

Number and Distribution of Authorized Vendors Policy No. VM-100.05

Effective Date: October 1, 2016

No. of Pages: 3

Policy

The State agency must authorize a sufficient number and distribution of vendors in order to ensure the lowest practicable food prices consistent with adequate participant access to supplemental foods and to ensure effective State agency management, oversight, and review of its authorized vendors. The State agency may establish criteria to limit the number of stores it authorizes. The State agency must apply its limiting criteria consistently throughout its jurisdiction. Any vendor limiting criteria used by the State agency must be included in the State Plan.

Purpose

As a steward of public funds, Georgia WIC must balance the need for participant access with the duty to obtain the lowest fair prices for WIC foods.

Procedures

Georgia WIC has established criteria to assess the number and distribution of authorized vendors throughout the state of Georgia. The primary method of regulating the number of authorized vendors is through the use of a vendor to participant ratio.

I. Number and Distribution of Authorized Vendors

The vendor-to-participant ratio utilizes the following methodology:

A. Classification of Counties

A classification scheme for distinguishing counties as Rural, Suburban or Urban is employed. The scheme is based on population density data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Georgia 2010: Population and Housing Unit Counts, U.S. Bureau of the Census (USCB), and the 2010 Redistricting data - Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The classifications are as follows:

Population Density - USCB (Square Miles)	Population Density - GA-DCA (Per Acre)	County Type	Participant To Vendor Ratio
8.5 to 288.8	.013 to .5	Rural	40:1
288.9 to 633	.0501 to 1	Suburban	100:1
633.1 and Above	1.001 and Above	Urban	145:1

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1. Apply Classification

The aforementioned classification scheme is applied to both certified participants and authorized vendors from the previous federal fiscal year and according to the county code on record.

- a. The county code for participants is the code associated with the participant's home address and the local health in which they certified
- b. The county code for vendors is the code associated with their physical location and not the mailing or corporate address.

Participants and vendors are then mapped according to their county code.

B. Participant-to-Vendor Ratio Calculated

The participant -to-vendor ratio is calculated based on the number of certificated participants per county code to authorized vendors per county code. Based on the county type (Rural, Suburban or Urban) a vendor saturation analysis is performed to ascertain the need for additional vendors in a geographic area or if new vendors should be limited due to saturation.

C. Frequency of Analysis

The state vendor saturation analysis is determined prior to the start of an application/authorization period. At a minimum, the analysis is executed annually and just prior to the start of the Federal fiscal year by the Vendor Cost Containment Unit and distributed to the Vendor Relations and Adm. Unit for applicant screening.

1. Applications for WIC vendor authorization are accepted during the following periods of each federal fiscal year:
 - a. October 1st to December 31st
 - b. March 1st to May 31st

D. Utilization of Analysis Results

The results of the analysis, vendor-to-participant ratios, are used to inform the Vendor Relations Staff about the distribution of authorized vendors and to identify areas of saturation that do not require new store authorizations.

New applicants with addresses in the saturated geographic areas may not be considered for authorization. The application packet will be returned to the applicant unprocessed.

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E. Exceptions to the Participant-to-Vendor Ratio

1. For vendor authorization, exceptions to the vendor-to-participant ratio conclusions may be considered under the following circumstances:
 - a. The need to assure that each food instrument issuance clinic site in the state has an authorized vendor within a 10 mile radius.
 - b. The need to provide adequate service to participants in a population center of at least ten (10) individuals who have no access to an authorized vendor within a 10 mile radius of the population center.
 - c. The need to provide adequate service to participants when circumstances make that necessary. Those circumstances may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. New clinic site opening;
 - ii. Participant caseload increases;
 - iii. New participant population center recognized;
 - iv. Store closings, either voluntary or due to catastrophe;
 - v. Problems with WIC Program compliance;
 - vi. Problems caused by non-compliance with Food Stamp regulations.

Authority

7 C.F.R. § 246.12(g)

7 C.F.R. § 246.3(e)

7 C.F.R. § [246.4\(a\)\(14\)\(ii\)](#)**Definitions/Supporting Information**

VM-100.01 Vendor Application and Authorization Process

VM-100.02 Vendor Selection and Limiting Criteria

Contact Information

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