



Food and
Nutrition
Service

June 24, 2020

SUBJECT: Request for WIC Flexibilities In Response to COVID-19

1320
Braddock
Place
Alexandria,
VA
22314

TO: Kurt Messner
Regional Administrator
Northeast Regional Office

This letter is in response to the June 23, 2020 correspondence from Vermont WIC requesting flexibility in the food package requirements in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) as a result of significant impacts to providing WIC program services to participants due to COVID-19.

Vermont WIC cited significant impacts on vendors' abilities to maintain inventory of certain WIC-eligible products and requests a waiver of select minimum requirements and specifications and/or the maximum monthly allowances as outlined in 7 CFR 246.10(e)(9)-(12) for specific supplemental foods. Pursuant to the authority granted in section 2204(a)(1) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127), USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approves the waiver request through **July 31, 2020** in the following manner:

- **Fluid Milk.** Participants will be able to substitute 2% milk when non-fat or 1% milk is not available, despite the designation of their food package.

Given the issue of low stock as a result of increased customer demand during the COVID-19 epidemic, USDA FNS understands that holding vendors to normal minimum requirements and specifications and maximum monthly allowances for supplemental foods is not possible at this time. A waiver to provide administrative flexibility to allow the food substitutions and flexibilities described above removes a requirement that under current circumstances could prevent or impede the provision of essential Program services to participants.

Following receipt of a food package waiver, Vermont WIC will need to advise vendors and participants that substitutions should be made when the prescribed benefit is unavailable for purchase and these flexibilities are available until July 31, 2020. For participants prescribed fat free or 1% milk, the State agency will inform participants to select the lowest fat milk available.

The waiver authority at section 2204(b)(1) of P.L. 116-127 requires the State agency to submit a report which includes a summary of the use of this waiver and a description of whether this waiver resulted in improved services to women, infants and children. The State agency shall provide the Regional Office with this report no later than 1 year after the date of approval.

USDA FNS appreciates Vermont WIC's commitment to addressing the operational challenges impeding the delivery of WIC benefits to women, infants and children in need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Widor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

SARAH WIDOR
Director
Supplemental Food Programs Division