

Allowable WIC Foods: Staff Activity Guide / Answer Key

1) *Review the current Colorado WIC foods. Find the answers to these questions.*

- a) Does Colorado WIC allow Adams peanut butter? (**YES**)
- b) Do we allow Wheaties? (**YES**)
- c) Is Kraft brand American cheese in 16-oz package allowed? (**NO**)

2) *How do you know?*

The answers are all in the Colorado WIC Allowable Foods List (Foods List).

Discussion Point:

Without having to study a pile of information on food cost, availability, and federal regulations detailing various WIC foods, WIC staff and participants can use this one source to find the nutritious foods that Colorado WIC provides.

3) *Why is using the Foods List so important?*

Ask staff for their input.

Discussion Points:

- ✓ By using the Foods List, the participant receives the appropriate nutritious foods that complement the nutrition education received at the WIC clinic.
- ✓ The Foods List offers a consistent message about the allowed foods, so that the participant does not have a confusing and/or difficult experience buying WIC foods at the store.
- ✓ WIC staff and participants may have many questions about the new foods. The Foods List is the resource to answer most of these questions.

4) *When will WIC staff receive the new Foods Lists?*

Discussion Points:

- ✓ The 2009 Foods List is finalized. A copy is attached in PDF. It is being printed for large-scale distribution to local agencies in upcoming months. You can anticipate receiving several months' worth of the Foods List in plenty of time for the transition.
- ✓ Keep in mind: The Foods List should **not** be given to participants prior to their first checks containing the new foods. April training packet will contain comprehensive methods and tools for you to use in training WIC participants on each of the food groups, as well as the steps involved in redeeming their WIC checks and cash value vouchers after June 1.

5) *How did the WIC foods and the Foods List change?*

Discussion Points:

- ✓ New WIC food groups, such as fruits and vegetables, have been added, and revisions have been made to existing WIC food groups. For example: certain containers of 64-ounce juice are now allowed, and Beechnut brand infant cereal has been added.
- ✓ Also, in the 2009 Foods List, sections labeled as "Amount", "Size", "Brand", "OK to Buy" and "Do Not Buy" have been added to most food groups to assist participants while shopping.

6) *Why isn't creating the Foods List quicker and easier?*

Discussion Points:

- ✓ Determining the allowed and excluded food items for WIC Foods List involves numerous considerations, including the following.
- ✓ Federal regulations detailed explicit nutritional requirements as well as many policy provisions for each food category.
- ✓ Food manufacturers determine the characteristics of their items—like size, content, and labeling—and may periodically change those characteristics.
- ✓ State WIC gathered information about thousands of items from manufacturers to identify foods that meet both federal and state guidelines, such as nutritional content, availability, cost, etc.
- ✓ Colorado WIC attempts to control costs by identifying less expensive items and store brands—for example frozen orange juice—when possible. If the items are not readily available or do not consistently meet nutritional requirements, specific brands need to be listed—for example frozen grape juice.
- ✓ Numerous individuals from various fields reviewed Colorado WIC's listing of proposed new food items. These reviewers included State WIC fiscal, nutrition, retailer and management staff, WIC Directors, Local Agency Retail Coordinators (LARC), major food distributors, manufacturers, retailer representatives, and USDA. Feedback received from these various groups was incorporated into the new Foods List.

7) *What are the new foods?*

Discussion Points:

- ✓ Using the *2009 Foods List* and the *New WIC Foods Chart*, walk through the new foods.
- ✓ Encourage staff to voice opinions and ask questions about the foods.

8) *How do WIC educators explain the changes to participants?*

The April packet will provide materials and tools to use in determining the correct food package for the participant and then training to purchase their items at the store using the new Foods List.

9) *When will the new food packages be available on participants' checks?*

Any participant who visits WIC prior to June 1 will receive the current food packages for the duration of her check cycle. (1, 2, or 3 months of checks). Any participant who visits the clinic on June 1 or thereafter will receive the new food packages. Thus, if a participant visits the clinic on May 29, she will receive the current food package for three months. However, if she visits on June 1, her checks will reflect the new food packages.

10) *How do clinics handle participants who want to return their current food checks to the WIC clinic after 6/1/09 to obtain the new food package?*

It is up to the local agency as to whether or not they will allow participants to return to have checks re-issued. With busy clinic schedules, you may not be able to accommodate those requests. As an FYI, we heard from New York (who implemented the new food rule in January) that participants were unhappy with getting less cheese and had mixed reactions to getting less milk and eggs. (They were pleased with having canned beans, the single strength juices for children and the fruits and vegetables, though!) So, not all participants may be eager to exchange their checks. Those receiving formula may want to keep the "old" June and July checks also, knowing that the amounts of formula decrease at 6 months.

11) *Is my clinic prepared for implementing the new food packages?*

Discussion Points:

- ✓ Ask staff members for their thoughts on the new foods.
- ✓ Keeping in mind their roles in the transition and upcoming training activities, do they feel prepared for the changes?
- ✓ As a group or individually, go over the *WIC Allowable Foods Quiz*.
- ✓ Please pass the thanks of the Colorado WIC staff on to your staff. Their hard work in preparing for the transition has been very impressive!