

Connecticut Department of Public Health Date: June 24, 2009

Funding Source: The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

WIC System Assessment and Implementation Planning Project

Project #1

Project Description:

Connecticut's current WIC data system (SWIS) severely limits the State WIC Program and Local WIC Agencies ability to:

- Improve program effectiveness and efficiency of operations,
- Implement EBT, and
- Share information with other Maternal and Child health data systems currently used by the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH).

To address this problem the Connecticut WIC program, on 15-May-2009, submitted a Planning Advance Plan Document (PAPD) requesting approval to initiate planning activities for a new WIC system. A total budget of \$474,880 has been identified for these activities with \$110,000 coming from approved FFY09 WIC grant funding and \$364,880 in FFY 2010 funding from the WIC Technology Grant – Miscellaneous Projects Grant (Grant Package #4), which is being submitted to fund the FFY2010 project tasks. The following summary discusses:

- The state of the current system,
- Benefits that Connecticut WIC expects to achieve from the implementation of a new system, and
- Describes the analysis and planning process that Connecticut will follow to identify an appropriate system solution and produce the required Implementation Advance Planning Documents.

SWIS supports client certification, nutrition services, food delivery, and the administrative functions of the WIC Program. The system is a transfer of the Andersen Massachusetts System, was implemented in 1995, and currently supports:

- Monthly delivery of services to approximately 60,000 clients by 23 permanent and 57 satellite Local WIC Agencies sites with 150+ staff,
- Issuance of approximately 170,000 food instruments monthly,
- Participation of and payments to over 550 food vendors, and
- Program management activities of 24 DPH / WIC staff.

The Department of Public Health's WIC Program Office and Local WIC Agencies identified specific needs that a new system must address:

- Improvements in operational efficiency and program effectiveness:
 - Improved scheduling of client visits, including issuing appointment reminders and the need for clients to bring in supporting documentation
 - Improved growth charting and calculation of Body Mass Indices
 - Enhanced ability to transfer clients from one agency to another
 - Simplified replacement of lost or damaged food checks
 - Additional functionality to support the monitoring of client nutritional health and the delivery of nutrition education
 - Elimination of the loss of historical information when updating client records
- Improvements in reporting are needed to support agencies' ability to:
 - Monitor Staff productivity
 - Maintain supply and formula inventories
 - Produce ad-hoc reports needed to support agency operations
 - Track qualitative and quantitative nutritional outcomes
- Accommodate expanding business functions
 - EBT to eliminate the need for paper-based food benefit instrument
 - Simplify the implementation of new food packages and services
- Improved monitoring and fiscal management
 - Improved vendor management, monitoring, and food pricing processes
 - Enable information to be shared between local agencies or the WIC Program office to improve State monitoring of local programs.
 - Reduce time consuming manual processes required to transcribing of information from agency reports to multiple spreadsheets, incorporate data from multiple State systems, research discrepancies, and consolidate information to prepare monthly financial reports (e.g. FNS-798)
 - Enhance the system's ability to aid in the identification of fraud
- Improvements to the system's technology base
 - Improve ease of use
 - Reduce effort required to implement new features
 - Accommodate expanding business functions, such as EBT, eliminating the need for paper-based food benefit instrument
 - Reduce operating, maintenance and support costs

Since most state WIC agencies perform similar functions and state-of-the-art WIC systems exist, Connecticut plans on transferring another WIC state agency's web based system into Connecticut, with minimal yet justifiable customization, rather than designing a totally new system. State Agency Model (SAM) systems (SPIRIT and MPSC) and other web-based WIC systems (e.g. Massachusetts Eos, MI-WIC, and others) will be considered for transfer.

The selected system must address Connecticut WIC business needs, be aligned with Connecticut's State Enterprise-Wide Technology Architecture (EWTA¹), and address the specifications identified in the USDA - FNS Functional Requirements Document (FReD²) for a Model WIC System.

The goal of the WIC System Modernization Project is to replace the current SWIS system with modern, cost effective, web-based, WIC management information, food instrument delivery, and payment system that supports the following objectives:

- Improves the timely and accurate deliver of WIC benefits to clients and enhances WIC's ability to positively impact the health and nutrition of women and children.
- Improves program effectiveness and efficiency.
- Insures accountability and integrity of program and agency operations
- Improves State and Local Agency staff productivity by automating tasks, simplifying learning curves, and improving satisfaction resulting from ease of use.
- Enhances and improves fiscal processes, accountability, and reduces paperwork.
- Uses modern web technology that facilitates and simplifies use and deployment of the system to local WIC Agencies.
- Incorporates a modern, modular architecture that reduces complexity and costs associated with implementing new functionality to address new federal and state requirements, such as value-based vouchers for fruit and vegetables, and is compliant with the State's EWTA.
- Is compliant with WIC standards and data elements.
- Is compliant with Federal and State policies and regulations.
- Supports integration and data exchanges with other Connecticut and Federal maternal and child health programs and social services agencies.
- Supports and simplifies the future implementation of an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) solution or, depending on the outcome of the feasibility analysis, the concurrent implementation of a recommended EBT platform that is compliant with X9.93.
- Minimizes system implementation costs and reduces on-going operating and support costs

¹ A copy of the State's EWTA can be found at <http://www.ct.gov/doi/cwp/view.asp?a=1245&q=253976&doiNav>

² A copy of USDA-FNS's Fred Requirements Document can be found at http://www.fns.usda.gov/apd/WIC_FRED.htm

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MIS Updates for New Food Package implementation

Project #2

Project Description:

Development changes to the Connecticut Statewide WIC Information System (SWIS) to accommodate revisions in the WIC food packages as a result of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Interim Rule, 7 CFR Part 246.

The Connecticut Statewide WIC Information System (SWIS) was designed to use state level, pre-defined food packages and the system currently does not allow tailoring of individual food items at the local agency level. To accommodate the new WIC food packages and provide for maximum flexibility, we must rewrite and redesign the entire food package subsystem in SWIS. SWIS supports client certification, nutrition services, food delivery, and the administrative and fiscal functions of the WIC Program. The antiquated system is a transfer of the Andersen System, which the Connecticut WIC Program implemented in 1995. It currently supports:

- Monthly delivery of services to approximately 60,000 clients
- Over 150 staff at 23 permanent local WIC offices and 57 satellite sites
- Issuance of over 190,000 food instruments monthly
- Participation of and payments to over 550 food vendors, and
- Program management activities of 24 DPH / State WIC Office staff.

The new food package system will allow for fully customized tailoring of all food items based on each participant's subcategory, which determines the food types and maximum quantities prescribed. The system will incorporate indicators that are not in the current SWIS version, such as identifying foods that may present dangers to certain clients with food-based allergies; identifying specific participant subcategories with regard to the issuance of appropriate maximum amounts of food; and applying markers on shelf-stable food items. These indicators will further assist the nutritionist in creating the most appropriate food prescriptions and food items for participants.