**Section 672.200 Geographic Distribution and Participant Access Criteria**

a) The Department will authorize an appropriate number and distribution of vendors to ensure adequate Participant access to supplemental foods consistent with 7 CFR 246.12(g)(1) and the approved State Plan. Current SNAP disqualification/civil money penalty for hardship or business integrity, as well as all State agency-imposed criteria, may be waived to authorize Vendor applicants needed for Participant access.

b) Before disqualifying a Vendor for non-permanent disqualifications, the Department will determine if the disqualification would result in inadequate Participant access. The Department will also make a Participant access determination before imposing permanent disqualification. If a Participant access determination finds that the disqualification of a vendor would result in inadequate Participant access, the Department will impose a civil money penalty (CMP) instead of disqualification, consistent with Section 672.505(j).

c) For WIC Vendor applicants deemed necessary for Participant access by the Department, costs of a stand-beside point of sale terminal may be covered by the Department, consistent with 7 CFR 246.12(z)(2)(iv).

d) "Participant access" is defined as no other Vendors being available within 5 miles of a Vendor in an urban RUCA ZIP Code or within 20 miles of a Vendor in a rural RUCA ZIP Code. The Department will determine Participant access based on the following criteria:

1) Location of the physical address of the vendor using current RUCA Codes.

2) All other authorized vendors will be mapped and their distance from the vendor in question will be calculated. Distance will be calculated based on distance in radial miles.

(Source: Amended at 48 Ill. Reg. 2491, effective January 30, 2024)