



VENDOR NEWS

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Information for Store Owners, Managers, and Cashiers

July 2019

Welcome and 'Hello!' to our Michigan WIC Vendor Partners across the state.

My name is Kimberly Keilen and I am excited to join the Michigan WIC team as the new Section Manager of the Vendor Management and Program Integrity Units.

I have been privileged with the mission of assisting Michigan families. I know the lack of access to nutritious foods is one of the greatest barriers to the healthy development for our mothers and children. WIC targets health vulnerabilities of moderate- and low-income women and children from multiple approaches by promoting breastfeeding, improving healthcare access, and providing nutrition education and healthy foods to enable families in making lifelong healthy eating and lifestyle choices.

Providing these healthy foods is where we depend on you, our WIC Vendors. You are the on-the-ground partners. We rely on you to stock your shelves with WIC approved items and to serve WIC customers with kindness and respect. I believe quality shopping experiences really do make a substantial positive impact for the families enrolled in the WIC program.

The WIC Program has been proven very effective in promoting positive health outcomes since it began in 1972. All the more reason why we, the stewards of WIC, must strive to continuously improve the program to better serve our families. On matters big or small, we want to hear your input. I invite Michigan WIC Vendors to reach out to our department. We want to hear your questions, your concerns, your recommendations, and your stories. I am confident we may continue to equip you with the tools you need to be effective WIC Vendors.

I look forward to meeting you at the statewide WIC Vendor Conference on September 5, 2019.

I am excited for our continued partnership in improving the lives of WIC mothers and their children.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Keilen, MSW

Section Manager
Vendor Management and Program Integrity
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services



Please email MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov or call (517) 335-8937 with all questions and input.

ANNUAL WIC VENDOR CONFERENCE

What is the Vendor Conference?

The WIC Vendor Conference is an annual event for Vendors put on by the Michigan WIC Program. It serves to:

- * Enhance the WIC Program's relationship with Vendors;
- * Satisfy the requirement that Vendors attend at least one interactive training per 3-year Contract cycle;
- * Provide an opportunity for networking with other Vendors, attorneys, and stakeholders across the state.

2018 Successes:

With attendance of over 100 Vendors from across Michigan, the 2018 Conference featured interactive discussion regarding current WIC technologies and policies, understanding the WIC customer shopping experience, and strategies to improve service to WIC clients. One such strategy was presented by Florida WIC officials who explained how placing WIC foods together on a dedicated 'WIC Shelf' can increase WIC sales.

Below are some take-away points from their presentation.

- * Creation of 'WIC Shelves' was shown to increase WIC sales by nearly 50% in pilot stores.
- * WIC customers redeemed a larger proportion of their WIC food benefits at stores where shopping was most convenient.
- * Visible signs and grouping of WIC food items increased effectiveness of the strategy.

Thank you to all the Vendors who attended and helped make the 2018 WIC Vendor Conference a success!

2019 Registration Information:

This year, we will continue the tradition with the 2019 Annual WIC Vendor Conference on **September 5th** in Lansing, MI. As always, this is an all-day event with breakfast and lunch provided. To register for this event, go to <https://events.mphi.org/wic-vendor-conference/>.

Creating WIC Shelves: A Useful Marketing Strategy

Pointers for creating your own 'WIC Shelf'

- * Create your WIC Shelf next to the baby aisle to increase traffic
- * Place infant formula, the highest value item, on the bottom shelf so it is easily accessible
- * Place items you would like to increase the sales of at eye-level so that they are readily visible to customers
- * Place large containers, like infant cereal, on the top shelf to conserve space
- * Create the shelf within eyesight of cashiers to allow for easy monitoring and assistance of customers shopping for WIC
- * Display a variety of brands, allowing WIC customers choice and encouraging the purchase of less commonly known WIC items
- * Group items with similar uses together – such as bread and peanut butter
- * Place juices and cereals on the top and bottom shelves – they are the largest and easiest to recognize, signaling to clients that WIC items are located in that area
- * Use shelf talkers and signs to direct clients to the appropriate location



Examples of WIC Shelves from Florida WIC



CONTACT THE WIC VENDOR RELATIONS UNIT FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT ATTENDING THIS YEAR'S VENDOR CONFERENCE:

(517) 335-8937

MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov

CHANGES TO THE WIC FOOD GUIDE

The Michigan WIC Program is committed to continually improving access to healthy foods. To do so, we frequently update our list of WIC approved foods to reflect changes in production, availability and nutrition content, as well as client benefits. Recent changes to the food list include an expansion to the approved egg varieties, the removal of Post Bran Flakes from the list, and the increase in cash value-benefits for children.

