MONTANA WIC PROGRAM

FARM DIRECT TRAINING GUIDE FOR FARM STAFF

Includes the following materials:

- *Message to: The Farmer*
- *Facilitation Training Guide*
- *Montana WIC Benefit Redemption Guide*
- *Montana WIC Farm Direct Food List*

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Introduction to Montana WIC

For over 40 years, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) has been an integral part of Montana's public health system. Promoting healthy habits early, when they make the most powerful difference in the lifelong health of a child, is what WIC is all about. With each new eligible family WIC reaches, public health grows stronger and more effective in the fight against obesity and other debilitating and life threatening conditions.

The Farm Direct Program authorizes Farmers to accept WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program Benefits (FMNP).

Participating in the Farm Direct Program provides Farmers with additional sales opportunities and promotes the production of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables.

WIC participants shopping with authorized Farmers have a large array of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables to choose from, which may help reduce some of the barriers to a healthy diet that many low income families experience.

Message to the Farmer

How do Farmers prepare their staff to accept FMNP benefits?

To assist you and your staff in preparing to accept FMNP benefits, several training tools have been made available. This training packet is meant to act as a guide in training your staff. Your main WIC Farm Direct contact, the Local Agency Retailer Coordinator (LARC) or Farm Direct Coordinator is another resource to support your training efforts.

Please note: As an authorized WIC farmer, you are expected to provide this required WIC training to cashiers, bookkeepers, and any other staff that deals with FMNP transactions or the maintenance of WIC eligible foods.

This training packet includes: this message to the Farmer, a facilitation training guide, the Montana WIC Farm Direct Food List, Benefit Cashing Guide.

These materials are intended to assist you in the following ways.

1. Checking your stock of locally grown, FMNP eligible food items as listed on the Food List to ensure you are selling the approved food items in exchange for FMNP benefits,
2. Identifying resources for additional information and answers,
3. Developing and implementing a training plan for your staff (see the "Facilitation Training Guide"),
4. Ensuring cashiers are proficient in basic WIC competencies such as using the Food List and redeeming FMNP benefits.

The Montana WIC Program appreciates you being a partner with us in providing nutritious, locally grown produce to Montana's children. Your efforts are truly appreciated and make a world of difference.

Let's start with Produce

All produce to be sold in exchange for WIC benefits must be locally grown and at the beginning of each sale day, at least sixty (60) percent of the produce offered for sale must be self-grown. FMNP benefits may only be redeemed for fresh fruits & vegetables as listed on the Eligible Food List.

1) Farm Direct Eligible Food List

Approved foods are locally grown, fresh, unprepared fruits and vegetables.

Fresh Vegetables

Asparagus
Beans, yellow or green
Beets
Broccoli
Brussels Sprouts
Cabbage
Carrots
Cauliflower
Celery
Chinese Cabbage
Collard Greens
Corn
Cucumbers
Eggplant
Potatoes
Garlic
Kale
Kohlrabi
Leeks
Lettuce
Mushrooms
Mustard Greens
Okra
Onions
Parsnips
Peas
Peppers
Pumpkins
Radishes/Horseradishes
Fresh Cut Herbs
Rhubarb
Rutabagas
Spinach
Squash-
summer & winter varieties
Sweet potatoes
Swiss Chard
Tender Greens - similar to lettuce
Tomatoes
Turnips/Turnip Greens
Watercress
Zucchini

Fresh Fruits

Apples
Apricots
Blackberries
Blueberries
Cantaloupe
Casaba Melons
Cherries
Chokecherries
Currants
Gooseberries
Grapes
Huckleberries
Melons
Nectarines
Peaches
Pears
Plums
Raspberries
Strawberries
Watermelons

Items that may not be purchased with WIC FMNP or WIC Fruit & Vegetable Benefit
Any processed produce or non-foods items, including:

Baked Goods
Cheese
Crafts
Eggs
Honey
Juices
Nuts
Plants (herb or vegetable)

Keep a copy of the eligible food list at all points of sale.

Resources Available to Authorized Farmers

2) Identifying Resources for Additional Information & Answers

⇒ **Your WIC Contact - Local Agency Retailer Coordinator (LARC)**
She/he is your main WIC contact.

⇒ **The Farm Direct Eligible Food List**
Make sure each cashier at the stand/stall/booth has a copy and please use the Food List during training. It is an invaluable tool to identify eligible FMNP produce. Without it, cashiers are unprepared to conduct any FMNP transaction.

⇒ **The Montana WIC Farm Direct Handbook**
You can consistently find answers to questions about the WIC program in your Handbook. It has information about FMNP benefits, violations, policies and more.

⇒ **The FMNP Benefit**
The valid dates and maximum value of the FMNP benefit is printed on the benefit.

⇒ **Your Own High Level of Customer Service**
WIC knows that farm staff is expert at customer service and will provide WIC customers with great service - whether it is explaining that an item is not FMNP-approved and cannot be purchased with a FMNP benefit or whether it is helping a WIC customer get as close to the maximum value of the benefit as possible.

