

## Complaint Handling

- I. All complaints not alleging a participant violation need to be documented in the **Customer Service Log** in VISION. This includes complaints against participants, endorsers, proxies, and vendors from any source. Documentation needs to be completed so that appropriate investigative procedures, follow-up, and resolution can be examined if the participant/vendor requests an agency conference or a fair hearing.
  - a. In the Customer Service Log, indicate where the complaint originated with the Customer Service Type drop-down menu.
  - b. The description box needs to contain either the file name of the scanned written complaint (if applicable) or the details of the complaint including type of complaint, status of complainant, date, time, location (in the case of vendors, specific address), specific food items involved; description of individuals involved; interaction and discussion between parties. Complaints missing this critical information may not result in corrective action.
- II. If the complaint involves a vendor, then the complaint will be referred to the local agency vendor management representative to investigate in accordance with Vendor Management policy (see Complaints Against Vendors).
- III. If the complaint involves a participant violation as defined in policy, the Customer Service Log entry can be skipped and the Participant Violations screen in VISION will be completed instead. Some participant violation entries in VISION will refer back to complaints originally entered in the Customer Service Log.
- IV. Obtain a written statement from the individual(s) making the complaint when possible. Oral complaints can be taken, however, may not provide the necessary documentation or information to be satisfactorily used in a Fair Hearing. Vendors may use the *Business Reply Card* to document participant complaints. Those individuals making oral complaints against vendors or WIC clients should be asked to place the concern in writing and this should be scanned.
- V. If the complaint involves a situation that can be adequately explained or completely resolved on the basis of simple clarification of WIC Program policy then the local agency should resolve the concern. If a complaint needs to be referred to the State WIC office, the written documentation should be scanned and an electronic copy should be kept in the clinic and an electronic copy forwarded to the State WIC Office.
- VI. In VISION, Enter the closed date upon resolution of the complaint or enter a closed date if a family alert has been created to notify staff to discuss the situation at the next appointment. If the complaint is being referred to the State,

the clinic director, or the local vendor coordinator for resolution, a closed date should not be entered until that person has been contacted via phone/email to forward the complaint.

- VII. Complaints should be resolved and closed within a reasonably short amount of time. Unresolved complaints (those without a closed date) automatically place an alert on the Alert screen of the Operations menu. These alerts are monitored by State staff.
  - a. Complaints entered with a customer service type of "Investigation" are entered by State Office investigators. Local staff can ignore these alerts as they will be closed by state staff after a review of the complaint.
  - b. If the clinic is not able to reach the client to discuss the complaint after multiple attempts to contact the participant using available methods and the client is no longer participating in WIC a closed date should be entered.
- VIII. Complaints regarding staff members or internal clinic situations do not need to be documented in VISION but must be handled and resolved according to local agency procedures. The clinic director must retain the details of the complaint on file.
- IX. The State WIC office must be contacted immediately regarding all complaints alleging discrimination of any kind. The Civil Rights complaint check box must also be checked. Complaints of Civil Rights must be handled in accordance with Federal Law and Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy. See the Civil Rights section, Complaints of Discrimination, for additional procedures on handling complaints of discrimination.