



USDA Issues New Food Package Rules

On December 6, 2007, the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced publication in the *Federal Register* of an interim final rule revising the WIC food packages. The new food packages reflect recommendations made by the Institute of Medicine in its report "WIC Food Packages: Time for a Change" and include cost containment and administrative modifications to ensure cost neutrality. They also align with the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the infant feeding practice guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics. New foods include fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Implementation is scheduled for no later than August 2009. The California WIC Program is currently developing our specific implementation plan.

A copy of the interim final rule, can be found at www.fns.usda.gov/wic/

New Food Package Resources

USDA has developed some materials on the food package changes. Although these materials were developed for state agencies, they may also be helpful to local agencies. Materials include press releases, fact sheets, frequently asked questions (FAQs), a Power Point presentation, background history, as well as information for staff training and education. Materials can be found at http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Learning_Center/Food_Packages.html

The California WIC Program will also be developing staff training and participant education materials with input from local WIC agency staff and participants.

New Food Package Staff Survey

In response to Task Force recommendations, the California WIC Program recently developed an online survey to assess the food choices and preferences of WIC staff as well as their input on the most effective training and education tools for the food package changes. The survey, which is voluntary, takes about ten minutes to complete and will be conducted through the end of February. Remember the more staff surveys completed, the more reliable our results! For additional information on the survey please contact Mandeep Punia at mandeep.punia@cdph.ca.gov or Pat Gradziel at pat.gradziel@cdph.ca.gov or call them at (916) 928-8685.

Western Region Food Policy Work Group

The Western Region of WIC is conducting weekly conference calls through March 2008 to reach consensus on what foods to authorize for the new WIC food packages. California WIC is facilitating these calls. Although it may not be possible to attain 100% uniformity, the closer the Western Region states are in their authorized food lists, the easier it will be for grocers who have stores in multiple states and for participants who move to nearby states.

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