

Training the Farm Direct Applicant – Trainer Copy

Review the completed and signed Application to determine if the Farm Direct applicant criteria have been met by the Farmer before training is conducted. Training must be done on an annual basis and may be done in a group or on a one-to-one basis. To prepare for the training, read the Farm Direct Handbook and become familiar with the program policies. Provide the applicant with a copy of the Handbook. Use the following agenda to guide the training. Ensure the applicants have their questions answered and that they have a thorough understanding of the Farm Direct Program before they fill out and sign the Farm Direct Agreement. Send the Application, Training Documentation form and the signed Agreement to the State Office for review and processing.

Farm Direct Program overview – The Farm Direct Program directly authorizes Farmers to redeem WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) Benefits at farmer’s markets and/or roadside stands in exchange for locally grown produce. Participating in the Farm Direct Program provides Farmers with additional sales opportunities and promotes the production of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables.

Selection criteria for a farmer – A number of criteria need to be met in order for a Farmer to become authorized. Annual training is required every year of the three year agreement. The Farmer must grow Farm Direct approved fruits and vegetables him or herself and may sell only locally grown, eligible produce in exchange for FMNP benefits. At least sixty (60) percent of the produce offered for sale in exchange for FMNP benefits must be self-grown which means authorized Farmers may not be wholesalers. Authorized Farmers must comply with civil rights requirements and they must maintain a positive compliance history with any and all USDA Food and Nutrition Services programs. Let’s look at some of these items more closely.

Locally grown produce - Fresh fruits & vegetables that have been grown in Montana or in the counties adjacent to Montana borders where the farmer is selling the produce may be exchanged for FMNP benefits. Produce not locally grown, may not be sold in exchange for FMNP benefits.

Eligible produce food list – (Hand out and review the Food List) WIC participants may purchase locally grown, fresh, unprepared fruits and vegetables as listed on the Food List. No processed produce such as: sauerkraut, jam, jelly, pie, or non-produce items such as: honey, bread or eggs. You are required to keep a copy of the Food List handy at your stand/stall/booth for quick reference.

Post the Montana Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs laminated sign - WIC customers look for this sign when redeeming benefits and farmers are required to display it at their point of sale.

Produce purchased with FMNP benefits must be of the same quality and cost as available to other customers - Prices must be clearly marked or posted. If the Farmer sells items not locally grown or not eligible for purchase with FMNP benefits, they must be identified & separated from WIC eligible produce.

Non-discrimination of WIC participants (may not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability - WIC customers must be treated the same as non-WIC customers.

The current Farm Direct Agreement must be reviewed, especially the Farmer responsibilities and the items which can result in sanctions - cover the areas thoroughly and remind Farmers to read the entire agreement, annual face-to-face training is required, farmer agrees to post WIC Farm Direct sign, the Farmer agrees to be monitored for compliance, the agreement is not transferable to another farmer,

Farmer may not accept FMNP benefits until Agreement is fully executed (meaning signed by DPHHS and copies and the stamp has sent to the Farmer), follow benefit redemption procedures.

Transaction Policies & Procedures. – Please refer to page 11-12 of the Farm Direct Handbook and let's take a look at the transaction procedures. Remember: No cash may be exchanged and no change may be given for FMNP benefits. The total amount of the sale may not exceed maximum value printed on the benefit. However, WIC customers may purchase more than the value of the benefit and pay the difference. If the cost of the items purchased exceeds the maximum value of the benefit you will need to enter the maximum value of the benefit and the participant may pay the difference in a separate transaction. Never write the amount of the overage on the benefit. If the WIC customer does not wish to pay the overage they may put something back to be at or below the benefit amount. Non-locally grown produce must be displayed separately. Farmers & their employees need to be physically present to operate their own booth/table/stall.

How to redeem FMNP benefits – For 2017 the value of the WIC FMNP benefit is \$5.00.

Redemption procedures are illustrated in the Handbook on page 11-13. Please pay careful attention to the steps in a WIC transaction. If these steps are not strictly followed, the Farmer may not be reimbursed for the redeemed benefit. The farmer needs to confirm that the date of cashing is within the valid dates printed on the FMNP benefit, total the purchase and enter the actual amount of sale without exceeding the maximum value of the benefit. The WIC customer signs the benefit & the farmer stamps the benefit with the Farm Direct ID stamp before deposit.

Safe storage of FMNP benefits - keep the redeemed FMNP benefits in a safe place; lost or stolen WIC benefits will not be replaced

Depositing FMNP benefits – FMNP benefits must be deposited with your bank by Oct. 31, 2017.

Violations & Sanctions are listed in the Farm Direct Handbook – Be sure to review these together (pages 14, 15, and 16 in the Handbook).

Review the fair hearing rights and process together – (page 17 in the handbook).

Your local WIC Farm Direct contact is _____
and their phone number to contact with questions is _____.

State WIC Office phone number is 1-800-433-4298 – use option 2 for WIC benefit redemption & rejection questions.

Once the Application & Agreement are submitted to the State WIC Office, they will be reviewed. If approved, the Agreement will be processed and Farmers will receive signed copies of the documents, a Farm Direct ID stamp, Farm Direct signs, Benefit Redemption Guides, Food Lists, and a Training Guide so Farmers can train their staff.