Training and Preparing Your Staff

3) Developing & Implementing a Training Program

Develop a Training Plan for accepting FMNP Benefits
⇒ Identify the staff that will be trained.
⇒ Create a process for staff to be able to ask questions and give feedback and comments.

Implementing a Training Plan
The enclosed "Facilitation Training Guide" should be used as a guide for conducting your training on the FMNP foods and accepting benefits. Use it in conjunction with the Benefit Redemption Guide.

These materials can be used to conduct group or individual staff training sessions. However, we do suggest your training plan include at least some time for staff to be able to ask and discuss questions.

Thank you for being a partner with WIC for Montana families!

Facilitation Training Guide
Montana WIC Farm Direct

Messages to the Farm Direct Trainer:

⇒ This training guide is a tool to assist you in preparing your staff for accepting Montana WIC benefits.

⇒ Use this guide in group or individual training sessions. WIC suggests training your staff in groups so they can discuss changes and learn from each other.

⇒ Cover each of the training steps so that staff understand and are ready to redeem benefits. As time permits, allow discussion and questions on the major topics and ask for the thoughts of the group.

⇒ Allow about thirty to forty-five minutes to go through the training steps.

⇒ Break up the training steps in more than one session if necessary.

⇒ The materials you will need to conduct the training include:

- This *Facilitation Training Guide*
- The *Montana WIC Farm Direct Food List*
- The *Montana WIC Farm Direct Benefit Redemption Guide*

Thanks for Preparing Your Staff!

Trainer: Use the following questions as discussion points. Once the group has had a chance to respond, introduce the information about WIC and further the discussion.

Step 1: Introduce the WIC Foods

The WIC Farm Direct Food List!

WIC benefits include exciting food groups - such as fresh fruits and fresh vegetables. These foods are meant to better address the change in nutritional needs in today's population and improve the health of WIC participants.

How do we prepare for accepting WIC benefits?

To be ready for WIC, we are going to be discussing seven main topics today.

The main topics are:

- ⇒ Benefits of WIC
- ⇒ Steps in a FMNP Transaction
- ⇒ Montana WIC Farm Direct Eligible Foods
- ⇒ Taking FMNP Benefits
- ⇒ Special Circumstances
- ⇒ WIC Violations and Sanctions
- ⇒ Main Resources to Find Answers to Questions

Step 2: Benefits of WIC

Why should farm staff know about the benefits of WIC?
What are the benefits?

(Trainer: Allow for discussion of possible answers.)

Farm cashiers and other staff work very hard for WIC to provide nutritious food for WIC customers. Their efforts pay off in many ways to many people.

Some of the main benefits of WIC are:

- ⇒ Healthier children with healthier lifestyles.
- ⇒ Dollars to Your Farm-- In addition to the value of the FMNP benefits redeemed, WIC customers generally spend some of their family food dollars as well.
- ⇒ Dollars to Your Community-- Montana WIC currently contracts with local agencies to provide WIC services throughout the State.
- ⇒ Dollars Saved in Medical Costs-- WIC lowers Medicaid costs. WIC combats poor nutrition at an early stage, rather than treating the effects once they are serious. For every dollar spent on WIC, up to $3 is saved in medical costs for tax-payers.

Step 3: Steps in a WIC Transaction

What are the steps in taking a FMNP benefit?

(Trainer: Allow for discussion of possible answers.)

1. Check the Dates:
   You will only be reimbursed for benefits accepted on or within the "First Day to Use" and the "Last Day to Use".
2. Check the Foods:
   Make sure the fruits & vegetables the WIC customer is purchasing are listed on the Food List.
3. Write the Date of the Transaction.
4. Write the Total:
   Write the amount of the sale on the benefit. (If you make a mistake, cross out the incorrect price with a single line, place the new price in the correction box and have the WIC customer initial the change.) Under no circumstances may the benefit be redeemed for more than the maximum value printed on the benefit. **No cash may be exchanged and no change may be given.**
6. Ask the WIC customer to sign the benefit:
   Have the WIC customer sign the benefit after you write in the amount of the Sale.
7. Stamp the Benefit
   Before deposit, your bookkeeper will stamp the Farm direct ID on the benefit and examine the benefit for mistakes. (Your Farm Direct Handbook has details.)

Why are these steps important to know?

- By following these simple steps, fewer FMNP benefits are rejected.
- The Benefit Redemption Guide will help with questions at check out.

WIC participants are issued the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) Benefit (pictured below). The redemption steps are referenced in the Montana WIC Farm Direct Benefit Redemption Guide. Keep one handy at your stand/stall/booth.

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Benefit

Step 4: Montana WIC Farm Direct Eligible Foods

Why does Farm staff need to be able to determine if an item is allowed by WIC?

(Trainer: Allow for discussion of possible answers.)

- ⇒ When the farm staff and the WIC customer both know how to use the Food List to find out if an item is allowed, it is a better experience for everyone. The customer and the cashier do not have confusion about an item.
- ⇒ Cashiers especially need to know how to find out if an item is approved by WIC. The Farmer may not get paid and/or may get a violation if a WIC customer gets an item that is not allowed or is denied an item that is allowed. If one of those problems continues, the Farmer risks losing WIC Farm Direct authorization and, possibly, SNAP (Food Stamp) authorization.
- ⇒ There may be questions about WIC approved foods. The Food List is the resource to answer these questions.

