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**PART 246—SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN**

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**Subpart A—General**

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**§ 246.1 General purpose and scope.**

This part announces regulations under which the Secretary of Agriculture shall carry out the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC Program). Section 17 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, as amended, states in part that the Congress finds that substantial numbers of pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants and young children from families with inadequate income are at special risk with respect to their physical and mental health by reason of inadequate nutrition or health care, or both. The purpose of the Program is to provide supplemental foods and nutrition education, including breastfeeding promotion and support, through payment of cash grants to State agencies which administer the Program through local agencies at no cost to eligible persons. The Program shall serve as an adjunct to good health care during critical times of growth and development, in order to prevent the occurrence of health problems, including drug and other harmful substance abuse, and to improve the health status of these persons. The program shall be supplementary to SNAP; any program under which foods are distributed to needy families in lieu of SNAP benefits; and receipt of food or meals from soup kitchens, or shelters, or other forms of emergency food assistance.

[50 FR 6121, Feb. 13, 1985, as amended at 54 FR 51294, Dec. 14, 1989; 58 FR 11506, Feb. 26, 1993; 76 FR 59888, Sept. 28, 2011]

**§ 246.2 Definitions.**

For the purpose of this part and all contracts, guidelines, instructions, forms and other documents related hereto, the term:

2 *CFR* part 200, means the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards published by OMB. The

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part reference covers applicable: Acronyms and Definitions (subpart A), General Provisions (subpart B), Post Federal Award Requirements (subpart D), Cost Principles (subpart E), and Audit Requirements (subpart F). (NOTE: Pre-Federal Award Requirements and Contents of Federal Awards (subpart C) does not apply to the National School Lunch Program).

*Above-50-percent vendors* means vendors that derive more than 50 percent of their annual food sales revenue from WIC food instruments, and new vendor applicants expected to meet this criterion under guidelines approved by FNS.

*Affirmative Action Plan* means that portion of the State Plan which describes how the Program will be initiated and expanded within the State's jurisdiction in accordance with § 246.4(a).

*A-130* means Office of Management and Budget Circular A-130, which provides guidance for the coordinated development and operation of information systems.

*Applicants* means pregnant women, breastfeeding women, postpartum women, infants, and children who are applying to receive WIC benefits, and the breastfed infants of applicant breastfeeding women. Applicants include individuals who are currently participating in the program but are re-applying because their certification period is about to expire.

*Authorized supplemental foods* means those supplemental foods authorized by the State or local agency for issuance to a particular participant.

*Breastfeeding* means the practice of feeding a mother's breastmilk to her infant(s) on the average of at least once a day.

*Breastfeeding women* means women up to one year postpartum who are breastfeeding their infants.

*Cash-value voucher* means a fixed-dollar amount check, voucher, electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card or other document which is used by a participant to obtain authorized fruits and vegetables. Cash-value voucher is also known as cash-value benefit (CVB) in an EBT environment.

*Categorical eligibility* means persons who meet the definitions of pregnant

women, breastfeeding women, postpartum women, or infants or children.

*Certification* means the implementation of criteria and procedures to assess and document each applicant's eligibility for the Program.

*Children* means persons who have had their first birthday but have not yet attained their fifth birthday.

*Clinic* means a facility where applicants are certified.

*Competent professional authority* means an individual on the staff of the local agency authorized to determine nutritional risk and prescribe supplemental foods. The following persons are the only persons the State agency may authorize to serve as a competent professional authority: Physicians, nutritionists (bachelor's or master's degree in Nutritional Sciences, Community Nutrition, Clinical Nutrition, Dietetics, Public Health Nutrition or Home Economics with emphasis in Nutrition), dietitians, registered nurses, physician's assistants (certified by the National Committee on Certification of Physician's Assistants or certified by the State medical certifying authority), or State or local medically trained health officials. This definition also applies to an individual who is not on the staff of the local agency but who is qualified to provide data upon which nutritional risk determinations are made by a competent professional authority on the staff of the local agency.

*Competitive bidding* means a procurement process under which FNS or the State agency selects a single source (such as a single infant formula manufacturer offering the lowest price), as determined by the submission of sealed bids, for a product for which bids are sought for use in the Program.

*Compliance buy* means a covert, on-site investigation in which a representative of the Program poses as a participant, parent or caretaker of an infant or child participant, or proxy, transacts one or more food instruments or cash-value vouchers, and does not reveal during the visit that he or she is a program representative.