Expanded Egg Choices

There have been recent transitions in egg production, with cage-free and other specialty eggs gaining popularity. To maximize access and meet changing consumer preferences, Michigan WIC has revised the authorization criteria for the Egg category.

Effective 12/17/18, Michigan WIC clients are now able to purchase the following types of approved eggs, according to the allowed maximum egg price listed on the client's shopping list.

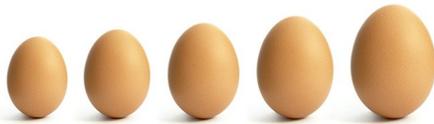
- * Eggs of **ALL SIZES**, including small, medium, large, extra large, and jumbo
- * **Specialty eggs**, including free range, grain fed, cage free, low cholesterol, omega 3, and pasteurized
- * Eggs with **BROWN** shells, in addition to those with white shells

Go to michigan.gov/WICVendor for a **list of WIC approved eggs** and their corresponding UPC codes. Like any other food item, Vendors may request the Michigan WIC program authorize additional egg varieties by filling out and submitting the **UPC Request Form**, also found on the above website.



IMPORTANT NOTE:

The Michigan WIC Vendor Contract requires that Vendors maintain competitive prices for all WIC approved items. UPC requests received by the Michigan WIC Program will be reviewed to ensure the food item meets competitive pricing criteria.



Any Size
WIC authorized



Brown and White Eggs
WIC authorized



Post Bran Flakes No Longer WIC authorized

Post Bran Flakes' formula has changed, and this cereal's iron content is now below WIC requirements. Therefore, Post Bran Flakes will **no longer be authorized for sale via WIC transactions.**

- * **UPC 884912113139** has been deactivated
- * All formulations of this item will be unavailable for sale via WIC
- * Post Bran Flakes will no longer count towards **minimum stock requirements**
- * Post Bran Flakes package graphics and product UPC number will not change

[NOTE: We appreciate your help in explaining this change to your customers if they are not already aware.]

Cash-Value Benefits

Effective October 1, 2018, the fresh fruit and vegetables benefit for children increased from \$8.00 to \$9.00 monthly.



- * This does not affect how this benefit is transacted with WIC
- * **PLU #4469** is used to enter the dollar amount of all WIC fresh fruit and vegetable purchases
- * If a WIC customer would like to buy produce costing more than the remaining cash-value balance on their card, they may pay the difference in any form a tender accepted at the store (i.e. cash, EBT, credit, debit, etc.)

MEETING & EXCEEDING MINIMUM STOCK

Maintaining inventory to meet the minimum stock requirements is an essential part of being an authorized WIC Vendor. Not only is minimum stock a Contract requirement, it also helps foster customer loyalty by ensuring that WIC clients are able to redeem their benefits each and every time they shop at your store. The complete minimum stock sheet can be found at michigan.gov/WICVendor.

The following are useful reminders on minimum stock requirements for select food items:

Low fat and/or Fat Free Milk (8 gallons)



- Gallons of both 1% and Fat Free (skim) Milk count towards this minimum stock requirement
- NOTE: Half gallons **DO NOT** count towards minimum stock

48 oz OR 11.5/12 oz Juice (5 units, 2 varieties)



- Frozen juices and 48 oz bottles of juice both count towards this minimum stock requirement
- NOTE: Having a variety of juices provides added assurance that your store will not fall below the two variety requirement

Bread/Tortillas (6 loaves/packages)



- Bread and tortillas both count towards this minimum stock requirement
- NOTE: Check package sizes, as some brands are available in a WIC-approved **16 oz** packages as well as in non-WIC-approved sizes

Cereal (12 units, 6 varieties)



- Hot and cold cereals both count towards this minimum stock requirement
- 3 of the 6 varieties of cereal must be whole grain
- NOTE: Cereals that count towards the **whole grain** requirement are specified with the  symbol in the WIC Food Guide