How can you tell if items, like potatoes or herbs, are allowed by WIC?

(Allow for discussion.)

--The Food List: The food list defines produce that is approved for purchase.

What is shown in the Farm Direct Food List?

(Handout copies of the Food List; Allow for discussion.)

There are two groups of produce approved for Montana WIC Farm Direct sale – locally grown fresh vegetables and locally grown fresh fruits. The Food List also provides a list of restrictions to clarify the types of items that are not allowed to be purchased with FMNP benefits.

Step 5: Taking FMNP Benefits

FMNP benefits for fruits and vegetables are special in a number of ways. Here are some important points about the FMNP benefits for fruits and vegetables:

- ⇒ Fruits and vegetables can be purchased using a Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Benefit (FMNP).
- ⇒ The FMNP benefit lists the dollar amount that the WIC customer can purchase of fruits and vegetables, not the number of items.
- ⇒ Fixed dollar amounts are $5.00 for the FMNP benefit.
- ⇒ The cashier will write the actual amount of the sale on the benefit. (For example: if a WIC customer buys $4.50 worth of fruits and vegetables and "$5.00 is listed on the FMNP benefit, $4.50 is the amount that is written on the benefit.)
- ⇒ As with standard WIC benefits, no cash may be paid and no change may be given. WIC customers will not be given cash back if the purchase totals less than the amount on the benefit.

Can the WIC customer pay extra during the transaction if her Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Benefit goes over the maximum value printed on the benefit?

Yes. A WIC customer may pay any amount that exceeds the maximum value of the benefit. However, the overage amount is considered a separate transaction and should not be reflected on the benefit. This means never write more than the benefit maximum in the "amount of sale" box.

Can two Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Benefits be combined during a transaction?

Yes. A family may redeem more than one FMNP benefit in a transaction. For example, a participant wishes to purchase around $11 of fruits and vegetables and they have two $5 FMNP benefits. The cashier would ring up the produce – let's say it totals $10.80. The first $5 FMNP benefit is processed, leaving a balance of $5.80. Process the second $5 FMNP benefit, leaving an unused balance of 80 cents. $5 is written in the amount of sale on the first benefit and $5 on the second. If your check out system cannot accommodate a multiple check transaction, please inform the WIC participant and help them use as much of their benefits as they can.

Step 6: Special Circumstances

What happens if a WIC customer wants to purchase an item that the cashier does not think is approved?

(Allow for discussion.)

To verify if an item is approved by WIC for that customer, you need to refer to the Food List.
1.. Find the food group on the Food List. Along with the WIC customer, review the information shown in the Food List:

- ⇒ Eligible fresh fruits & vegetables
- ⇒ Restrictions

2. Determine if the item is approved based on the Food List and the benefit.

- ⇒ If the item is FMNP-approved, let the customer purchase the item;
- ⇒ If the item is not FMNP-approved, explain to the WIC customer that a non-approved item cannot be purchased with a FMNP benefit. The customer can then decide to:
  - Purchase an appropriate FMNP-approved item within the food group,
  - Purchase the item with her personal shopping, or
  - Not purchase the item.

Step 7: WIC Violations and Sanctions

WIC has a system of sanctions to ensure that WIC customers receive the correct nutritious foods prescribed for them. WIC-authorized Farmers, as well as WIC customers, may be sanctioned if found to have committed violations abusing the Program.

Farm Direct violations are detailed in the Farm Direct Handbook. Farm Direct sanctions range from nonpayment of a FMNP benefit to disqualification from the program. The main violations to keep in mind are:

- ⇒ Not training staff on FMNP foods, redemption and policies,
- ⇒ Providing unapproved food items, and
- ⇒ Not allowing the purchase of approved items.

Step 8: Main Resources to Find Answers to Questions

What Resources are available if you have a question about WIC?

(Trainer: Allow for discussion.)

⇒ **The Farm Direct Food List**
Each stand/stall/booth should have a copy.

⇒ **The FMNP Benefit**
The FMNP benefit, shows the valid dates and allowed maximum dollar amount.

⇒ **The Montana FMNP Benefit Redemption Guide**
A quick reference on how to redeem FMNP benefits.

⇒ **The Montana WIC Farm Direct Handbook**
You can consistently find answers to questions about the WIC Farm Direct Program in your Handbook.

⇒ **Your local WIC Contact- the Local Agency Retailer Coordinator (LARC)**
The LARC is your main WIC contact.

⇒ **Your Own High Level of Customer Service**
We realize that farm staff are expert at customer service and will provide WIC customers with great service - whether it is explaining that an item is not FMNP-allowed and cannot be purchased with a FMNP benefit or whether it is helping them remove items from the transaction to bring the total to below the maximum dollar value. (Thanks!)

Step 9: Wrap-Up

Trainer:

⇒ Wrap –up the training with time to allow for questions and discussion.