*Contract brand infant formula* means all infant formulas (except exempt infant formulas) produced by the manufacturer awarded the infant formula

cost containment contract. If under a single solicitation the manufacturer subcontracts for soy-based infant formula, then all soy-based infant formulas covered by the subcontract are also considered contract brand infant formulas (see § 246.16a(c)(1)(i)). If a State agency elects to solicit separate bids for milk-based and soy-based infant formulas, all infant formulas issued under each contract are considered the contract brand infant formula (see § 246.16a(c)(1)(ii)). For example, all of the milk-based infant formulas issued by a State agency that are produced by the manufacturer that was awarded the milk-based contract are considered contract brand infant formulas. Similarly, all of the soy-based infant formulas issued by a State agency that are produced by the manufacturer that was awarded the soy-based contract are also considered to be contract brand infant formulas. Contract brand infant formulas also include all infant formulas (except exempt infant formulas) introduced after the contract is awarded.

*Cost containment measure* means a competitive bidding, rebate, direct distribution, or home delivery system implemented by a State agency as described in its approved State Plan of operation and administration.

*CSFP* means the Commodity Supplemental Food Program administered by the Department, authorized by section 5 of the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973, as amended, and governed by part 247 of this title.

*Days* means calendar days.

*Department* means the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

*Discount* means, with respect to a State agency that provides Program foods to participants without the use of retail grocery stores (such as a State agency that provides for the home delivery or direct distribution of supplemental food), the amount of the price reduction or other price concession provided to any State agency by the manufacturer or supplier of the particular food product as the result of the purchase of Program food by each such State agency, or its representative, from the manufacturer or supplier.

*Disqualification* means the act of ending the Program participation of a par-

ticipant, authorized food vendor, or authorized State or local agency, whether as a punitive sanction or for administrative reasons.

*Documentation* means the presentation of written documents which substantiate statements made by an applicant or participant or a person applying on behalf of an applicant.

*Drug* means:

(a) A beverage containing alcohol;

(b) A controlled substance (having the meaning given it in section 102(6) of the Controlled Substance Act (21 U.S.C. 802(6))); or

(c) A controlled substance analogue (having the meaning given it in section 102(32) of the Controlled Substance Act (21 U.S.C. 802(32))).

*Dual participation* means simultaneous participation in the Program in one or more than one WIC clinic, or participation in the Program and in the CSFP during the same period of time.

*EBT Capable* means the WIC vendor demonstrates their cash register system or payment device can accurately and securely obtain WIC food balances associated with an EBT card, maintain the necessary files such as the authorized product list, hot card file and claim file and successfully complete WIC EBT purchases.

*Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)* means a method that permits electronic access to WIC food benefits using a card or other access device approved by the Secretary.

*Electronic signature* means an electronic sound, symbol, or process, attached to or associated with an application or other record and executed and or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the record.

*Employee fraud and abuse* means the intentional conduct of a State, local agency or clinic employee which violates program regulations, policies, or procedures, including, but not limited to, misappropriating or altering food instruments or cash-value vouchers, entering false or misleading information in case records, or creating case records for fictitious participants.

*Exempt infant formula* means an infant formula that meets the requirements for an exempt infant formula under section 412(h) of the Federal

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Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 350a(h)) and the regulations at 21 CFR parts 106 and 107.

*Family* means a group of related or nonrelated individuals who are living together as one economic unit, except that residents of a homeless facility or an institution shall not all be considered as members of a single family.

*Farmer* means an individual authorized by the State agency to sell eligible fruits and vegetables to participants at a farmers' market or roadside stands. Individuals who exclusively sell produce grown by someone else, such as wholesale distributors, cannot be authorized.

*Farmers' market* means an association of local farmers who assemble at a defined location for the purpose of selling their produce directly to consumers.

*Fiscal year* means the period of 12 calendar months beginning October 1 of any calendar year and ending September 30 of the following calendar year.

*FNS* means the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

*Food costs* means the costs of supplemental foods, determined in accordance with § 246.14(b).

*Food delivery system* means the method used by State and local agencies to provide supplemental foods to participants.

*Food instrument* means a voucher, check, electronic benefits transfer card (EBT), coupon or other document which is used by a participant to obtain supplemental foods.

*Food sales* means sales of all SNAP eligible foods intended for home preparation and consumption, including meat, fish, and poultry; bread and cereal products; dairy products; fruits and vegetables. Food items such as condiments and spices, coffee, tea, cocoa, and carbonated and noncarbonated drinks may be included in food sales when offered for sale along with foods in the categories identified above. Food sales do not include sales of any items that cannot be purchased with SNAP benefits, such as hot foods or food that will be eaten in the store.

