

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Name:		Vendor Advisory Council Meeting	
Date of Meeting:	March 7, 2022	Time:	2:30 PM
Minutes Prepared By:	Renee Verbeke	Location:	Virtual
1. Meeting Objective			
Bi-yearly meeting of the VAC. Discuss items as presented in approved agenda.			
2. Attendees			
Steering Committee:			
Myra Lee & Katherine Groble – Co-chairs			
Renee Verbeke – acting secretary			
Hal Stratton & Karen Batterham – VAC members			
VAC Members:			
Sharon Pitt and Erik Hingst – Wal-Mart			
Lindsay Wieringa – Meijer			
Diane Costa – Bryan’s Supermarket			
Eman Hussain – Dearborn Fresh Supermarket			
Mohammad Osman – Fordson Market			
Elijah Pelkie – Jim’s Jubilee Foods			
Issa Odeh – Quick Pick Party Store III			
Management:			
Kim Keilen, Julia Johnson, Dawn Pline			
Other:			
Zanya Suleiman (intern)			
3. Agenda and Discussion			
Topic	Discussion		
Agenda	Reviewed		
Welcome to New Members	Bryan’s Market, Meijer, Walgreens (Walgreens not present)		
State Updates	<p>Formula Recall by Dawn Pline – Allow for returns, exchanges, and store credit. Work with Abbott or your wholesaler to return affected product. Dawn covered how to return infant formula involved in the Similac recall. Small stores should return it where they purchased it or contact Abbott via email that was provided 3/4/22 to vendors. You must start the process with an email for authorization.</p> <p>Temporary replacement formulas and larger can sizes – Michigan is talking about this right now and hope to have a decision soon. Please make sure you update your APLs regularly.</p> <p>Asked VAC members to submit weekly inventory and to read their emails. Diane from Bryan’s Market asked how long the stores will need to submit inventory list. Dawn replied that it would be until the recall is worked through.</p> <p>“We know that this too shall pass.”</p>		
Strategic Objectives	<p>Receive vendor feedback on WIC policies, gain insight into Vendor barriers to improve service to WIC participants.</p> <p>Vendor Motivation slide based on VAC applications. Used to develop 2022 Strategic Objectives, keeping SMART GOALS in mind.</p> <p>Myra asked if any members get client feedback regarding the client shopping experience in their stores. Bryan’s Market (Diane) stated that they tend not to get a lot of feedback until there is an issue, i.e., shortages, etc., and it is usually things that they have no control over.</p>		

	<p>Eman Hussain stated she does not have much feedback either and wishes they could have a mobile app like clients have.</p> <p>Lindsey Wieringa from Meijer stated that food choice bullet point brings up the ability to approve other options for the Similac recall. She would like to see options of other alternatives when there is a supply chain issue, as well.</p> <p>Re: the client shopping experience, we may need consensus on how we measure it. Focus groups, round table, and other things will be looked at. Are materials useful? How can we make the shopping trip more beneficial? How do we have this conversation? Develop and revise vendor training tools to make all clients feel welcome and support the client and their shopping experience.</p> <p>Eman added that there could be a small paper to ask clients questions – something as simple as 5 questions used for feedback to identify the struggles the client may be facing. Myra responded that marketing was going to be utilized. Katherine shared that a short survey may come up on the MIWIC app to provide information for the client to complete after they shop.</p>
<p>Policy Feedback</p>	<p>Are there any policies you have questions about? Any changes to policy you would like to see? Karen Batterham asked if Vendors use the internet to check policies. How often do the Vendors check the website?</p> <p>Diane stated that she checks it about once a month but depends more on the emails.</p> <p>Elijah shared that they try to view the website but normally rely on emails, as well.</p> <p>We want to add a policy that would allow vendors to purchase products online and/or from out of state. This would expand on the current MDARD licensure requirement to allow licensure from other (non-MI) state equivalents. We are trying to close the loop on our end to give the vendors a viable option.</p>
<p>Fall Conference</p>	<p>Sept. 8, 2022, Doubletree, Dearborn. Theme is ‘You’re of the Star’ to give recognition to the vendors. The state will be sending out Save the Date information soon. The VAC will be utilized to make sure presentation topics are relevant for all vendors.</p> <p>Katherine asked for presenters/topics from the VAC panel and/or other speaker or topic ideas. This might include your experiences in the VAC, things you implement in your store, and other things that vendors would be interested in hearing about. The conference is for vendors, so we want it to be of interest.</p> <p>Eman Hussain shared the idea to share best practice ideas at the conference and a small visual for her cashiers. Katherine shared the idea re: staff training at stores is a great one.</p>
<p>Vendor Best Practices</p>	<p>How are you keeping track of inventory through the infant formula recall?</p> <p>Eman stated that she logs the inventory twice a week to make sure that she has enough needed formula.</p> <p>Mohamed stated that they spoke to the rep who instructed them to keep track of returns and keep count. He has not had many returns but has the problem of not having enough Enfamil. Customers are afraid to take Similac that was not recalled. Corporate stores are trying to replenish and distribute equally, local stores are not able to control it.</p>

	<p>Diane shared that Bryan’s Market tracks inventory and kept the returned formula separate from the rest. The manager checks daily to see that the store has what is needed.</p> <p>Lindsey added that Meijer is similar to Walmart that is driven by recall, merchant team, and another – they all work together to keep track of the numbers.</p> <p>How can we improve communications with our Vendors? Quarterly calls to check in?</p> <p>Eman has no problem with communications and contacts Diala immediately.</p> <p>Mohamed is happy with the communications.</p> <p>Harold Stratton added that sometimes the website has information where the vendor can go.</p> <p>Diane stated that she is open to text messages.</p> <p>Katherine added that the State is looking at doing text blasts one the new Vendor Portal goes live this fall.</p> <p>First Vendor quarterly call will be in April so please review the website. Quarterly call was well received by Diane, Elijah, and Lindsey.</p>
Online Training	<p>Online WIC Vendor Training will replace webcasts – we are hoping it goes live soon. We would like the VAC to view and provide feedback to make sure it is user friendly and easy to navigate. Online training will be completed at the Vendor’s convenience vs. a set time. You will be able to stop and go back later, if needed.</p> <p>Lindsey asked if there was any type of completion reporting for the vendor to know who completed the training. Katherine discussed a training (and monitoring) snapshot becoming available on the external Vendor Portal that is in development.</p>
Next Steps	<p>Decide on date for first Quarterly Call. Option of a Monday or Friday date-most could do Monday-April 4, 2022, 2:30-3:30 PM. Asked for specific topics and share best practices.</p> <p>Mohammed asked about a change of ownership and if the new vendor could be approved faster. Katherine addressed the selection criteria requirement that SNAP must be in place first.</p> <p>Eman asked about specialty formulas such as Allimentum and Elecare. She is concerned with the effect on babies of changing formulas back and forth.</p> <p>Myra asked if there were any topics to add/share in April? Myra suggested to draft agenda to share with VAC members to give feedback. Someone asked if we know when the recalled formulas will be back on the shelf. Dawn responded that we do not have definite dates yet.</p> <p>Plans to send out a membership directory to VAC members and spotlight vendors participating in VAC in future quarterly calls.</p>
4. Next Meeting:	Monday, October 3, 2022 at 2:30 PM