

# **WIC FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM GUIDELINES SUMMER 2021**

## **GOALS**

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) has dual goals. One goal is to improve the nutritional status of WIC participants by issuing coupons to them for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmers' markets. A second goal is to stimulate business for the local farmers and create a greater awareness of the farmers' market. The program operates in twenty-nine (29) counties across North Carolina.

## **PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY**

To be eligible for issuance of FMNP coupons, a participant must be:

- Currently certified in the WIC Crossroads system and eligible to receive WIC on that day;
- A child who is at least two years old at the time of issuance and who has not reached his/her fifth birthday; or
- A woman who is:
  - ✓ Pregnant,
  - ✓ Postpartum,
  - ✓ Partially-breastfeeding, or
  - ✓ Breastfeeding

## **DESCRIPTION OF ELIGIBLE FOODS**

Coupons may be used at authorized Farmers' Markets for any fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables.

FMNP coupons **cannot** be redeemed for herbs, peanuts, honey, jelly, jam, eggs, baked goods, plants, flowers, or other non-food items, or items not grown by local farmers.

## **INFORMATION TO GIVE TO FMNP PARTICIPANTS**

Each household should be given the FMNP participant flyer that describes how to use the coupons and the locations of nearby participating farmers' markets.

Also use the flyer to explain the program to participants, including the following information:

- Purpose of program
- Description of eligible foods
- How to use coupons at authorized markets
- Restriction on coupons
- Expiration dates for coupons
- Descriptions of participating farmers' markets and operating hours
- Location of nearest market(s) and transportation information

Applicable nutrition education material should also be distributed to coupon recipients.

## USING COUPONS AT FARMERS' MARKETS

Participants may use coupons with authorized farmers at any participating farmers' market. Authorized farmers will have a poster indicating they accept WIC FMNP coupons. Each coupon is worth \$5.00; no change is given for coupon purchases. Multiple coupons can be used together for a single purchase.

Participants must use the coupons between the "First Date to Spend" and the "Last Date to Spend". They **cannot** be used at grocery stores or roadside farm stands.

## ISSUANCE OF COUPONS

- 1) Coupon issuance at the start of the season should begin upon notification from the State WIC Agency.
- 2) Coupons are issued in sets of six. Each participant receives a total of \$30 worth of coupons on a one-time basis. Participants can only receive one set of coupons per year.
- 3) The participant/parent/proxy must sign the signature pad for issuance.
- 4) If the participant/parent/proxy should receive the coupons, but not sign for them, write "RCVD BY (Name of Recipient)" where the signature should be and initial and date it.
- 5) Instruct the participant/parent/proxy to sign the coupons at the participating farmers' market. Only a single signature is required, at the point of purchase.
- 6) A designated WIC proxy may pick up coupons.
- 7) Coupons can be mailed to participants.

## MAILING FMNP COUPONS

Why mail FMNP coupons?

- 1) Some participants might not come into the local agency because they have been issued eWIC benefits remotely
  - Mailing FMNP coupons would allow the participant to receive FMNP for the season
  - Only mail FMNP coupons if the participant is **NOT** coming into the local agency to be issued eWIC benefits.
- 2) Procedures for mailing FMNP coupons:
  - Review participant data in the Crossroads system
  - Document issuance of FMNP coupons
    - staff person preparing the mailing must sign the signature pad and write "Mailed" beside their signature.
    - a note must be made in the participant's record in the Crossroads system indicating FMNP coupons were mailed to the family.
- 3) Prior to mailing the FMNP coupons staff should do the following:
  - Verify participant address
  - Verify that all the information printed on the coupons is accurate
  - Make sure the return address of the local agency is on the envelope.
  - Enclose in the envelope:
    - the FMNP coupons
    - a name and location of market with days and hours the market is opened
    - any notifications
  - Mark/stamp/print "**DO NOT FORWARD, RETURN TO SENDER**" on the envelope
  - Mail the FMNP coupons by first class mail

- Confirm with the US Postal Service any requirements for preparing these envelopes
- 4) FMNP coupons returned in the mail:
- FMNP coupons that are mailed and returned as undeliverable must be promptly invalidated. Stamp or write the word “VOID” on of each FMNP coupon.
  - The FMNP coupons must also be voided in the Crossroads system.

### **CHECK STOCK/COUPON SECURITY**

Check stock and unclaimed coupons must be kept in a locked storage area. Local agency management staff is responsible for keeping the key to the storage area to ensure unissued check stock is secure.

### **COUPON REPLACEMENT**

Do not replace issued coupons which participants report as lost, stolen or damaged.

### **PROGRAM MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT**

A farmers’ market coordinator from the State WIC Agency will monitor at least 50% of the participating Local WIC Agencies during the course of the summer to review program procedures and discuss program issues with local staff.

Failure to comply with FMNP regulations, such as failing to follow procedures for issuing coupons, selling coupons for cash, theft, or other actions intended to produce illegal financial gain, may be violations of Federal or State law, and violators may be prosecuted.

### **PROGRAM EVALUATION**

During or following the coupon issuance period, your Local WIC Agency may be monitored regarding program operations and impact. Surveys are completed by Local WIC Agency staff and a sample of farmers and program participants at the end of the season.

### **COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

Local WIC Agencies are required to document participant complaints as well as farmer/market manager complaints that are directed to the Local WIC Agency. These should be recorded on the FMNP complaint form and kept on file. A copy must be sent to the State WIC Agency to assure resolution of the complaint. The complaint file will be reviewed as part of the monitoring visits.

### **QUESTIONS**

System-related questions regarding issuance should be directed to the NSB Customer Service Desk at 919-707-5795.

Programmatic questions should be directed to:  
Heather Todaro at [heather.todaro@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:heather.todaro@dhhs.nc.gov) /919-707-5738 or  
Cory Menees at [cory.menees@dhss.nc.gov](mailto:cory.menees@dhss.nc.gov) /919-707-5815.