*Full nutrition benefit* means the minimum amount of reconstituted fluid ounces of liquid concentrate infant for-

mula as specified in Table 1 of § 246.10(e)(9) for each food package category and infant feeding variation (e.g., Food Package IA fully formula fed, IA-FF).

*Health services* means ongoing, routine pediatric and obstetric care (such as infant and child care and prenatal and postpartum examinations) or referral for treatment.

*High-risk vendor* means a vendor identified as having a high probability of committing a vendor violation through application of the criteria established in § 246.12(j)(3) and any additional criteria established by the State agency.

*Home food delivery contractor* means a sole proprietorship, partnership, cooperative association, corporation, or other business entity that contracts with a State agency to deliver authorized supplemental foods to the residences of participants under a home food delivery system.

*Homeless facility* means the following types of facilities which provide meal service. A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter (including a welfare hotel or congregate shelter) designed to provide temporary living accommodations; a facility that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or a public or private place not designed for, or normally used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

*Homeless individual* means a woman, infant or child:

(a) Who lacks a fixed and regular nighttime residence; or

(b) Whose primary nighttime residence is:

(1) A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter (including a welfare hotel, a congregate shelter, or a shelter for victims of domestic violence) designated to provide temporary living accommodation;

(2) An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized;

(3) A temporary accommodation of not more than 365 days in the residence of another individual; or

(4) A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

*IHS* means the Indian Health Service of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

*Individual with disabilities* means a handicapped person as defined in 7 CFR 15b.3.

*Infant formula* means a food that meets the definition of an infant formula in section 201(z) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 321(z)) and that meets the requirements for an infant formula under section 412 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 350a) and the regulations at 21 CFR parts 106 and 107.

*Institution* means any residential accommodation which provides meal service, except private residences and homeless facilities.

*Infants* means persons under one year of age.

*Inventory audit* means the examination of food invoices or other proofs of purchase to determine whether a vendor has purchased sufficient quantities of supplemental foods to provide participants the quantities specified on food instruments redeemed by the vendor during a given period of time.

*Local agency* means: (a) A public or private, nonprofit health or human service agency which provides health services, either directly or through contract, in accordance with § 246.5; (b) an IHS service unit; (c) an Indian tribe, band or group recognized by the Department of the Interior which operates a health clinic or is provided health services by an IHS service unit; or (d) an intertribal council or group that is an authorized representative of Indian tribes, bands or groups recognized by the Department of the Interior, which operates a health clinic or is provided health services by an IHS service unit.

*Members of populations* means persons with a common special need who do not necessarily reside in a specific geographic area, such as off-reservation Indians or migrant farmworkers and their families.

*Migrant farmworker* means an individual whose principal employment is in agriculture on a seasonal basis, who has been so employed within the last 24 months, and who establishes, for the

purposes of such employment, a temporary abode.

*Multi-function equipment* means Point-of-Sale equipment obtained by a WIC vendor through commercial suppliers, which is capable of supporting WIC EBT and other payment tender types.

*Net price* means the difference between an infant formula manufacturer's lowest national wholesale price per unit for a full truckload of infant formula and the rebate level or the discount offered or provided by the manufacturer under an infant formula cost containment contract.

*Non-contract brand infant formula* means all infant formula, including exempt infant formula, that is not covered by an infant formula cost containment contract awarded by that State agency.

*Nonprofit agency* means a private agency which is exempt from income tax under the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended.

*Nutrition education* means individual and group sessions and the provision of materials that are designed to improve health status and achieve positive change in dietary and physical activity habits, and that emphasize the relationship between nutrition, physical activity, and health, all in keeping with the personal and cultural preferences of the individual.

*Nutrition Services and Administration (NSA) Costs* means those direct and indirect costs, exclusive of food costs, as defined in § 246.14(c), which State and local agencies determine to be necessary to support Program operations. Costs include, but are not limited to, the costs of Program administration, start-up, monitoring, auditing, the development of and accountability for food delivery systems, nutrition education and breastfeeding promotion and support, outreach, certification, and developing and printing food instruments and cash-value vouchers.

*Nutritional risk* means: (a) Detrimental or abnormal nutritional conditions detectable by biochemical or anthropometric measurements; (b) Other documented nutritionally related medical conditions; (c) Dietary deficiencies that impair or endanger health; (d)

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Conditions that directly affect the nutritional health of a person, including alcoholism or drug abuse; or (e) Conditions that predispose persons to inadequate nutritional patterns or nutritionally related medical conditions, including, but not limited to, homelessness and migrancy.

