



Michigan WIC Vendor News



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Application Period for Central Cycle Contracts

Applications for vendors in the central cycle were due February 15, 2013. (See December 2012 newsletter for affected counties.) 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, 2013. Approved vendors will receive a three-year contract beginning July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2016. 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, 2013. 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 CENTRAL region, changes of ownership that occur prior to May 31, 2013, 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, 2013 and June 30, 2013.

If a change of ownership of a currently authorized vendor in the CENTRAL region occurs between May 31, 2013 and June 30, 2013, 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, 2013.

School Lunch Program

In 2011 and 2012, the Michigan WIC Program, in collaboration with the Mich. 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. The pilot was conducted with students from Grand Rapids Public Schools, as well as students from Arenac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Midland, and Tuscola counties.

Due to the success of SEBTC over the past two years, the program is being expanded this year to include students from the City of Detroit in addition to those listed above. 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 June 1 through September 2, 2013.

WIC Food List

Production of an updated WIC food list (or food card) has been delayed, with a tentative date of September 1, 2013 for release of the new list. **In the meantime, the current food list, with an effective date of March, 2011, remains in effect.**

Changes in WIC Eligible Foods

GENTLEASE POWDER INFANT FORMULA

Due to a size change by the manufacturer, Gentlease power infant formula has gone from a 12 oz. to a 12.4 oz. can. This size adjustment has already been made to the WIC Vendor Minimum Stock Requirements sheet. The WIC Program has been allowing the UPC for the 12 oz. can to be redeemed so that vendors can use up their stock. **Effective May 1, 2013, the WIC program will no longer allow any redemptions of 12 oz. cans of Gentlease power infant formula.**

NESTLE DISCONTINUES 11.5 OZ. NON-FROZEN CONCENTRATE JUICES

Effective March 2013, Nestle will discontinue producing 11.5 oz. non-frozen (shelf stable) concentrate juice due to changing customer preference for ready to drink juice. Nestle will still offer six flavors of ready to drink 48 oz. and twelve flavors of 64 oz. Juicy Juice 100% juice in plastic bottles.

GERBER INFANT CEREAL CONTAINERS

Packaging for Gerber brand infant cereal will soon change from a cardboard box to a plastic container. These new plastic containers will be available in 8 oz. and 16 oz. sizes and will be WIC authorized. Shipment of the new containers is anticipated to begin in March 2013. In the meantime, supplies of box containers may become scarce. Please be reminded that WIC allows more than one brand of infant cereal, therefore, the current WIC minimum stock requirements for infant cereal will continue to be enforced (six 8 oz. boxes). See the current WIC food list for other authorized brands.

CHEESE AND EGGS

In an effort to reduce costs to the WIC Program, the small half pound (8 oz.) packages of cheese and small size eggs will no longer be eligible. This change will take effect late summer to early fall, 2013. You are being notified in advance so that you can make the necessary adjustments to your inventory to avoid minimum stock violations. Additional details on these changes will be included in the next edition of the Michigan WIC Vendor News.

Scanning Errors

The WIC Program has received complaints regarding WIC transactions related to scanning errors. If the client buys multiple units of the same food item, such as infant fruit jars, the cashier may manually enter the total number of units being sold, and then scan only one jar. 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 multipack package may be different from the UPC on the individual item. Some UPCs on multipacks will not scan for WIC because the 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 items being removed from the client's food balance, or in the client not being able to receive the product at all.**

When scanning errors are made which result in the wrong item being sold, or too many items have been taken from the client's food balance, the vendor must contact the Xerox 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 start and end dates, immediate reporting may prevent loss of benefits for the client.



Scanning Violations

Vendors . . . please remember, you must scan the UPC of the items the WIC client is actually purchasing so that the scanner may verify the item is authorized on that client's WIC EBT card. **It is a serious violation to scan any UPC not attached to the item the customer is actually purchasing.**

For instance, some vendors are scanning UPC codes NOT attached to the item actually being purchased. In other instances, vendors are allowing clients to substitute whole milk for low-fat by scanning the UPC for low-fat milk and allowing the client to take whole milk instead.

These types of violations are subject to the mandatory sanctions under the WIC Vendor Sanction Policy and federal regulations. The WIC Program has already taken termination and disqualification action against several vendors for violating these provisions.

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, cheese, 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 points per food category, up to a maximum of 15 points per visit.



Violations Involving White Potatoes

Despite repeated warnings and education through vendor training and the newsletter, it has come to our attention that some vendors are continuing to sell white potatoes to WIC customers. **All types of potato, other than yams and sweet potatoes, are considered “white” potatoes. Please be reminded that white potatoes are NOT WIC approved.** Yams or sweet potatoes are the only acceptable types of potatoes allowed for sale to WIC customers.

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).**

WIC Signage

Please ensure that your store has signage posted that informs your customers that you accept WIC. It is recommended that the sign be located near the entrance of the store to allow WIC clients the ability to quickly determine that your establishment participates in the WIC program.

Red and white “WIC Accepted Here” signs can be obtained from the state WIC office. Call the office at (517) 335-8937 to request replacement or additional signs.

“WIC Accepted Here” signs with a picture of the Michigan Bridge Card can be obtained by calling the Xerox Vendor Helpdesk at 1-888-529-1693.

In-store produced signage is also acceptable and must be prominently displayed.



WIC Public Comment Period

The Department of Community Health will accept written comments regarding the operation of the Michigan WIC Program between March 1, 2013 and April 30, 2013.

The public comment period provides an opportunity for WIC clients and vendors to comment or make suggestions regarding current WIC policies and procedures. This is the time to voice any concerns you may have regarding the WIC program.

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



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