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agency shall disqualify a local agency by written notice whenever it is determined by FNS or the State agency that the local agency has failed to comply with the requirements of the Program.

(2) FNS or the State agency may disqualify the State agency or restrict its participation in the Program when both parties agree that continuation under the Program would not produce beneficial results commensurate with the further expenditure of funds. The State agency or the local agency may disqualify the local agency or restrict its participation in the Program under the same conditions. The two parties shall agree upon the conditions of disqualification, including the effective date thereof, and, in the case of partial disqualification, the portion to be disqualified.

(3) Upon termination of a grant, the affected agency shall not incur new obligations for the disqualified portion after the effective date, and shall cancel as many outstanding obligations as possible. FNS will allow full credit to the State agency for the Federal share of the noncancellable obligations properly incurred by the State agency prior to disqualification, and the State agency shall do the same for the local agency.

(4) A grant closeout shall not affect the retention period for, or Federal rights of access to, grant records as specified in §246.25. The closeout of a grant does not affect the State or local agency's responsibilities regarding property or with respect to any Program income for which the State or local agency is still accountable.

(5) A final audit is not a required part of the grant closeout and should not be needed unless there are problems with the grant that require attention. If FNS considers a final audit to be necessary, it shall so inform OIG. OIG will be responsible for ensuring that necessary final audits are performed and for any necessary coordination with other Federal cognizant audit agencies or the State or local auditors. Audits performed in accordance with §246.20 may serve as final audits providing such audits meet the needs of requesting agencies. If the grant is closed out without the audit, FNS reserves the right to disallow and recover an appro-

priate amount after fully considering any recommended disallowances resulting from an audit which may be conducted later.

§ 246.18 Administrative appeal of State agency decisions.

(a) *Requirements.* The State agency shall provide a hearing procedure whereby a food vendor or local agency adversely affected by a State or local agency action may appeal the action.

(1) The right of appeal shall be granted when a local agency's or a vendor's application to participate is denied or, during the course of the contract or agreement, when a local agency or vendor is disqualified or any other adverse action which affects participation is taken. The following are exceptions to this provision:

(i) Expiration of a contract or agreement with a vendor and the State agency's determination regarding participant access shall not be subject to administrative review; and

(ii) Disqualification of a vendor as a result of disqualification from the Food Stamp Program shall not be subject to administrative or judicial review.

(2) The adverse action affecting a participating local agency shall be postponed until a hearing decision is reached.

(3) Except for disqualifications assessed under §246.12(k)(1)(i), which shall be made effective on the date of receipt of the notice of administrative action, the State agency may take adverse action against a vendor after the 15-day advance notification period mandated by paragraph (b)(1) of this section has elapsed. In deciding whether or not to postpone adverse action until a hearing decision is rendered, the State agency shall consider whether participants would be unduly inconvenienced and may consider other relevant criteria, determined by the State agency.

(b) *Procedure.* The State agency hearing procedure shall at a minimum provide the local agency or vendor with the following:

(1) Written notification of the administrative action, the procedures to file for an administrative review, if any, the cause(s) for and the effective date

of the action. Such notification shall be provided to participating vendors not less than 15 days in advance of the effective date of the action. When a vendor is disqualified due in whole or in part to violations specified in § 246.12(k)(1), such notification shall include the following statement: "This disqualification from WIC may result in disqualification as a retailer in the Food Stamp Program. Such disqualification may not be subject to administrative or judicial review under the Food Stamp Program." In the case of disqualification of local agencies, the State agency shall provide not less than 60 days advance notice of pending action.

(2) The opportunity to appeal the adverse action within a time period specified by the State agency in its notification of adverse action.

(3) Adequate advance notice of the time and place of the hearing to provide all parties involved sufficient time to prepare for the hearing.

(4) The opportunity to present its case and at least one opportunity to reschedule the hearing date upon specific request. The State agency may set standards on how many hearing dates can be scheduled, provided that a minimum of two hearing dates is allowed.

(5) The opportunity to confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses.

(6) The opportunity to be represented by counsel, if desired.

(7) The opportunity to review the case record prior to the hearing.

(8) An impartial decision maker, whose decision as to the validity of the State or local agency's action shall rest solely on the evidence presented at the hearing and the statutory and regulatory provisions governing the Program. The basis for the decision shall be stated in writing, although it need not amount to a full opinion or contain formal findings of fact and conclusions of law.

(9) Written notification of the decision concerning the appeal, within 60 days from the date of receipt of the request for a hearing by the State agency.

(c) *Continuing responsibilities.* Appealing an action does not relieve a local agency, or a food vendor permitted to continue in the Program while its ap-

peal is in process, from the responsibility of continued compliance with the terms of any written agreement or contract with the State or local agency.