*OIG* means the Department's Office of the Inspector General.

*Other harmful substances* means other substances such as tobacco, prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications that can be harmful to the health of the WIC population, especially the pregnant woman and her fetus.

*Partially-redeemed food instrument* means a paper food instrument which is redeemed for less than all of the supplemental foods authorized for that food instrument.

*Participant violation* means any deliberate action of a participant, parent or caretaker of an infant or child participant, or proxy that violates Federal or State statutes, regulations, policies, or procedures governing the Program. Participant violations include, but are not limited to, deliberately making false or misleading statements or deliberately misrepresenting, concealing, or withholding facts, to obtain benefits; selling or offering to sell WIC benefits, including cash-value vouchers, food instruments, EBT cards, or supplemental foods in person, in print, or online; exchanging or attempting to exchange WIC benefits, including cash-value vouchers, food instruments, EBT cards, or supplemental foods for cash, credit, services, non-food items, or unauthorized food items, including supplemental foods in excess of those listed on the participant's food instrument; threatening to harm or physically harming clinic, farmer, or vendor staff; and dual participation.

*Participants* means pregnant women, breastfeeding women, postpartum women, infants and children who are receiving supplemental foods or food instruments or cash-value vouchers under the Program, and the breastfed infants of participant breastfeeding women.

*Participation* means the sum of:

(1) The number of persons who received supplemental foods or food instruments during the reporting period;

(2) The number of infants who did not receive supplemental foods or food instruments but whose breastfeeding mother received supplemental foods or food instruments during the report period; and

(3) The number of breastfeeding women who did not receive supplemental foods or food instruments but whose infant received supplemental foods or food instruments during the report period.

*Postpartum women* means women up to six months after termination of pregnancy.

*Poverty income guidelines* means the poverty income guidelines prescribed by the Department of Health and Human Services. These guidelines are adjusted annually by the Department of Health and Human Services, with each annual adjustment effective July 1 of each year. The poverty income guidelines prescribed by the Department of Health and Human Services shall be used for all States, as defined in this section, except for Alaska and Hawaii. Separate poverty income guidelines are prescribed for Alaska and Hawaii.

*Pregnant women* means women determined to have one or more embryos or fetuses in utero.

*Price adjustment* means an adjustment made by the State agency, in accordance with the vendor agreement, to the purchase price on a food instrument after it has been submitted by a vendor for redemption to ensure that the payment to the vendor for the food instrument complies with the State agency's price limitations.

*Primary contract infant formula* means the specific infant formula for which manufacturers submit a bid to a State agency in response to a rebate solicitation and for which a contract is awarded by the State agency as a result of that bid.

*Program* means the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) authorized by section 17 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, as amended.

*Proxy* means any person designated by a woman participant, or by a parent

or caretaker of an infant or child participant, to obtain and transact food instruments or cash-value vouchers or to obtain supplemental foods on behalf of a participant. The proxy must be designated consistent with the State agency's procedures established pursuant to § 246.12(r)(1). Parents or caretakers applying on behalf of child and infant participants are not proxies.

*Rebate* means the amount of money refunded under cost containment procedures to any State agency from the manufacturer of the particular food product as the result of the purchase of the supplemental food with a voucher or other purchase instrument by a participant in each State agency's program. Such rebates shall be payments made subsequent to the exchange of a food instrument for food.

*Remote Indian or Native village* means an Indian or Native village that is located in a rural area, has a population of less than 5,000 inhabitants, and is not accessible year-round by means of a public road (as defined in 23 U.S.C. 101).

*Routine monitoring* means overt, on-site monitoring during which program representatives identify themselves to vendor personnel.

*Secretary* means the Secretary of Agriculture.

*SFPD* means the Supplemental Food Programs Division of the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

*Sign or signature* means a handwritten signature on paper or an electronic signature. If the State agency chooses to use electronic signatures, the State agency must ensure the reliability and integrity of the technology used and the security and confidentiality of electronic signatures collected in accordance with sound management practices, and applicable Federal law and policy, and the confidentiality requirements in § 246.26.

*Single-function equipment* means Point-of-Sale equipment, such as barcode scanners, card readers, PIN pads and printers, provided to an authorized WIC vendor solely for use with the WIC Program.

