

<p style="text-align: center;">Nutrition Services Department of State Health Services</p>

Effective January 1, 2011

Policy No. GA:13.0

Access to Appointments

Purpose

To reduce barriers to participation in the WIC Program by providing services during non-traditional hours.

Authority

7 CFR Part 246.7(b)(4); Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 32, Section 32.021 (as amended by 75th Legislature).

Policy

Each local agency (LA) shall provide services to applicants/participants during the extended clinic operating hours as required by the Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 32, Section 32.021.

Definitions

- I. Traditional Clinic Hours: Hours of clinic operation between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday - Friday.
- II. Extended Clinic Hours: Hours of clinic operation before 8:00 am. or after 5:00 p.m., Monday - Friday, or on Saturday or Sunday.

Procedures

- I. Each LA shall offer extended clinic hours as described below:
 - A. Each LA shall offer extended hours that reflect the best method to serve participants in the community.
 1. Extended operating hours shall be offered on weekday evenings and Saturdays and may be offered on Sundays, to provide increased access to WIC services.

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2. Each individual clinic within a LA is not required to offer extended operating hours. However, a reasonable effort shall be made to ensure that extended hours are distributed among clinics to ensure coverage of the entire service area.
 3. The methodology for determining the level of compliance with this requirement is shown in the APO spreadsheet posted on the WIC Director page.
- B. The lunch hour shall not be considered an extended clinic hour; however, operation during the lunch hour is encouraged.
 - C. Working individuals or students shall be given priority consideration for appointments during extended hours of operation. Other WIC participants or applicants shall be allowed to fill appointments that are not taken by working individuals or students.
 - D. During extended hours of operation, clinics shall offer the same services provided during traditional clinic hours including certification, nutrition education and counseling, and food instrument issuance. Certain blocks of time, including extended hours, may be set aside exclusively for one or more of these activities as long as all of the services are offered during extended hours at times that meet the needs of working participants and students. In no case shall traveling, answering of telephone lines, or other administrative activity, by itself, be counted as extended clinic hours.
 - E. Hours of operation shall be posted at each WIC clinic site.
 - F. LAs shall report changes in the operating hours of individual clinics to the SA as the changes occur.
 - G. LAs may use the option of scheduling extended hours in a way that reflects the best way to serve participants in their own community. LAs shall provide the justification of the extended hours scheduled and assurances that participation levels shall remain constant or grow. If participation levels decrease, the state agency (SA) may implement the 20% total extended hour requirement.

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- II. Each LA shall provide the SA an Annual Plan of Operations that includes the information requested and electronically submit to annualplansforops@dshs.state.tx.us on the APO spreadsheet posted on the WIC Director page.
 - A. The Annual Plan of Operations shall require the following information on LA clinic operations:
 - 1. The LA shall submit a complete list of clinic sites, including site number, hours, physical address, and telephone numbers for appointments and technical assistance at each site. The Clinic Information Form may be used to document the above information.
 - 2. All traditional and extended clinic hours shall be summed to provide an agency's total number of hours used to determine compliance with this policy, except as noted. The total number of clinic hours shall be divided by the total number of extended hours to determine the percentage of extended hours offered.
 - B. The Annual Plan of Operation shall be received at the SA not later than March 1st for implementation on October 1st of that year.
 - C. The Annual Plan of Operations shall be updated when the total number of extended hours provided by a LA changes by more than 5% or at the request of the SA.
 - D. Approval of the Annual Plan of Operations is required prior to subsequent contracting with an agency.

 - III. Each LA shall provide extended hours according to the needs of the community. In extraordinary circumstances where a WIC LA cannot provide extended hours, the LA may request a temporary waiver. Waivers shall be approved only for the period of time necessary to resolve the extraordinary circumstances that preclude compliance with this policy. In no case shall the total period of time covered by a waiver(s) exceed two years.

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