Infant Formula (12 cans)



- Cans of both Enfamil Infant and Enfamil Gentlease count toward this minimum stock requirement
- NOTE: It is recommended that Vendors listen to WIC customers and carry additional formulas as needed; however, not doing so **IS NOT** a Contract violation

The following are recommended strategies to ensure that your WIC food item inventory is consistently above the required minimum stock:

Maintain a Back-Stock of WIC Foods



Simply meeting the mandatory minimum stock still puts the Vendor at risk of falling below the requirement throughout the week. Having additional inventory that exceeds minimum stock allows Vendors to replenish shelves without leaving the store.

HELPFUL HINT: Items may be placed on shelves in order of expiration date to avoid accumulating outdated items.

Stock to Serve Community Preferences

Ask customers what items they prefer to inform inventory choices that increase sales and reduce waste. Maintaining minimum stock is most cost effective if items are sold before they become outdated.

Keep Records of WIC Food Inventory



Maintaining a regular log of WIC foods allows Vendors to track which items need to be rotated or re-stocked.

HELPFUL HINT: Train staff to use a checklist to monitor inventory and communicate items that need to be replenished on a daily basis.

Stock a Variety of Items for Each Category

Carrying a variety of WIC-approved food items allows Vendors to serve the preferences of a more diverse customer base and carry multiple items that satisfy the required minimum stock.

INVENTORY AUDITS AND MAINTAINING RECORDS

The WIC Vendor Contract, Section III, Items 20-23 requires that Vendors maintain **purchase and inventory records** for authorized WIC food items for which they have requested payment from the WIC Program. **Inventory audits** are one type of investigation conducted by the Department to ensure compliance with this Contract requirement.

If your store is selected for an inventory audit, you will be required to submit your records within **21 calendar days** of being notified (WIC Vendor Sanction Policy, Section B, Items 11-12). Failure to submit sufficient inventory records and/or audit discrepancies may result in the assessment of a **monetary claim** and/or **termination and disqualification** from the program for a period of 3 years (WIC Vendor Contract, Section XIV; WIC Vendor Sanction Policy, Section C, Item 9).

For digital copies of a sample WIC Vendor Contract and WIC Vendor Sanction Policy, go to michigan.gov/WICVendor.

Section IV of the **WIC Vendor Contract** establishes requirements by which Vendors must maintain purchase and inventory records for all WIC food items. Below are some **recommendations** to assist in maintaining compliance with the Contract. Don't forget, all WIC purchase records must be maintained for a **minimum of 3 years**.

Record Requirements

Key **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS** for WIC purchase records are listed below. A more detailed list can be found in Section IV of the WIC Vendor Contract. A digital sample of the Contract can be found at michigan.gov/WICVendor.

- * Name and address of the supplier, wholesaler, or retail grocer
- * Name and address of the WIC Vendor (purchaser)
- * Machine-printed date of purchase (handwritten dates are not acceptable)
- * Sizes, stock numbers, quantities, unit prices and UPC codes (if available)

Staying Organized

Keep WIC purchase records in one place



Use a dedicated binder to store all invoices and receipts to make record maintenance easier.

Request purchase records from suppliers



Ask your supplier for monthly invoices specific to WIC. If records do not satisfy Vendor Contract requirements, you may request additional invoices from your supplier.

Make paper copies of purchase receipts



Receipt paper ink fades with time and exposure to light. Keep legible receipts by printing copies with a scanner/printer. Storing receipts in a secure, dark place is also effective.

Ensuring Food Safety



The **Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD)** is our partner in ensuring food safety for WIC clients. Not only are all WIC authorized Vendors required to have a current food license from MDARD, but so are the suppliers they purchase WIC items from.

As outlined in the **WIC Vendor Contract, Section IV, Item 4**: Vendors must only purchase infant formula from wholesalers, distributors, and retailers licensed by MDARD or from infant formula manufacturers registered with the Food and Drug Administration.

To confirm the supplier has an up-to-date food license:

Ask your WIC food item supplier to see a copy of their food license or check on-line via MDARD Citizen Portal. Simply use a search engine to find this resource or go to <http://michigan.gov/MDARD>.

