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Civil Rights

POLICY:

The Local Agency will adhere to requirements set forth in FNS Instruction 113-1, dated 11/8/2005, which incorporates USDA policies and prohibitions against discrimination, by authority of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Americans with Disabilities Act, Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, The Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, The Food Stamp Act of 1977, Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (65 F.R. 50123) and USDA Regulations.

DEFINITIONS:

Complaint (see FNS 113-1, page 4, item H): Any verbal or written allegation of discrimination which indicates that the WIC Program is administered or operated in such a manner that results in disparity of treatment or services being provided to persons or groups of persons because of their race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability or retaliation.

Discrimination (see FNS 113-1, page 4, item M): The act of distinguishing one person or a group of persons from others, either intentionally, by neglect, or by the effect of actions or lack of actions based upon race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability or retaliation.

Grassroots Organization (see FNS 113-1, page 5, item P): An organization at the local level that interacts directly with potential eligibles or participants, such as an advocacy organization, community action program, civic organization, migrant group, religious organization, neighborhood council, or other similar group.

Person with a Disability: a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of an individual's life activities, or having a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment.

PROCEDURE:

A. Civil Rights Coordinator/504 Coordinator

The Local Agency Director will appoint an individual to act as the Local Agency Civil Rights Coordinator/504 Coordinator.

1. The Coordinator's name will be submitted in writing to the State Agency Director. The State Agency Director will be notified of personnel changes and/or vacancies in this appointment.
2. The Local Agency Civil Rights Coordinator/504 Coordinator will:
 - < Maintain the **Civil Rights File**
 - < Provide civil rights training
 - < Handle all civil rights complaints
 - < Disseminate information requested by personnel and/or public

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- < Perform other liaison functions as needed

B. Civil Rights File

1. A **Civil Rights File** maintained at the Local Agency will contain the following documents:
 - < FNS Instruction 113-1, dated 11/08/2005
 - < Grassroots Organization Directory
 - < **Local Agency 504 Evaluation (see Attachment #1 1.08).**
2. A copy of each complaint and decision received will be maintained on file for at least three (3) years and one-hundred fifty (150) days.

C. Public Notification and Outreach

1. Nondiscrimination Statement

- a) The following nondiscrimination statement must be included, in full, on all materials regarding the WIC Program that are produced for public information, public education, or public distribution.

“In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a complaint alleging discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call, toll free, (866) 632-9992 (Voice). Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.”

- b) When space prohibits use of the lengthy statement, the following statement may be used, in print size no smaller than the text:

"This institution is an equal opportunity provider."

- c) Radio and television advertising must contain the statement, but in cases where time constraints are imposed, the statement may be reduced to the following:

“The WIC Program is an equal opportunity provider.”

2. *And Justice For All* Poster

At least one (1) ***And Justice For All*** poster will be visibly posted in each Local Agency WIC clinic in an area that is frequented by applicants/participants.

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3. Interpretation Services

It is the responsibility of the WIC Program to provide interpreters for WIC Services.

- a) Interpreters will be provided by the Local Agency upon request with 5 days prior notice.
- b) Interpreters will wait no more than 30 minutes after the scheduled appointment time.
- c) Failure to show up within 30 minutes for an appointment in which an interpreter is scheduled may result in not having an interpreter scheduled for future appointments if this happens 3 times.
- d) Participants are welcome to bring their own interpreter to an appointment; however WIC will only pay for interpreters who are scheduled by the WIC staff.
- e) WIC Services will not be denied when an interpreter is not available.
- f) WIC staff may access telephone interpreter services through Language Line, if this is acceptable to the participant.

4. Underrepresented Populations

Agencies or organizations in the Local Agency geographic area which specifically serve racial/ethnic groups or other protected groups underrepresented in the general population will be identified by the Local Agency. The Outreach Coordinator will be responsible for adding such agencies or organizations to the Community Network Agencies list (see **Attachment #1, 7.03**) to ensure that equal efforts are made to inform underrepresented populations of WIC services and benefits

5. Non-English or Limited English Speaking Persons

Where a significant portion of the population of the local WIC service area is composed of non-English or limited English speaking persons who speak the same language, the Local Agency will ensure that all required WIC Program information is provided to such persons in the appropriate language orally and in writing.

- a) Bilingual personnel or interpreters will be available to serve these persons.
- b) Written materials will be provided for such persons.
- c) All rights and responsibilities listed on the **Participant Agreement (WIC-05)** will be read to those applicants in the appropriate language.

D. Data Collection

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Racial/ethnic data must be collected by the Local Agency during WIC Program certification through self-reported identification.

1. Applicants/participants will be asked to self-identify their racial/ethnic group only after it has been explained, and they understand that the collection of this information is strictly for statistical reporting requirements and has no effect on the determination of their eligibility to participate in the Program
2. Racial/ethnic data will be reported in the **STORC Demographics Screen**.
3. The State WIC Agency will produce a racial/ethnic report for each Local Agency.

E. Compliance Reviews

The Local Agency will be monitored on civil rights during the State Agency Local Agency Program Review and Local Agency Internal Review.

