

**Wisconsin Food Security Consortium  
Meeting**

**March 20, 2006**

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**NOTES**

**Attending:** Amy Meinen, Robin Soileau, Patti Daubs, Jane Voichick, Peter Bakken, Jonathan Bader, Sue Larson, Mike Skaer, Heather Harvey, Judi Bartfeld, Kadi Row, Pat Ludeman, Bob Molininsky, Mike McKenzie, Helene Pesche, Patti Herrick. Guests: Stephanie Kersten and Autumn Arnold

**Next Dates and Agenda:** to be determined. It was recommended that a smaller group from the Consortium meet and debrief the past year and map out proposed plans for the coming year. (Update; the next meeting will be June 13<sup>th</sup>).

**Presentation: FoodShare (Mike McKenzie and Autumn Arnold)**

Mike McKenzie, Chief of the FoodShare Policy and Planning Section provided an overview of the Wisconsin's FoodShare Program (formerly known as Wisconsin Food Stamp Program).

Oversight to the Program is USDA, FNS (Food and Nutrition Service), Federal Regulations and Food Stamp Act. There is not much in State Statute except with regard to EBT (electronic benefits transfer). FSP is state-supervised and county/tribe-administered. It is located in DHFS (recently moved from DWD), Division of Health Care Financing, Bureau of Eligibility, FoodShare Policy and Planning Section.

FNS has two goals for the FSP: increase access and participation WHILE maintaining payment accuracy. (In the past, payment accuracy was the only performance measure). With the reauthorization of the Program, performance measures were added:

- 1) payment accuracy (still has sanction associated with it but we have been allowed to apply the sanction money back in to program improvement) There were no sanctions for 2005!
- 2) negative error rate,
- 3) timely processing of applications,
- 4) participation of eligibles

Re: participation of eligibles, Wisconsin ranked 49<sup>th</sup> with 49% of eligibles served in FFY 04. DHFS is looking at these data to determine why it appears low considering the recent participation increases. See the recent FRAC report:

[http://www.frac.org/html/federal\\_food\\_programs/FSP/Participation\\_Rates\\_04.html](http://www.frac.org/html/federal_food_programs/FSP/Participation_Rates_04.html)

Wisconsin income maintenance goals:

- 1) Increase access and participation
- 2) Reduce local agency workload
- 3) Increase and improve payment accuracy

Initiatives once FSP moved from DWD to DHFS:

- 1) System enhancements, e.g. CARES, income calculations, system flow
- 2) Reduced reporting from participants, e.g. reduce number of from face-to-face meetings and allow a short mid-year report to continue participation
- 3) Broadband categorical eligibility

- 4) Transitional food stamp benefits when leave W2, e.g. to receive additional 5 months
- 5) Excluded financial aid from asset determination
- 6) To increase participation with focus on elderly and children, changing name to FoodShare
- 7) Provide training to local organizations with FoodShare 101 video and other materials
- 8) Conducts management evaluations to one third of the agencies
- 9) Developed ACCESS

Currently working on:

- 1) Increasing the utilities deduction (which would increase benefits)
- 2) Participant Access Index rate
- 3) Application combined with SSI to certify FoodShare for three years if eligible for SSI without additional FS contact
- 4) If payment accuracy is high, could get a waiver of the face-to-face interview at one year.
- 5) Considering an electronic case file that would streamline transfer of clients between counties.

The Food Stamp Program is up for reauthorization in 2007. Recommendations made from DHFS to USDA Secretary Johanns (December 16, 2005) included:

- Increase minimum benefit to \$30/month for all households and \$50/month for households with elderly persons and persons with disabilities.
- Expanded FSP deductions
- Eliminate asset test
- Maintain expanded categorical eligibility
- Eliminate the shelter expense cap and the medical expense cap for non-elderly, non-disabled households.
- Allow an 'opt-out' provision if medical deductions are standardized.
- Increase overall benefit levels
- Eliminate legislation requiring parental cooperation with child support services as a conditions of eligibility for FSP benefits.

See <http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/em/index.htm> and click on Publications for "FoodShare Makes Wisconsin Healthier" brochure, Fact Sheet, and the FoodShare Eligibility and Benefits Handbook that Mike distributed during the meeting.

Mike also distributed FoodShare Wisconsin Program at a Glance that can be found at <http://www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/foodshare/fsataglance.htm>.

ACCESS Project presentation by Autumn Arnold. A copy of the Power Point slides is attached. Patti Daubs, an experienced system user, shared the Hunger Prevention Council of Dane County, Inc. FoodShare Outreach Project. The Project helped people access FoodShare through the Access web tool at the pantry. If the person appeared to be eligible, the results were printed out and they were given an envelope with instructions on how to complete the application process (e.g. necessary documentation). 81% (or 148) of the people using the screener appeared to be eligible. 107 cases were in CARES; 41 were not. 55 were either already receiving FoodShare, had closed cases, or were not eligible. 26 were eligible, 23 applied, and 20 cases were opened and receiving benefits. 41 were eligible but did not apply.

## **Conference Call with Local Hunger Coalitions**

Approximately 15 representatives of local hunger coalitions called in. Kadi provided a brief history of the Food Security Consortium that was sent earlier via e-mail. One of the recommendations from an earlier survey was for the Consortium to be better connected with local organizations. The purpose of this call was to start the conversation as to improve communication, as well as ideas for priorities to begin working together.

Jonathon Bader summarized the responses you provided to our on-line survey of local coalitions. Here is the link to view all results:

[http://www.zoomerang.com/reports/public\\_report.zgi?ID=L22JJKEVVPEG](http://www.zoomerang.com/reports/public_report.zgi?ID=L22JJKEVVPEG)

Other suggestions from the call:

- Provide technical assistance
- Share Dane County Pantry Survey tool
- Get a grant to do a social marketing campaign, activities
- Reinforce common messages, e.g. Oregon talking point.
- Ashland/Bayfield will share their Food Security Survey results
- Anyone is welcome to attend the meetings
- Suggest regional representation on the Food Security Consortium, periodic conference calls.
- Would the Consortium be open to more local participation; to participation by phone and in other locations outside Madison?

How to move forward:

- Perhaps a statewide Hunger Summit.
- Describe what has been done so far, e.g. strategic planning, purpose statement, perhaps a website to include minutes, survey results, what coalitions are doing, etc.
- Facilitate communication amongst each other locally (Kadi described the Extension Data Base that is now opened up to other users).  
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/food/coalition/index.cfm>

Next steps:

It was decided that it was time for a small group of Consortium members to digest the past year activities and today's discussion. The group will meet and propose next steps at our next meeting.

## **Legislative Updates**

The President's 2007 Budget proposes a cut for the WIC Program by capping Nutrition Services funds to 25% and requiring a 20% match starting in 2008. An email was sent earlier with specific information, talking points and Wisconsin-specific impact.

The same budget proposes elimination of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program.