OPEN APPLICATION UPDATES

The Michigan WIC Program has revised the timeline for its Open Application Period and will begin accepting WIC Vendor Applications from **October 1, 2019 to December 13, 2019** for **Southeast Contracts (2020-2023)**.

We have enacted an earlier start date and extended the application period to provide a greater opportunity for potential Vendors to apply and to allow our Vendor staff ample time to conduct a thorough review of all received applications.

WHAT: Open Application Period

Opportunity for all currently authorized and waitlist Vendors to apply for WIC authorization. **NOTE:** WIC Vendor Contracts last a period of 3-years and are **NOT** automatically renewed.

WHERE: Southeast Contract Cycle (see map)

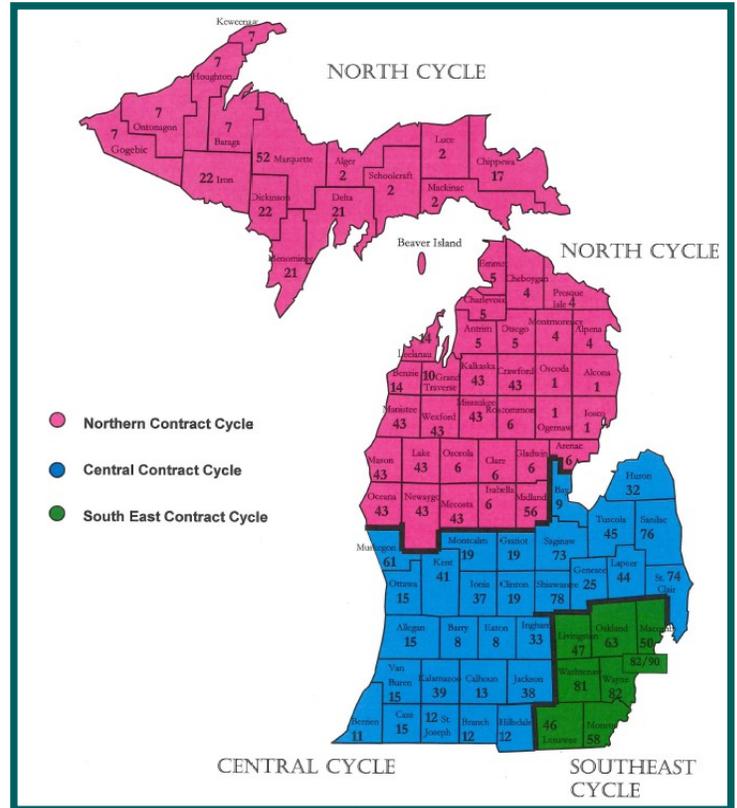
All Vendors that operate food stores in the following counties are eligible to apply: **Livingston, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw, Wayne, Lenawee, and Monroe.**

WHEN: October 1st through December 13th

If you are a currently authorized WIC Vendor or are on the waitlist, you will receive a notice in the mail at this time. If you are not yet on the waitlist and would like to be considered, please contact the Vendor Relations Unit at (517) 335-8937. **LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

CURRENT CONTRACT CYCLES

- * SOUTHEAST (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2020)
- * NORTH (July 1, 2018-June 30, 2021)
- * CENTRAL (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2022)



WIC VENDOR CONTRACT CYCLES

REVISED SELECTION CRITERIA

The **WIC Vendor Selection Criteria** is a list of requirements that the Michigan WIC Program uses to determine an applicant's eligibility to serve as a Michigan WIC Vendor. The Michigan WIC Program continues to update the Selection Criteria to ensure that we contract with the Vendors most qualified to serve Michigan WIC clients. Below are two recently updated criteria to keep in mind. For a full list of the current Selection Criteria, please go to michigan.gov/WICVendor.

★ FULL-LINE GROCERY STORE

In addition to minimum stock requirements, a full-line grocery must stock the following items at all times:

1. at least 1 additional variety of bread or tortillas with 6 or more units of said variety
2. at least 1 additional variety of brown rice with 6 or more units of said variety
3. at least 4 varieties of fresh fruits with 5 or more units of each variety
4. at least 4 varieties of fresh vegetables with 5 or more units of each variety
5. at least 4 varieties of fresh meat, poultry or fish with 5 or more units of each variety.

