



Application Period for Northern Cycle Contracts

Applications for vendors in the northern cycle were due February 15, 2012. All timely applications are currently being reviewed for accuracy and completeness. If an application is missing information or requires clarification, it will be returned to the vendor for appropriate action.

All applicants will be notified, in writing, of a decision regarding their application no earlier than May, 2012. Approved vendors will receive a three-year contract beginning July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2015. Vendors not selected for WIC authorization will be notified in writing and placed on a waiting list.

New vendors selected for authorization will require a pre-authorization site visit and will be eligible to process WIC transactions only upon receipt of a fully executed contract, but not before July 1, 2012. A WIC representative will contact the new vendor to schedule the site visit.

Vendors who were previously authorized for WIC, and whose contracts will be renewed, do not require a site visit.

Use of the WIC Logo

Under no circumstances can the WIC Logo or WIC Name (acronym) be used to advertise ANY in-store promotion or incentive that clearly targets WIC customers. Note Item C and D below.

According to the WIC Vendor Contract, the WIC logo is any stylized representation of a silhouette depicting a woman holding an infant, or other variations of silhouettes depicting various types of WIC clients. The WIC acronym is defined as the letters W-I-C placed in sequence, and represents the WIC Program as defined in Section 1.

- A. Never place stickers, tags, or labels that include either the WIC logo or WIC acronym directly on WIC approved food items.
- B. Never place stickers, tags, or labels that include either the WIC logo or acronym in a location to indicate or suggest that a non-WIC food item is WIC approved.
- C. The WIC acronym or logo may not be used in manufacturer advertising or by vendors in their names, or in advertising or promotional literature other than to inform the public that the vendor is WIC authorized.
- D. The WIC acronym or logo may not be used in manufacturer or vendor advertising in any manner likely to cause confusion, mistake, or deception as to the affiliation, connection, or association of a manufacturer or vendor with the WIC Program, or as to the sponsorship or approval of a manufacturer's or vendor's goods, services, advertising, or commercial activities, including nutritional message(s) by the WIC Program of USDA.

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WIC WEBSITE ADDRESS
www.michigan.gov/wic

Change of Ownership during Application Period

For the NORTH region, changes of ownership that occur prior to May 31, 2012, as evidenced by a final bill of sale, will be processed normally. The new owner of a currently WIC authorized store will not be considered for authorization under the change of ownership policy if the change of ownership occurs between May 31, 2012 and June 30, 2012.

If a change of ownership of a currently authorized vendor in the NORTH region occurs between May 31, 2012 and June 20, 2012, the new owner may submit a request for an application for WIC authorization. Upon receipt, the application will be placed on a waiting list for consideration as a *new applicant* after July 1, 2012.

Cheese Pricing

A recent concern has been raised by WIC vendors that they are not being fully reimbursed for certain costly brands of WIC approved cheeses.

The WIC Program will reimburse the amount charged by the vendor for cheese up to the maximum allowable amount, which is \$4.00 for an 8 oz. package, or \$8.00 for a 16 oz. (1 lb.) package.

WIC vendors may refuse to sell certain WIC approved cheeses to WIC clients if the price of the cheese exceeds the maximum allowable amount, as long as other, less expensive, WIC approved cheese is available in the store for WIC clients to purchase. The WIC client shopping list notes this price limit, and clients must make cheese selections within these parameters.

NOTE: WIC vendors are still required to charge competitive prices for WIC products, including cheese, compared to other vendors in their peer group. Vendors should NOT automatically raise prices for all WIC approved cheeses to the maximum \$4.00/8 oz. or \$8.00/16 oz. limit. Depending on the brand of cheese and average price for that cheese in your peer group, you may not be reimbursed the maximum allowable amount.

If vendors or WIC clients have issues related to this policy, please call 1-800-942-1636. Press 1, then 5, for the WIC Vendor unit.

WIC Food List

Production of an updated WIC food list (or food guide) will be delayed, with an anticipated date of December, 2012 for release of the new list. In the meantime, the current food list, with an effective date of March, 2011, remains in effect.

Food lists distributed to vendors are for use by cashiers in cases where clarification may be needed on allowable WIC foods. WIC clients are given a copy of the WIC food list when they enroll in the WIC program. If a WIC client asks for a copy of the food list to take with them due to loss of their original list, please refer them to their local WIC clinic for a replacement. If you need additional lists for cashiers, please contact the WIC office at (517) 335-8937. Lists are available in English, Spanish, and Arabic.

School Lunch Program

Last year, the Michigan WIC Program, in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Education, received a USDA grant to pilot an alternative to the Summer Food Service program for children. Through this pilot, school age children who were eligible for free and reduced price school meals in Grand Rapids Public Schools were able to continue receiving nutritious foods during the summer through the use of the WIC Summer EBT for Children (SEBTC) Bridge Card.

Due to the success of the SEBTC Program last year, the program is being expanded this year to include students from Arenac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Midland, and Tuscola counties in addition to Kent County. As was the case last year, it is possible for SEBTC clients in these counties to use their summer food benefits anywhere in the state. Clients can use their SEBTC Bridge Cards from May 25 through September 2, 2012.

Temporary Store Closures

If your store closes temporarily due to remodeling, fire, burglary, or any other reason, you MUST notify the WIC office immediately. If we are not made aware of the closing and the store is closed for an extended length of time, you may be terminated from WIC due to lack of sales.

