

## **WIC Food Package Final Rule**

- The revisions to the WIC food package in both the interim and final rule are designed to improve the nutrition and health of the nation's low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants and young children.
- The revised food packages set forth in the interim rule were developed to better reflect current nutrition science and dietary recommendations; promote and support more effectively the establishment of successful long-term breastfeeding; and provide WIC participants with a wider variety of food, within the parameters of program resources.

### **MAJOR CHANGES IN THE FINAL RULE**

- The fruit and vegetable cash-value voucher for children is increased from \$6 to \$8 per month, the level recommended by the IOM. WIC State agencies are also required to allow all participants to pay the difference if the fruit and vegetable purchase exceeds the value of the cash-value voucher, a transaction known as "split tender" to ensure that participants are able to maximize the use of their cash-value vouchers.
- Yogurt has been added as a partial milk substitute for children and women.
- Whole grain and fish options have been expanded to include pasta products and canned Jack mackerel, respectively.
- To strengthen consistency with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the final rule requires that only 1% or nonfat milks may be authorized for children over two years of age and women. (Under the interim rule, children over two years of age and women could be issued a variety of lower fat milks, i.e., reduced fat (2%), lowfat (1%) and nonfat milk).
- Infants 9 months through 11 months of age can receive a cash-value voucher for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables in lieu of a portion of the commercial jarred infant food fruits and vegetables provided for older infants.
- The WIC competent professional authority (CPA), in consultation with the health care provider if necessary, is authorized to determine the need for milk substitutes (including soy-based beverage and tofu) for children and women.

### **BACKGROUND**

- On March 4, 2014, a final rule revising the WIC food packages was published in the Federal Register.
- This rule completes implementation of the first comprehensive revisions to the WIC food packages since 1980.

- The final rule considers public comments submitted in response to the interim rule revising the WIC food packages published on December 6, 2007 (72 FR 68966). FNS received approximately 7,700 comments on the interim rule.
- The revised food packages set forth in the interim rule were developed to better reflect current nutrition science and dietary recommendations; promote and support more effectively the establishment of successful long-term breastfeeding; and provide WIC participants with a wider variety of food, within the parameters of program resources.
- The modifications in the final rule reflect the experiences of State agencies in implementing the interim rule, while continuing to fulfill the intent of the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies that serve as the basis for the WIC food package changes.

### **IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVE DATES**

- The rule is effective May 5, 2014.
- State agencies must implement the provision increasing the cash-value voucher for children to \$8 per month no earlier than May 5, 2014, and no later than June 2, 2014.
- State agencies must implement the provision requiring split-tender transactions with the cash-value voucher no earlier than October 1, 2014, and no later than April 1, 2015.
- State agencies may authorize yogurt for women and children no earlier than April 1, 2015.
- State agencies must implement the provision authorizing the CPA to determine the need for soy-based beverage or tofu for children no earlier than October 1, 2014.

### **HISTORY OF THE WIC FOOD PACKAGES**

- The WIC food packages provide supplemental foods designed to meet the special nutritional needs of low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, non-breastfeeding postpartum women, infants and children up to five years of age who are at nutritional risk.
- WIC food packages and nutrition education are the chief means by which WIC affects the dietary quality and habits of participants.
- The IOM in its report, WIC Food Packages: Time for a Change, cited fundamental changes that have occurred in the major health and nutrition risks faced by WIC's target population, including overweight and obesity, diets lacking in whole grains and fruits and vegetables, and short duration of breastfeeding.
- The interim rule added new foods and optional substitutions to better meet the needs of WIC's diverse population by including the addition of fruits and vegetables (either fresh, frozen, or canned); soy-based beverage and tofu as milk alternatives; and whole grains (cereals, bread, and other whole grains).