★ TRANSACTION VOLUME

WIC Vendors must transact a minimum of \$2,400 in WIC per quarter. New Vendors will be evaluated 3 months after authorization and warned if not compliant with this requirement. After 6 months, a new Vendor may be terminated and disqualified.

PLEASE NOTE: Current WIC Vendors and WIC Vendor Applicants will be subject to satisfying these updated criteria, so it is important to regularly check your mail and email for notices.

SUMMER EBT FOR CHILDREN

The Michigan WIC program has received a USDA grant to continue the **Summer EBT for Children (SEBTC)** program for the summer of 2019.

This grant helps provide a monthly prescription of nutritious WIC foods using the SEBTC Bridge Card to eligible school-age children in selected public schools and Intermediate School Districts (ISDs).

The value of this food package is about **\$30 per month** per child. Families can redeem SEBTC benefits during the summer months of **June, July, and August**, with benefits expiring on **September 2nd, 2019**.



SEBT Food Package Items

- ◆ Low Fat Milk - 2 Gallons
- ◆ Eggs - 1 Dozen
- ◆ Cereal - 18 Ounces
- ◆ Whole Grain Options - 1 Pound
- ◆ Peanut Butter & Bean Options
- ◆ Cheese - 1 Pound
- ◆ \$8 Cash Value for Fresh Fruits & Vegetables



SEBT 2019 Service Are-

Due to limited funding, Michigan is not able to serve all the areas that were served in the past years. The areas and schools selected were made in a combined effort through the USDA and multiple state programs and agencies and look at need *and* the availability of other summer food programs in the area.

The counties being served in the summer of 2019 include:

Alcona	Gladwin	Marquette
Alger	Gogebic	Mecosta
Alpena	Grand Traverse	Montmorency
Baraga	Houghton	Ogemaw
Charlevoix	Huron (new)	Ontonagon
Chippewa	Iosco	Osceola
Clare	Kalkaska	Oscoda
Crawford	Keweenaw	Roscommon
Emmet	Luce	Sanilac (new)
Genesee	Mackinac	Tuscola

Most 2019 service areas have participated in years past. However new **Vendor Training** will be made available for retailers in new SEBTC service areas to ensure that Vendors are able to assist clients as needed. Additionally, a brief Vendor Training for existing retailers will also be made available to brush up on the SEBTC program. Please be on the lookout for additional information about these trainings.

Additional details for Vendors can be found online at www.sebtc-mi.com under the **Information for Grocery Vendors** tab. Here you may view a helpful handout about processing SEBTC transactions and the allowed Food Guide for 2019.

If you have any questions about the SEBTC program, please contact Sarah Greer at GreerS1@michigan.gov or call the SEBTC Help Desk at 1-888-265-3291.

VENDOR WEBCAST TRAININGS

The Michigan WIC Program is constantly trying to improve the ways we communicate with Vendors and conduct trainings. Upon evaluating requests to make trainings more accessible, the Michigan WIC Program is excited to announce the launch of its **online training webcasts!**

Online trainings allow state WIC staff to provide **convenient, consistent, and comprehensive** information to Vendors across the state simultaneously. WIC Vendors may now fulfill their mandatory training requirements remotely using an internet-capable device without leaving their stores or homes. These webcasts offer higher convenience while still allowing WIC Vendors to interact with the trainers and ask questions.

Since January of 2019, **over 700 WIC Vendors** across Michigan have attended an online training. We hope you will enjoy this new training platform!



Commonly Asked Questions:

Q: How often do I have to attend a training?

A: Trainings are a mandatory Contract requirement and Vendors must attend a training once a Contract cycle, i.e., once every 3 years. If you would like to know when the last time a representative from your store attended a training, contact the Vendor Relations Unit at (517) 335-8937.

Q: How will I know when I have been scheduled for a training?

A: Invitations to mandatory upcoming trainings are sent to Vendors via email and/or mail.

Q: How do I access the training?

A: Your invitation includes a **weblink** to the training you have been invited to. This link only corresponds to the training held on the day and time indicated in your invitation. Type this link into the address bar on any internet-capable device (computer, laptop, tablet, smart phone) to access both the **registration page** and **training video**.

Q: What happens if I miss my training date? Can I watch the video at any time?