WIC Sanction Policy

WIC representatives frequently find, during site visits and training sessions, that vendors lack an understanding of their obligations under the WIC Vendor Contract and the sanctions that can be applied due to violations of the contract. It is highly recommended that vendors periodically review the WIC Vendor Contract and WIC Vendor Sanction Policy to avoid committing violations that can result in department sanctions or even termination from the WIC Program. All vendors receive a copy of the WIC Vendor Contract and sanction policy upon authorization. Extra copies of the sanction policy are frequently distributed during biennial training sessions.

As a reminder, under Section A, Administrative and Procedural Violations, of the sanction policy, vendors who accumulate 35 or more violation points during a contract period may be subject to termination of their vendor contract and a one year period of disqualification. Sanction points assigned during a contract period may be carried over to the next contract period. (See Page 11, Section XX of the WIC Vendor Contract.)

A common violation under Section A is Inadequate Stock, meaning not meeting the WIC Vendor Minimum Stock Requirements. The violations and points assigned under this section are:

- A. Insufficient quantities to meet minimum stock: 5 points per food group, up to a maximum of 15 points per visit
- B. No stock: 10 points per food group, up to a maximum of 30 points per visit, and
- C. Expired, stale, spoiled, or moldy WIC foods as part of the minimum stock requirement: 10 points per visit

There are many other violations which can result in points assigned under Section A. Further, under Section B, Chronic Violations and/or Abuse, and Section C, Violations Requiring a Mandatory Sanction Under Federal Regulations at 7 CFR 246.12, sanctions may result in termination of the WIC Vendor Contract and period of disqualification of one to three years.

It is important that you read and understand the sanction policy to avoid committing violations that may result in sanctions or termination. If you have questions regarding the vendor contract or sanction policy, please contact your WIC vendor analyst.

Displaying WIC Prices

Per the WIC Vendor Contract, Section III, Number 6: **“Clearly mark the price of WIC authorized foods on the item, container, shelf, or sign,** in compliance with all Federal and State laws regarding the pricing of food items.”

The new Michigan item pricing law does not require price tags on individual items. However, you must still post prices for all WIC items in a visible location. For instance, prices displayed on a tag or sign under the items on a shelf, or a sign displayed on the door of a cooler (for items such as milk and eggs) are acceptable. Prices for all WIC approved fresh fruits and vegetables must also be displayed.

NOTE: Failure to display prices of WIC foods can result in a sanction of 3 point per food category, up to a maximum of 15 points per visit.

Out-of-State WIC Coupons

It has come to our attention that, on occasion, WIC clients who have been issued WIC coupons from another state will attempt to redeem these coupons at an authorized Michigan WIC vendor.

Michigan WIC vendors should not allow the redemption of out-of-state WIC coupons for purchase of WIC foods. Should an attempt be made by a client to use their out-of-state coupons, refer the client to the local WIC office for potential receipt of WIC benefits in Michigan.

Vendors who accept out-of-state WIC coupons will not be reimbursed by the Michigan WIC Program. Neither can the Michigan WIC Program provide assistance to vendors in seeking reimbursement from the state which issued the coupons.

Sealed Fresh Fruit Cups

Fresh cut fruit in sealed cups may be WIC approved, as long as the cups do not contain any preservatives or syrups. If the fruit is packed only in 100% fruit juice, with no added sugar or preservatives, it is allowed.

Violations Involving White Potatoes

Despite repeated warnings and education through vendor training and the newsletter, it has come to our attention that some vendors may be selling white potatoes to WIC customers. **Please be reminded that white potatoes ARE NOT WIC approved.**

In accordance with the USDA approved WIC Vendor Sanction Policy, **the penalty for selling any unauthorized foods to a WIC customer is Termination and Disqualification from the WIC Program for a period of 3 years, and possible termination from SNAP (Food Stamps).**

Scanning Errors

The WIC Program has received complaints regarding WIC transactions related to scanning errors. When the client buys multiple units of the same food item, such as infant formula, the cashier will scan only one can or bottle and then manually enters the total number of units being sold. In some instances, the cashier fails to verify that all the units are of the exact same product (same UPC). This practice may result in the wrong food item being sold.

Some food items are sold in multipacks as well as individual packaging, such as formula and infant fruits and vegetables. The UPC on the package may be different from the UPC on the individual food item. Some UPCs on multipacks will not scan for WIC because the food item can only be sold by the individual unit. The UPC determines the number of food items to take from the client's total food benefits. **Incorrect scanning may result in too many food items removed from the client's food balance or the client is not able to receive the product at all.**

When scanning errors are made which result in the wrong food item being sold, or too many food items have been taken from the client's shopping list, the vendor must contact the ACS Retailer Helpdesk at 1-888-529-1693 as soon as possible to report the error. These errors should not be corrected by a physical exchange of the food item to the client. Adjustment in food cost reimbursement may be necessary. Also, depending on benefit dates, immediate reporting may prevent loss of benefits for the client.

WIC Program Terminations & Disqualifications

The following WIC vendors were recently terminated and disqualified from the WIC Program as a result of termination and disqualification from SNAP (food stamps) due to **fraud**:

Halal Depot
650 28th St SW
Wyoming MI 49509

Rayan Phone Cards & Grocery
1941 Eastern Ave
Grand Rapids MI 49507

WIC Public Comment Period

The Department of Community Health will accept written comments regarding the operation of the Michigan WIC Program between March 1, 2012 and April 30, 2012.

**PLEASE DISPLAY THE ENCLOSED FLYER IN
A PROMINENT LOCATION IN YOUR STORE.**



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To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call toll free (866) 632-9992 (Voice). Individuals who are hearing impaired or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.