



Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

May 28, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Request for WIC Flexibility in Response to COVID-19

1320  
Braddock  
Place  
Alexandria,  
VA  
22314

**TO:** Kurt Messner  
Regional Administrator  
Northeast Regional Office

This letter is in response to the May 12, 2020 correspondence from Rhode Island FMNP requesting program flexibility in the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) as a result of significant impacts to providing eligible foods to recipients due to COVID-19.

Rhode Island FMNP requested a waiver of the requirement to conduct face-to-face training for farmers and farmers' market managers who have never previously participated in the FMNP as outlined at 7 CFR 248.10(a)(4) and 248.10(d). Pursuant to the authority granted in section 2204(a)(1) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127), USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approves this waiver request through **September 30, 2020**.

Given the recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to control the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic through means of social distancing, USDA FNS understands that face-to-face training creates an undesirable risk. This waiver removes a requirement that could prevent or impede the provision of essential Program services.

This waiver allows Rhode Island FMNP to conduct the initial training of farmers and farmers' market managers by remote means, including but not limited to telephone conference calls, video conferences, and web-based training. This waiver is only applicable to regulations at:

- 7 CFR 248.10(a)(4) and (d) which require the State agency to conduct face-to-face training prior to start up of the first year of FMNP participation of a farmers' market and individual farmers.

The waiver authority at section 2204(b) of P.L. 116-127 requires the State agency to submit a report which includes a summary of the use of this waiver and a description of whether the waiver resulted in improved services to women, infants, and children. The State agency shall provide the Regional Office with this report no later than one year after the date of approval.

USDA FNS appreciates Rhode Island FMNP's commitment to addressing the operational challenges impeding the delivery of WIC benefits to women, infants, and children in need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Widor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

SARAH WIDOR  
Director  
Supplemental Food Programs Division