

Virginia WIC Retailer Advisory Meeting Minutes

Date: July 18, 2024

Time: 2:00 PM EST

Location: webex

State WIC Office Attendees: Paula Garrett, Megan Nason, Alex Acharya, Bob Altermatt, Brian Tun, Ephraim Ewing.

Facilitator: Jennifer Trower

- The meeting began at 2:00pm

Paula Garrett (Program Director) provided an update for the Division

- New state plan to take us through the next 3 years; focused on program operations, breastfeeding, and nutrition services.
 - Program operations goal: Grow program by 5%
 - Breastfeeding goal: increase fully breastfeeding rate by 5%
 - Nutrition services goal: help establish nutrition priorities focused on participant health and nutrition outcomes by increasing registered dieticians in the field to provide better counseling and assessments.
- 2024 budget just over \$100 million; majority of which is for food items.
- New vendor working with us to help with a new and improved mobile app which meets our IT requirements. This app would assist participants in finding out their benefits, what foods are approved in the store, and locating stores. We hope for a launch in about 6-8 months.

Megan Nason (Program Manager) provided an update for the WIC Program

- Participation leveling off a bit after the decline post-COVID. Outreach projects in work to help raise participation.
- Currently working on a project with Medicaid to compare participant data to find people who are qualified for WIC but not participants yet.
- This is the 50th anniversary for WIC! The theme for the celebration is “honoring our past and nourishing our future”.
 - In line with these celebrations, we wanted to share some information here:
 - Back in 1974, the first WIC clinic opened in Pineville, KY. It was fully established by Congress the next year, and then it just took one year for them to evaluate the program and realize what impact WIC had. They saw immediate improvement in infant health and reduced anemia rates for both the moms and the the infants. The health benefits are huge. As of this year there are nationwide 6.5 million participants, that does include infants, children, and then pregnant and postpartum moms. This is about 40 percent of all infants in the entire United States. There is WIC in all 50 states, in 33 tribes and five territories and over 10,000 different WIC clinics around the country. The Program is huge

and it is very successful and we are very proud and excited to celebrate the 50th anniversary this year.

Alex Acharya (Vendor Team Manager) provided an update for the vendor team

- The 2024/2025 food lists were mailed to all stores; please ensure you've thrown away the 2022/2023 lists and placed these new ones at your registers and at customer service.
- Annual training is due 7/19/24. Reach out to Alex if you did not receive the email and instructions. Alex.acharya@vdh.virginia.gov

The Date for the next meeting is October 17, 2024 at 2:00pm EST.