

Complaint Handling**Policy No. CR- 1140.01**

Effective date: October 1, 2016

No. of Pages: 3

Policy

An applicant or participant may file a complaint alleging discrimination within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory act. The local WIC agency must provide the address to which an applicant or participant may file a complaint of discrimination and accept and submit all complaints of discrimination to the State Georgia WIC Program Office on behalf of him or her.

Purpose

To ensure that applicants and participants who believe their civil rights were violated for any reason based race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap, is apprised of their right to file a complaint; and, to ensure that all complaints are systematically documented.

Procedures for Processing Discrimination Complaints

- I. If the complaint is identified as a Civil Rights Complaint, the local WIC agency must refer it immediately to the Georgia WIC Program Regional Advisory Team Manager.
- II. Complaints of discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability can be mailed, faxed, or submitted electronically as follows:

By Mail:

United States Department of Agriculture
Attn: Director, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-9410

By Facsimile

Facsimile: (202) 690-7442

By Electronic Submission

Email: program.intake@usda.gov

- III. The local WIC agency must accept all complaints of discrimination, whether written or verbal, but must **not** process any discrimination complaints it receives. All complaints must be sent to: to the Georgia WIC Program's Office of Program Integrity and Strategy. Upon receipt, a State Georgia WIC staff person will submit the complaint to USDA at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html
 - A. Written Complaints. The District office or a local WIC agency will maintain a copy of all written discrimination complaints it receives, and must submit a copy of the

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complaint to the State Georgia WIC Program Office at:

Department of Public Health
Georgia WIC Program
Attention: Office of Program Integrity and Strategy
2 Peachtree Street, Suite 10-293, Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Complaints should include the name of the agency and/or the individual(s) whom the complaint addresses and a description of the alleged violation.

- B. Verbal Complaints. In the event a complainant makes verbal allegations and cannot place such allegations in writing, the person to whom the allegations are made will complete an [Incident/Complaint Form](#). The Incident/Complaint form must be completed in its entirety.
- C. Completing the [Incident/Complaint Form](#). Every effort should be made to resolve an incident or complaint within twenty-four (24) hours.
- D. Follow-Up/Resolution of Complaint. The local WIC agency must document the resolution of the complaint/incident and indicate if the complaint can be closed at the local level on the [Incident/Complaint Form](#). The name and title of the staff person who resolved the complaint and resolution date must be recorded on the form.
- E. Anonymous complaints will be handled in the same manner as any other complaint.

IV. Accepting Complaints at the Service Delivery Point

The local WIC agency must advise applicants and participants at the service delivery point of their right to file a complaint, how to file a complaint, and how submitted complaints are processed. The ["How to File a Complaint"](#) flyer must be displayed at the service delivery point.

Procedures for Processing a Complaint/Incident (Other Than a Discrimination Complaint)

- I. An applicant or participant may file a written or verbal complaint regarding staff or clinic treatment that is unrelated to discrimination or ineligibility/disqualification. In such an instance, the local WIC agency must complete the [Incident/Complaint Form](#) as outlined in Section III.C., above.

Vendor Complaints. If a vendor calls with a complaint, complete the [Incident/Complaint Form](#). When recording the incident/complaint, get as much information about the situation as possible. In the absence of electronic signatures type the name of the person taking the incident/complaint.

Resolution of a vendor complaint must be documented as outlined in Section III.E., above.

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- II. The maximum time to process a complaint is 90 days from acceptance to issuance of FNS HQ Final Agency Decision, State, or Regional Decision Letter, per FNS-113-1.

Authority

7 CFR § 246.8(b)

FNS Instruction 113-1

WIC Program Policy Memorandum #2016-2

Definitions/Supporting Information

Discrimination - The act of treating someone differently on the basis of that individual's race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, age, physical ability, gender, or sexual orientation.