Subject: General Nutrition Education

References: 246.11

Policy: The local agency must make nutrition education available to WIC participants or caregivers according to federal and state requirements and to meet the nutrition education needs of families.

Purpose: To ensure that WIC participants receive adequate nutrition education that strives to improve the health of nutritionally at-risk women, infants and children.

Procedures:
- All participants must be provided with a minimum of two nutrition education contacts (must receive nutrition education on two different occasions) during each certification.
  - Provide education at the time of certification. See Initial Education policy, Section 6.3.
  - Provide education at least one more time during the certification period. See Additional Education policy, Section 6.7.
  - Provide education for infants at a rate equivalent to quarterly. See Additional Education policy, Section 6.7.
- Nutrition education is a benefit of the program and should be provided at no cost to the participant.
- Participants may not be denied supplemental foods for failure to attend or participate in nutrition education.
- Nutrition education should address the individual’s nutritional risks and nutritional interests.
- Nutrition education should emphasize the relationship between nutrition, physical activity habits and health.
- The participant should easily understand the nutrition education.
- Nutrition education should meet the cultural and language needs of the participant.
- Nutrition education should be appropriate to the literacy level of the participant.

Guidance:

Provision of Nutrition Education:
- If multiple nutrition and health needs for education are identified, the CPA should prioritize those needs and focus the education on just 1 or 2 topics.
- Provide literature that is appropriate for the individual participant. Literature should supplement counseling, not replace it.
Facilitate behavior change. Mutually explore ways to change behaviors. Counseling methods may include: goal setting, motivational interviewing, brief negotiations, and identifying barriers to change. Ask your state nutrition consultant for resources to build counseling skills. Two of the counseling resources available from the state includes: Brief Negotiations modules and Bright Ideas!…for Nutrition Educators.

Nutrition education should be delivered in appealing, creative and interactive ways that engage the participant, and, as appropriate, other family members.

Incorporate physical activity messages (e.g., Fit WIC).

Incorporate community/national nutrition messages (e.g., 5-A-Day, folic acid preconceptually).

Use recognized, effective strategies, methodologies and techniques for providing nutrition education.

Promote WIC as an adjunct to good health care.

Staffing:
Each local agency should designate a Nutrition Education Coordinator. The Nutrition Education Coordinator plans and evaluates program nutrition services.

- The Nutrition Education Coordinator should be a CPA who meets the qualifications of Registered Dietitian (or registration eligible), Minnesota Licensed Dietitian (LD), Minnesota Licensed Nutritionist (LN), or is an individual with a Master’s or Bachelor’s Degree in Nutrition. When a CPA with these qualifications is not available, a CPA who is a Registered Nurse, or who has a degree in a Health or Home Economics related field, may be used in consultation with the assigned State Nutrition Consultant. Refer to CPA policies in Chapter 4. If the Nutrition Education Coordinator is not a Registered Dietitian, Minnesota Licensed Dietitian or Minnesota Licensed Nutritionist, more oversight may be needed by the state Nutrition Consultant.

- The Nutrition Education Coordinator should be an individual who possesses:
  - Knowledge of human nutrition in health and disease. Should also have knowledge of nutrition needs of infants, children and women during the prenatal, postpartum and breastfeeding stages.
  - Knowledge of effective counseling and educational concepts and methods.
  - Ability to prepare and/or evaluate educational materials, and to prepare and deliver in-service trainings.
  - Ability to prepare and/or oversee nutrition education program planning and evaluation.

- Roles of the Nutrition Education Coordinator include:
  - Plan and evaluate nutrition services.
  - Develop the annual local nutrition education plan.
  - Evaluate CPA staff competencies in nutrition, and plan and coordinate training as needed.
  - Monitor CPA staff performance, per local agency policy and supervision schedule.
  - Develop and review/evaluate nutrition education materials.
  - Develop procedures for high-risk (INCPs) care, including methods for evaluation of high-risk care provided by CPA staff. Refer to High Risk Individual Nutrition Care Plan Policy, Section 6.6.
- Provide technical assistance to and consultation with local agency staff and other health professionals regarding nutrition issues.
- Provide or arrange continuing education opportunities for the local agency CPA staff.
- Serve as liaison with health care providers.
- Coordinate approvals of medically prescribed formulas.