*State* means any of the fifty States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Is-

lands, Guam, American Samoa, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

*State agency* means the health department or comparable agency of each State; an Indian tribe, band or group recognized by the Department of the Interior; an intertribal council or group which is an authorized representative of Indian tribes, bands or groups recognized by the Department of the Interior and which has an ongoing relationship with such tribes, bands or groups for other purposes and has contracted with them to administer the Program; or the appropriate area office of the IHS.

*State alliance* means two or more State agencies that join together for the purpose of procuring infant formula under the Program by soliciting competitive bids for infant formula.

*State Plan* means a plan of Program operation and administration that describes the manner in which the State agency intends to implement and operate all aspects of Program administration within its jurisdiction in accordance with § 246.4.

*Statewide EBT* means the State agency has converted all WIC clinics to an EBT delivery method and all authorized vendors are capable of transacting EBT purchases.

*Supplemental foods* means those foods containing nutrients determined by nutritional research to be lacking in the diets of pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants, and children, and foods that promote the health of the population served by the WIC Program as indicated by relevant nutrition science, public health concerns, and cultural eating patterns, as prescribed by the Secretary in § 246.10.

*Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is the program authorized by the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011, *et. seq.*), in which eligible households receive benefits that can be used to purchase food items from authorized retail stores and farmers' markets.

*USDA implementing regulations* include the following: 2 CFR part 400, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards; 2 CFR part

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415, General Program Administrative Regulations; 2 CFR part 416, General Program Administrative Regulations for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments; and 2 CFR part 418, New Restrictions on Lobbying.

*Vendor* means a sole proprietorship, partnership, cooperative association, corporation, or other business entity operating one or more stores authorized by the State agency to provide authorized supplemental foods to participants under a retail food delivery system. Each store operated by a business entity constitutes a separate vendor and must be authorized separately from other stores operated by the business entity. Each store must have a single, fixed location, except when the authorization of mobile stores is necessary to meet the special needs described in the State agency's State Plan in accordance with § 246.4(a)(14)(xiv).

*Vendor authorization* means the process by which the State agency assesses, selects, and enters into agreements with stores that apply or subsequently reapply to be authorized as vendors.

*Vendor limiting criteria* means criteria established by the State agency to determine the maximum number and distribution of vendors it authorizes pursuant to § 246.12(g)(2).

*Vendor overcharge* means intentionally or unintentionally charging the State agency more for authorized supplemental foods than is permitted under the vendor agreement. It is not a vendor overcharge when a vendor submits a food instrument for redemption and the State agency makes a price adjustment to the food instrument.

*Vendor peer group system* means a classification of authorized vendors into groups based on common characteristics or criteria that affect food prices, for the purpose of applying appropriate competitive price criteria to vendors at authorization and limiting payments for food to competitive levels.

*Vendor selection criteria* means the criteria established by the State agency to select individual vendors for authorization consistent with the requirements in § 246.12(g)(3) and (g)(4).

*Vendor violation* means any intentional or unintentional action of a vendor's current owners, officers, managers, agents, or employees (with or without the knowledge of management) that violates the vendor agreement or Federal or State statutes, regulations, policies, or procedures governing the Program.

*WIC* means the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children authorized by section 17 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, 42 U.S.C. 1786.

*WIC-eligible nutritionals for participants with qualifying conditions (hereafter referred to as "WIC-eligible nutritionals")* means certain enteral products that are specifically formulated to provide nutritional support for individuals with a qualifying condition, when the use of conventional foods is precluded, restricted, or inadequate. Such WIC-eligible nutritionals must serve the purpose of a food, meal or diet (may be nutritionally complete or incomplete) and provide a source of calories and one or more nutrients; be designed for enteral digestion via an oral or tube feeding; and may not be a conventional food, drug, flavoring, or enzyme. WIC-eligible nutritionals include many, but not all, products that meet the definition of medical food in Section 5(b)(3) of the Orphan Drug Act (21 U.S.C. 360ee(b)(3)).

[50 FR 6121, Feb. 13, 1985; 50 FR 8098, Feb. 28, 1985]

EDITORIAL NOTE: For FEDERAL REGISTER citations affecting § 246.2, see the List of CFR Sections Affected, which appears in the Finding Aids section of the printed volume and at [www.govinfo.gov](http://www.govinfo.gov).

### § 246.3 Administration.

(a) *Delegation to FNS.* Within the Department, FNS shall act on behalf of the Department in the administration of the Program. Within FNS, SFPD and the Regional Offices are responsible for Program administration. FNS shall provide assistance to State and local agencies and evaluate all levels of Program operations to ensure that the goals of the Program are achieved in the most effective and efficient manner possible.