**COVID-19 WIC Teleworking Proposal**

**Summary**

In response to the novel COVID-19, Tulare County WIC Program is taking safety measures to minimize risk and exposure. WIC is an essential service and therefore must continue services to the public. The following measures are in place:

* Closure of small sites including Dinuba, Orosi, Lindsay, Farmersville, Earlimart, and Woodlake.
* Staff reduction by 50%, in which approximately 50% are on reserve disaster leave at home, and 50% of essential workers are on-site continuing services.
* Consolidate staff to 3 large sites in Visalia, Porterville, and Tulare.
* Conducting phone-only appointments, no in-person appointments.
* WIC Cards are either picked-up by participants or mailed out. Strict enforcement of social distancing measures in place when participants choose to pick up the card. (See Attachment A)

As of 3/16/20, observed a sharp increase in call volume and a continued rise in caseload and new enrollments compared to prior months.

* Call volume of 1,534 (98% increase since first week of March)
* Total March call volume 5,510 calls compared to February (58% increase x 1 month)
* In the last month (March 6-April 6) it is estimated that *over 2,000* families have unmet appointments. (This number does not include all members with appointments).

Due to staff reduction, we are unable to fulfill all scheduled appointments previous to COVID19. We are behind on appointments, unable to schedule in new enrollments in current month and participants are scheduled into May or June at the earliest.

To mitigate and reduce call volume and conduct scheduled appointments in a timely manner, we must expand our work force while keep social distancing a priority.

**Proposal**

1. Staff to Telework and conduct appointments from their homes
   1. 10 eligible staff to work from home 40-hours per week (WIC has 10 laptops)
   2. Assign a “super-user” each week (w/ one back-up) from home to assist on-site staff questions and technical assistance
2. Remainder of staff to continue 2-week rotation on-site in open sites
   1. Daily Leads assigned – 1 daily lead per large site as the point of contact
3. Call Center Support Staff to telework, answering incoming calls from home
   1. Rotate Call Center Office Assistants to come on site once per week to maintain warehouse and inventory, fill necessary orders for large sites, and meet invoice/supply request needs
4. If unable to retrieve 10 VDI licenses by mid-April, we will expand office hours and utilize reserve staff to call participants and conduct calls.

**Implementation**

* *Timeline for Implementation – By Monday, April 13th*
* Pilot – start week of April 6th :
  + 2 staff to pilot week of April 6, 2020 from Wave 1 (currently on reserve)
  + Add 2 more staff to the pilot week of April 13, 2020 from Wave 2 (will be on reserve next week) – possibly back-fill to lessen impact on clinic

**Action Items**

1. Confirm assigned teleworking staff. Communications to staff.
2. Designate and assign laptops – WIC has 10 laptops on hand
3. Assign County phones (follow up with Angela Huerta)
4. VDI Access to 4 pilot staff
5. VDI Access to 6 additional staff once available
6. Train staff on new operations and workflow processes, expectations, absence requests, daily logs, voicemail triage, WIC Card Remote Issuance

In the event we cannot access the VDIs needed within the next few weeks, an alternate work schedule will be put into place. (next page)

**WIC Alternate Work Schedule**

**Purpose:** Due to the staff being placed on reserve, applications and benefit processing are falling behind. This is directly impacting access to food to participants in the WIC program. Workload increases for call center staff the further behind appointments fall. More than 2,000 families in the last month have unmet appointments, and call volume has increased almost 60% since last month.

**Proposal:** Current operational hours should shift to allow a second smaller shift and open operations during the weekend.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Shift A** | **# of Staff** | **Shift B\*\* (Reserve)** | **# of Staff** |
| Mon-Fri | 7am-5pm |  | 5:30pm-8:30pm |  |
| Sat-Sun | OFF |  | 7:30am-5:00pm |  |
| Total Hours/Emp | 40 hours | | 27 hours | |

\*\*Shift B-Staff will need to be staggered to permit two days off M-F

Through this we will increase our ability to address the issue of improving access while we get the resources needed to begin to work from home and pilot it to ensure we are operational.

A 30 minute window is in place between Shift A and Shift B to ensure social distancing is practiced and to allow for a smooth transition between shifts without overcrowding the office.

We will continue to work on telecommuting with IT and Compliance to get the resources needed