policy, Marketing & Training)

Projected Funding:

Congress passed an omnibus spending package that included \$6 billion in funding for WIC, including an extension of the enhanced fruit and vegetable benefits through the end of the fiscal year. As of this meeting, MA WIC has not yet received its federal budget.

Program Participation

Program participation has continued to increase, and the program now serves over 123,000 participants.

Discussion of USDA Proposed WIC Food Package Changes

Diana Hoek presented slides from USDA on the proposed changes to the WIC Food Package.

The Council provided the following comments:

- Cash Value Benefit (CVB), the fruit and vegetable benefit – Council members were pleased that the benefit increased and that it would continue. Members were supportive of the addition of fresh and cut herbs and large packages of fruit and vegetables.
- Juice: Several members expressed approval that juice amounts would be reduced and that participants would have the option to receive additional CVB instead of juice.
- Milk: There was general agreement that WIC provides a lot of milk. This change will negatively impact local dairy farmers as most fluid milk is sold locally.
- Milk Substitutions:
 - All current MA-approved yogurts meet the new total sugar limits.
 - The greater flexibilities were all seen are favorable.

- MA WIC will look to see which plant-based milks, tofus and yogurts qualify as milk substitutes
- Whole Grains:
 - Cereals – Council members were not concerned about the change to only allowing whole grain cereals
 - Whole Grain Options: The expansion of options was received favorably
 - Supplemental amounts of grains: Amounts were increased for women which Council members supported. Allowing the purchase of a 1 ½ lb. bread loaf would make shopping easier.
- Fish: Providing fish to all women and children was seen positively.
- Formula: Increasing the flexibility on the amount of formula to provide was seen favorably
- Supplemental Amounts of Infant Foods:
 - Council members supported expanding the allowable age to receive CVB to 6 months, reducing the amounts of jarred infant foods and increasing amounts of CVB.
 - Council members discussed infant meats. Several stated that the appearance, taste and undesirable texture made it a poorly consumed food. Members did not have suggestions to USDA on ways to increase redemption but instead suggested substituting legumes and teaching parents to make their own infant meats.
 - The proposed reduction in infant cereal was also favorably seen.
- Other changes: council members were supportive of all the proposed changes that increased participant flexibility including other substitutions and package size options.

Comments are due to USDA by February 21, 2023. There are plans to post the proposed changes that will most impact WIC participants on the mass.gov/wic website along with a link to the Federal Register so that anyone interested can submit their comments.