A: Webcasts are only available on the date and time indicated in your invitation. If you miss the webcast, call the Vendor Relations Unit at (517) 335-8937 to determine if there is an alternate webcast date scheduled.

Q: I own multiple stores, can I fulfill the training requirement for all of them at the same time?

A: No. If a single owner/manager operates multiple store locations, each store (Vendor) must provide a unique email address and log-in to the webcast separately to receive credit for the training. The same person may not watch the training for multiple locations.

Q: I logged in late. How much of the training video do I have to watch to receive credit?

A: Vendors will receive credit only by participating in the training for its entirety from start to finish. After successfully completing the training, you will receive an attendance certificate in the mail notifying you that you have met the requirement.

Q: I'm having trouble registering/logging in/watching the video. What should I do?

A: WIC Vendors may call the state office at 517-335-8937 with any difficulties in registering or questions about upcoming WIC Vendor Trainings. If you can see the video and/or hear the presentation, you are successfully logged in and your attendance is being recorded.

Q: When is the next webcast scheduled?

A: The next round of webcasts will take place this fall. Make sure to check your mailboxes and inboxes for invitations. The annual in-person **WIC Vendor Conference** on September 5th in Lansing also counts towards your mandatory training requirement. See pages 2 and 10 for more information.

WIC CONNECT MOBILE APP



WIC Connect
State of Michigan

Health & Fitness

The Michigan WIC Program has launched a smart phone application for **WIC clients** to engage with the Program. The new WIC Connect App was designed with functionality that assists WIC participants in accessing their clinic support and in redeeming their food benefits with Vendors.

NOTE: Anyone can download the app, but only WIC clients have access to all of its functions. (Specifically the ability to scan UPC codes and see remaining benefit balances.)

The WIC Connect Mobile Application allows WIC clients to do the following and more:



Find nearby WIC Vendors



View their remaining food benefit balance



Scan UPCs to verify WIC eligibility
App displays other allowed items in same food item category



Access WIC Resources, including the Food Guide

USEFUL RESOURCES

Michigan Department of Health & Human Services – WIC Division

Lewis Cass Building, 6th Floor
320 S. Walnut Street
Lansing, MI 48913

Phone: 517-335-8937
Fax: 517-335-9514
Email: MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov
Website: [HTTPS://WWW.MICHIGAN.GOV/WICVENDOR](https://www.michigan.gov/wicvendor)

Point of Sale (POS) Device / Manual Vouchers Questions

Contact Conduent Customer Service at 1-888-529-1693

Reporting Fraud and/or Abuse

Report this information to 1-800-CALL-WIC or WICFRAUDINVESTIGATIONS@MICHIGAN.GOV

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD)

Phone: 1-800-292-3939
E-mail: MDA-INFO@MICHIGAN.GOV
Website: [HTTP://MICHIGAN.GOV/MDARD](http://michigan.gov/mdard)

SNAP Retailer Information

Toll Free information Number: 1-877-823-4369
Website: [HTTPS://WWW.FNS.USDA.GOV/SNAP/RETAILER-APPLY](https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-apply)



Michigan Department of Health and Human
Services, WIC Division
Lewis Cass Building
320 S. Walnut St.
Lansing, MI 48913

Questions/Comments
Telephone Number: (517) 335-8937
Email: MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov



PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

A colorful banner for the Michigan WIC Vendor Conference. The banner features a green and white checkered background. On the left, there is a shopping cart icon with a green and white grid pattern. Above the cart, a purple banner reads 'New Date!'. To the right of the cart, the text 'wic MICHIGAN' is displayed. Below this, the word 'Vendor' is written in a large, blue, stylized font, with 'MANAGEMENT' in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font underneath. To the right of the cart, a large purple banner reads 'Save THE Date' in a white, cursive font. Below this, the text 'MICHIGAN WIC Vendor Conference' is written in a green, cursive font. The date 'SEPTEMBER 05, 2019' is written in a blue, sans-serif font. Below the date, the location 'Lansing Community College West Campus' and '5706 Cornerstone Dr, Lansing, MI 48917' is written in a blue, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the banner, the text 'VISIT EVENTS.MPHI.ORG FOR MORE INFORMATION' is written in a white, sans-serif font. The banner is framed by a green border with a white checkered pattern.

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