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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food and Nutrition Service

Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request—Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

AGENCY: Food and Nutrition Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is publishing for public comment a summary of a proposed information collection. The proposed collection is for reinstatement of a previously approved collection for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by October 12, 1999 to be assured of consideration.

ADDRESSES: Send comments and requests for copies of this information collection to Barbara Hallman, Chief, Policy and Program Development Branch, Supplemental Food Programs Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 542, Alexandria, VA 22302.

Comments are invited on:

(a) Whether the proposed collection is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(b) The accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(c) Ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(d) Ways to minimize the burden on those who are to respond, including use of appropriate, automated, electronic,

mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

All comments will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval of the information collection. All comments will become a matter of public record.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Barbara Hallman, (703) 305-2730.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: (7 CFR Part 246), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

OMB Number: 0584-0043.

Expiration Date of Approval: Expired.

Type of Request: Re-instatement of a previously approved collection with changes.

Abstract: The WIC Program provides supplemental foods, nutrition education, and health care referrals to low income, nutritionally at risk pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age 5. Currently, WIC operates through State health departments in 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, America Samoa and the Virgin Islands. Additionally, 33 Indian tribal bands and organizations serve as State agencies.

This information collection is for the reporting and recordkeeping burdens associated with the WIC Program regulations, and is necessary to ensure appropriate and efficient management of the Program. This request is being made to extend the current information collection for an additional three years.

Based on Program regulations:

- State Plans are the principal source of information about how each State agency WIC Program operates.

- Local agency applications and vendor agreements are necessary to delineate responsibility, and ensure the accountability of State agencies, local agencies, and vendors.

- Certification data provide the basis for determining the eligibility of program applicants.

- Local agency nutrition education plans facilitate the provision of quality nutrition education and allows FNS and the State agency to assess the quality and quantity of nutrition education provided to participants.

- The vendor monitoring report enables FNS to evaluate vendor trends and assess State agency efforts to control vendor fraud and abuse.

- Documentation of participant and vendor complaints enables FNS and the State agency to identify problems at the local agency level.

The requirements that the State agency:

- Identify the disposition of food instruments;

- Request approval for specified allowable costs;

- Justify the carry-over and backspending of funds;

- Submit preliminary and final closeout reports;

- Submit financial, participation, and food delivery reports to FNS;

- Develop funding procedures for local agencies;

- Report the status of participant claims; and

- Request waivers for development of alternate cost containment systems; ensure the accountability of Federal funds and promote efficient program management.

The requirement for State agency corrective action plans ensures the problem areas of program management are rectified. Submission of information to FNS for a biennial report entitled "Study of WIC Participant and Program Characteristics," provides valuable data on the various aspects of program operations. The food delivery requirements assist in controlling vendor fraud and abuse and promoting the integrity of State agency food delivery systems.

The information collected is used by FNS to manage, plan, evaluate and account for Government resources. The reports and records are required to ensure the lawful, proper and judicious use of public funds.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 0.140 manhours per response.

Respondents: State and local governments, individuals or households, and businesses.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 7,642,797

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 2.45

Estimated Total Annual Burden: 2,607,523 manhours.

Dated: July 21, 1999.

Samuel Chambers, Jr.

Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service.

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