MAKING THE MOST OF AN OPPORTUNITY: GUIDANCE FROM NWA’S EVALUATION COMMITTEE ON MONITORING THE IMPACT OF THE $35 CVB

The temporary increase of the WIC Cash Value Benefit (CVB) to $35/month for the purchase of vegetables and fruits presents a critical opportunity for States and Local Agencies to demonstrate the impact of these changes, potentially lending support to advocacy efforts to increase the value of the CVB beyond the 4-month temporary period. The NWA Evaluation Committee encourages all members to do all they can to rapidly capture data and stories from your staff and participants. We recognize not all agencies have the same capacity to access their redemption data or conduct interviews or focus groups, but here we outline three strategies we hope many of you can embark on quickly as we get ready for more vegetables and fruit this summer.

1. CAPTURE CVB REDEMPTION DATA SO WE CAN SHOW HOW MUCH PARTICIPANTS ARE BUYING.

Most of us do this already! Ideally you can capture redemption data of your CVB both before and during the months of the expanded CVB. Capturing monthly data back to June 2020 (and even pre-pandemic back to June 2019) would be useful to address questions of seasonality in vegetable and fruit purchasing, but if you can’t go back that far, don’t worry, get what you can get. All our systems are a little different, so we recognize there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Also, many of our systems capture redemption by family and not by individual. No problem! The encouragement here is to capture what your systems currently allow and to try and get some historical data from before the change if you can.

The following elements would be useful to capture monthly, starting before the increase to $35 and continuing through the period of increase:

• Average Total dollars redeemed of the CVB (this one is the most important)
• Percent with 0 redemption
• Percent with 90%+ redemption

For those of you out there with easy access to your data, consider whether you can also capture the above by (1) racial/ethnic background, (2) SNAP participation and/or (3) participation in this summer’s Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program (FMNP).

2. CAPTURE CVB REDEMPTION DATA SO WE CAN SHOW WHAT VEGETABLES AND FRUITS PARTICIPANTS ARE BUYING.

If your system captures data on the types of vegetables and fruits participants are purchasing, grab it! We know currently that families buy mostly fruit, do we see a shift to adding more vegetables with the $35 CVB? What types of vegetables and fruits are purchased when the expanded CVB becomes available? In states that authorize them, do we see a change in the amount of canned, frozen and/or dried options being purchased?

3. TALK TO STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS AND CAPTURE THEIR INDIVIDUAL STORIES OF WHAT THE $35 CVB HAS MEANT TO THEM, THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES.

We at WIC never underestimate the power of a good story! Please capture them in writing, video and other creative ways. Consider adding an open-ended question about the increased CVB in participant surveys you might be planning.

NWA will be sharing a monthly survey between June and September to try and capture some of the data outlined in this guidance. We hope to use some of the data to inform a number of case studies and advocacy materials to support a permanent increase to CVB.

Thank you for all you are doing during this exciting time for increasing equitable access to vegetables and fruits, and thank you in advance for sharing your data and your stories so we can do all we can to advocate for continued increases of this important benefit.