

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



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September 8, 2010

**Internal Audit Report 2010-09
Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program
Department of Health and Human Services**

Introduction. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) received \$1,432,337 from the State of Alaska Division of Public Assistance (State) to administer the Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program (WIC Program) for fiscal year 2008 and \$1,462,556 was appropriated for fiscal year 2009. The WIC Program is a federally funded supplemental food and nutrition program for pregnant and breastfeeding women and their children from birth to age five. The WIC Program provides nutrition information, counseling, and periodic health screenings, along with supplemental food warrant vouchers for infant formula and healthy foods. Participant's information is entered into a State maintained database. The WIC Program currently has thirteen staff. As of July 2010, the WIC Program had about 5,875 active clients.

Objective and Scope. The objective of this audit was to determine whether HHS staff complied with the grant requirements in administering the WIC Program. Specifically, we determined whether client eligibility was determined correctly, if required documentation was in client files, if applications for the WIC Program were processed timely, and if food warrant vouchers were properly issued. Our audit included a random sample of 40 client files from the current grant period.

The audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards, except for the requirement of an external quality control review, and accordingly, included tests of accounting records and such other auditing procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. The audit was performed during the period of July through August 2010. The audit was requested by the Administration.

Overall Evaluation. Based on our review, we determined that WIC Program staff generally complied with the State requirements in administering the grant. Specifically WIC Program staff correctly determined client eligibility, processed applications in a timely manner, and properly issued food warrant vouchers. However, required documentation was not always found in the client files. For example, the WIC Family Information application and the Notification of Termination were not always documented in the client files.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Required Documents Not Always Found.

- a. **Finding.** Required documentation was not always found in the client files. Specifically, 4 of 40 files reviewed did not have a WIC Family Information application. In addition, 2 of 7 clients that had terminated their participation in the WIC Program did not have a copy of the WIC Notification of Termination in their file. The State of Alaska Policy and Procedures Manual for the WIC Program requires that the WIC Family Information application and the Notification of Termination be kept in the paper file.
- b. **Recommendation.** The WIC Program Manager should ensure that the application process specified in the State of Alaska Policy and Procedures Manual is followed by WIC Program staff.
- c. **Management Comments.** Management stated, “Management concurs with the finding. The Municipality’s WIC program was selected by the State of Alaska to be the pilot site for the use of electronic signature pads in lieu of gathering the same information in hardcopy form. Although this pilot has been a success, management concurs that current Federal USDA requirements for operating a local WIC program do not yet fully support this innovation. The State continues to work towards a

completely paperless system and is due to replace the existing AKWIC database/program within the next 18 months. Until that is complete, and further guidance is forthcoming from USDA, WIC staff will go back to filling out the paper form(s) instead, maintaining the required documentation in the client's chart."

- d. **Evaluation of Management Comments.** Management comments were responsive to the audit finding and recommendation.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION

WIC Program Database. The WIC Program database is maintained by the State of Alaska WIC Program management information system staff. The database is important because it provides information regarding the current status of each client.

Although the database allows WIC Program staff to enter data, it appears that the database sometimes drops information such as participant identification. According to WIC Program staff, this problem seems to be happening more and more frequently as the database ages. As a result, participant information maintained in the database is not always accurate and complete. We contacted State WIC Program staff and they verified that the database has experienced a variety of problems and is scheduled to be replaced sometime next year.

Discussion With Responsible Officials. The results of this audit were discussed with appropriate Municipal officials on September 2, 2010.

Audit Staff:
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