(d) *Judicial review.* If a State level decision is rendered against the local agency or food vendor and the appellant expresses an interest in pursuing a higher review of the decision, the State agency shall explain any further State level review of the decision and any available State level rehearing process. If neither is available or both have been exhausted, the State agency shall explain the right to pursue judicial review of the decision.

[50 FR 6121, Feb. 13, 1985, as amended at 64 FR 13324, Mar. 18, 1999]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 65 FR 83286, Dec. 29, 2000, § 246.18 was revised, effective February 27, 2001. For the convenience of the user, the revised text is set forth as follows:

§ 246.18 Administrative review of State agency actions.

(a) *Adverse actions subject to administrative reviews.* (1) *Vendor appeals.* (i) *Adverse actions subject to full administrative reviews.* Except as provided elsewhere in paragraph (a)(1) of this section, the State agency must provide full administrative reviews to vendors that appeal the following adverse actions:

(A) denial of authorization based on the vendor selection criteria for competitive price or for minimum variety and quantity of authorized supplemental foods (§ 246.12(g)(3)(i) and (g)(3)(ii)) or on a determination that the vendor is attempting to circumvent a sanction (§ 246.12(g)(4));

(B) termination of an agreement for cause;

(C) disqualification; and

(D) imposition of a fine or a civil money penalty in lieu of disqualification.

(ii) *Adverse actions subject to abbreviated administrative reviews.* The State agency must provide abbreviated administrative reviews to vendors that appeal the following adverse actions, unless the State agency decides to provide full administrative reviews for any of these types of adverse actions:

(A) denial of authorization based on the vendor selection criteria for business integrity or for a current Food Stamp Program disqualification or civil money penalty for hardship (§ 246.12(g)(3)(iii) and (g)(3)(iv));

(B) denial of authorization based on a State agency-established vendor selection criterion if the basis of the denial is a WIC vendor sanction or a Food Stamp Program withdrawal of authorization or disqualification;

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(C) denial of authorization based on the State agency's vendor limiting criteria (§246.12(g)(2));

(D) denial of authorization because a vendor submitted its application outside the timeframes during which applications are being accepted and processed as established by the State agency under §246.12(g)(7);

(E) termination of an agreement because of a change in ownership or location or cessation of operations (§246.12(h)(3)(xvii));

(F) disqualification based on a trafficking conviction (§246.12(1)(1)(i));

(G) disqualification based on the imposition of a Food Stamp Program civil money penalty for hardship (§246.12(1)(2)(ii)); and

(H) disqualification or a civil money penalty imposed in lieu of disqualification based on a mandatory sanction imposed by another WIC State agency (§246.12(1)(2)(iii)).

(iii) *Actions not subject to administrative reviews.* The State agency may not provide administrative reviews pursuant to this section to vendors that appeal the following actions:

(A) the validity or appropriateness of the State agency's vendor limiting or selection criteria (§246.12(g)(2) and (g)(3));

(B) the validity or appropriateness of the State agency's participant access criteria and the State agency's participant access determinations;

(C) the State agency's determination whether a vendor had an effective policy and program in effect to prevent trafficking and that the ownership of the vendor was not aware of, did not approve of, and was not involved in the conduct of the violation (§246.12(1)(1)(i)(B));

(D) denial of authorization if the State agency's vendor authorization is subject to the procurement procedures applicable to the State agency;

(E) the expiration of a vendor's agreement;

(F) disputes regarding food instrument payments and vendor claims (other than the opportunity to justify or correct a vendor overcharge or other error, as permitted by §246.12(k)(3); and

(G) disqualification of a vendor as a result of disqualification from the Food Stamp Program (§246.12(1)(1)(vii)).

(2) *Effective date of adverse actions against vendors.* The State agency must make denials of authorization and disqualifications imposed under §246.12(1)(1)(i) effective on the date of receipt of the notice of adverse action. The State agency must make all other adverse actions effective no earlier than 15 days after the date of the notice of the adverse action and no later than 90 days after the date of the notice of adverse action or, in the case of an adverse action that is subject to administrative review, no later than the date the vendor receives the review decision.

(3) *Local agency appeals.* (i) *Adverse actions subject to full administrative reviews.* Except as provided in paragraph (a)(3)(ii) of this sec-

tion, the State agency must provide full administrative reviews to local agencies that appeal the following adverse actions:

(A) denial of a local agency's application;

(B) disqualification of a local agency; and

(C) any other adverse action that affects a local agency's participation.

(ii) *Actions not subject to administrative reviews.* The State agency may not provide administrative reviews pursuant to this section to local agencies that appeal the following actions:

(A) expiration of the local agency's agreement; and

(B) denial of a local agency's application if the State agency's local agency selection is subject to the procurement procedures applicable to the State agency;

(iii) *Effective date of adverse actions against local agencies.* The State agency must make denials of local agency applications effective immediately. The State agency must make all other adverse actions effective no earlier than 60 days after the date of the notice of the adverse action and no later than 90 days after the date of the notice of adverse action or, in the case of an adverse action that is subject to administrative review, no later than the date the local agency receives the review decision.