1. The **Civil Rights File** will be examined to see that it contains the appropriate documents.
2. The Monitor will look for appropriate use of the FNS-approved nondiscrimination statement and the posting of the *And Justice For All* poster.
3. The Monitor will inquire about methods used to collect racial/ethnic data.
4. The Monitor will ask several questions to assess if there are any operational procedures which have either deliberately or unknowingly resulted in discrimination.
5. The Local Agency will address deficiencies found during the monitoring and write a plan for corrective action.

F. Civil Rights Training

1. The Local Agency Civil Rights Coordinator will:
 - < Provide civil rights training to all new WIC personnel; and
 - < Provide annual civil rights training to all Local Agency staff. Annual training will be due in the same calendar month each year. Training may be as a group or by individual. All persons must complete training between the first and last day of the calendar month. Training may occur earlier (less than 12 months from the last training) but will be due again no later than the same calendar month in the next year. (see **Policy 1.19, WIC Staff Training**).
 - < Use training curriculum provided by the State Agency or obtain prior approval on other Civil Rights Training curriculum.
2. Civil rights training will include, but not limited to, the following:
 - < Collecting and using racial/ethnic data

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- < Effective public notification systems
- < Complaint procedures
- < Compliance Review Techniques
- < Resolution of noncompliance
- < Requirements for reasonable accommodation of persons with disabilities
- < Requirement for language assistance
- < Conflict resolution, and
- < Customer Service

G. Civil Rights Complaints

The Local Agency will accept written and verbal complaints of discrimination lodged against the State Agency, Local Agency, WIC clinic or retail store. Such complaints may be filed by State Agency and Local Agency employees and potential employees, Program applicants, participants, proxies or anyone who observes discrimination in the delivery of Program benefits.

1. The Local Agency will use the following procedures for accepting civil rights complaints.
 - a) The State Agency/Local Agency must accept all civil rights complaints filed within one-hundred eighty (180) days of the alleged discriminatory action.
 - b) Civil rights complaints must be accepted whether written, verbal, identified or anonymous.
 - c) Verbal or phoned complaints or allegations in which the complainant refuses or is not inclined to put in writing will be written by the WIC personnel taking the complaint.
 - d) WIC personnel taking the verbal complaint will attempt to obtain the following information:
 - < Name, address and phone number of the complainant or other means of contacting the complainant;
 - < The specific name and location of service delivery site;
 - < Nature of the action that led the complainant to feel that discrimination was a factor;

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- < Basis on which complainant feels discrimination exists (race, sex, age, color, national origin, disability, or retaliation);
 - < Names, titles and business address of person(s) who may have knowledge of discriminatory action; and
 - < Dates during which the alleged discriminatory actions occurred, or if continuing, the duration of such actions.
 - < The complainant may also be offered a Civil Rights Complaint form, (see **Attachment #2 1.08**) on which the above information may be entered. Under no circumstances will a written complaint form be required from the complainant.
2. The proper procedure for referral of complaint regarding race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability is to write to the above address (see **Section C1**). *Do not offer a fair hearing.*
 3. Copies of each civil rights complaint will also be sent to the following within twenty-four (24) hours upon receipt of the complaint:

*Civil Rights Coordinator
Food and Nutrition Service
Mid-Atlantic Region
Mercer Corporate Park
300 Corporation Boulevard
Robbinsville, NJ 08691-1598*

*Director, State WIC Program
350 Capitol Street, Room 519
Charleston, WV 25301-3717*
 4. Contact the State Agency **immediately** with any questions.

H. Applicants/Participants with Disabilities

The Local Agency will make provisions to screen for applicants with disabilities and provide all WIC services to all participants with disabilities.

1. A self-evaluation of Program accessibility will be conducted for each Local Agency WIC clinic using the **Local Agency 504 Evaluation (see Attachment #1 1.08)**.
 - a) The self-evaluation will be maintained in the Local Agency **Civil Rights File**.
 - b) A copy will be sent to the State Agency.
 - c) Once evaluated, there is no requirement for a re-evaluation unless the facilities are changed to increase or decrease the provision of service to applicants/participants with disabilities as stated in the self-evaluation currently on file.

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- d) New WIC clinics will be evaluated as they are opened.
2. If a WIC clinic is not accessible to a person with a disability, a written Local Agency policy will be developed that describes how services will be provided to the person with a disability.
- a) These alternate services may include, but are not limited to:
 - < Service at other sites
 - < Service in other accessible locations within the same WIC clinic
 - < Home visits
 - b) In choosing among available methods, give priority to those methods that offer programs and activities to qualified people with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate to obtain the full benefits of the WIC Program.
 - c) The policy should be flexible to cover all types of disabilities and allow reasonable accommodations, for example:
 - < Provision of interpreters for applicants/participants who are deaf
 - < Readers or braille for applicants/participants who are visually impaired
 - < Other special learning equipment.

REFERENCES:

- 1. Federal Regulations: 7 CFR Part 15 b Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- 2. FNS Instruction 113-1, dated 11/08/2005, Civil Rights Compliance and Enforcement – Nutrition Programs and Activities
- 3. SFP 95-123, People with Disabilities
- 4. SFP 96-009, Use of the USDA’s Nondiscrimination Statement
- 5. SFP 97-136, USDA’s Nondiscrimination Statement
- 6. DR 4300-3, 1999 Equal Opportunity Public Notification Policy

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1. Local Agency 504 Evaluation
- 2. Civil Rights Complaint Form