(b) *Full administrative review procedures.* The State agency must develop procedures for a full administrative review of the adverse actions listed in paragraphs (a)(1)(i) and (a)(3) of this section. At a minimum, these procedures must provide the vendor or local agency with the following:

(1) Written notification of the adverse action, the procedures to follow to obtain a full administrative review and the cause(s) for and the effective date of the action. When a vendor is disqualified due in whole or in part to violations in §246.12(1)(1), such notification must include the following statement: "This disqualification from WIC may result in disqualification as a retailer in the Food Stamp Program. Such disqualification is not subject to administrative or judicial review under the Food Stamp Program."

(2) The opportunity to appeal the adverse action within a time period specified by the State agency in its notification of adverse action.

(3) Adequate advance notice of the time and place of the administrative review to provide all parties involved sufficient time to prepare for the review.

(4) The opportunity to present its case and at least one opportunity to reschedule the administrative review date upon specific request. The State agency may set standards on how many review dates can be scheduled, provided that a minimum of two review dates is allowed.

(5) The opportunity to cross-examine adverse witnesses. When necessary to protect the identity of WIC Program investigators,

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such examination may be conducted behind a protective screen or other device (also referred to as an “in camera” examination).

(6) The opportunity to be represented by counsel.

(7) The opportunity to examine prior to the review the evidence upon which the State agency’s action is based.

(8) An impartial decision-maker, whose determination is based solely on whether the State agency has correctly applied Federal and State statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures governing the Program, according to the evidence presented at the review. The State agency may appoint a reviewing official, such as a chief hearing officer or judicial officer, to review appeal decisions to ensure that they conform to approved policies and procedures.

(9) Written notification of the review decision, including the basis for the decision, within 90 days from the date of receipt of a vendor’s request for an administrative review, and within 60 days from the date of receipt of a local agency’s request for an administrative review. These timeframes are only administrative requirements for the State agency and do not provide a basis for overturning the State agency’s adverse action if a decision is not made within the specified timeframe.

(c) *Abbreviated administrative review procedures.* Except when the State agency decides to provide full administrative reviews for the adverse actions listed in paragraph (a)(1)(ii) of this section, the State agency must develop procedures for an abbreviated administrative review of the adverse actions listed in paragraph (a)(1)(ii) of this section. At a minimum, these procedures must provide the vendor with the following:

(1) Written notification of the adverse action, the procedures to follow to obtain an abbreviated administrative review, the cause(s) for and the effective date of the action, and an opportunity to provide a written response; and

(2) A decision-maker who is someone other than the person who rendered the initial decision on the action and whose determination is based solely on whether the State agency has correctly applied Federal and State statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures governing the Program, according to the information provided to the vendor concerning the cause(s) for the adverse action and the vendor’s response; and

(3) Written notification of the review decision, including the basis for the decision, within 90 days of the date of receipt of the request for an administrative review. This timeframe is only an administrative requirement for the State agency and does not provide a basis for overturning the State agency’s adverse action if a decision is not made within the specified timeframe.

(d) *Continuing responsibilities.* Appealing an action does not relieve a local agency or a vendor that is permitted to continue program operations while its appeal is in process from the responsibility of continued compliance with the terms of any written agreement with the State agency.

(e) *Finality and effective date of decisions.* The State agency procedures must provide that review decisions rendered under both the full and abbreviated review procedures are the final State agency action. If the adverse action under review has not already taken effect, the State agency must make the action effective on the date of receipt of the review decision by the vendor or the local agency.

(f) *Judicial review.* If the review decision upholds the adverse action against the vendor or local agency, the State agency must inform the vendor or local agency that it may be able to pursue judicial review of the decision.

Subpart F—Monitoring and Review

§ 246.19 Management evaluation and reviews.

(a) *Management evaluations and reviews.* (1) FNS and each State agency shall establish a management evaluation system in order to assess the accomplishment of Program objectives as provided under this part, FNS guidelines, instructions, and the Federal-State agreement with the Department. FNS will provide assistance to States in discharging this responsibility, establish standards and procedures to determine how well the objectives of this part are being accomplished, and implement sanction procedures as warranted by State Program performance.

(2) If FNS determines through a management evaluation or other means that the State agency has failed, without good cause, to demonstrate efficient and effective administration of its Program or has failed to comply with the requirements contained in this part or the State Plan, FNS may withhold an amount up to 100 percent of the State agency’s nutrition services and administration funds.

(3) Sanctions imposed upon a State agency by FNS in accordance with this section (but not claims for repayment assessed against a State agency) may be appealed in accordance with the procedures established in § 246.22. Before carrying out any sanction against a