

wic MICHIGAN VENDOR NEWS

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Information for Store Owners, Managers, and Cashiers

Fall 2021

Dear Vendor,

I am excited to be communicating with all of you through our 2021 Fall Vendor Newsletter.

The Summer months proved to be very busy and productive for the WIC Vendor team. Many changes are taking place to better serve our WIC participants and I continue to remain positive about the future. Through these changes, our important work, and commitment to the WIC program must continue. I am very enthusiastic and thankful for our valued WIC Vendors who remain dedicated partners in the Michigan WIC Program.

You will find a lot of great information in this newsletter on important initiatives and program changes, including: updated Vendor policies, transaction tips, the Central Open Application Period, the launching of the Vendor Advisory Council and much more!

As always, please remember to check your email periodically for updates on these initiatives, as well as other important communications that may affect your WIC contractual requirements.



As we work together to bring important services to WIC families, please feel free to contact us with your questions or concerns. Thank you for all you do!

Sincerely,

Kimberly Keilen

Section Manager—Vendor Relations & Program Integrity

NEW VENDOR POLICIES

In an effort to continue promoting transparency in our policies and your responsibilities as an authorized WIC Vendor, Michigan WIC is excited to announce the publication of our policies on the Vendor website under [MI-WIC Vendor Policy](#).

Michigan WIC hopes that publishing our governing policy, in a restructured format, will help Vendors understand not only what is expected of Vendors, but also how Michigan WIC administers the program. The policy documents cover everything from Vendor contracting to compliance to appeals. We hope this serves as a helpful resource for all of our WIC Vendors.



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

TRANSACTING WIC

EBT Transition

The much-anticipated Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) transition has happened! WIC transactions can now be performed through a Fidelity Information Systems (FIS) Point-of-Sale (POS) device, or through an integrated system that is FIS/CDP certified. The WIC program and its staff have worked hard to ensure a smooth transition for all of our WIC-approved Vendors.

The EBT provider (now FIS/CDP) reimburses WIC Vendors for their WIC transactions; keeps track of participant benefits; authorizes POS systems; hosts the Approved Products List (APL) and runs the Help Desk.

If you have your FIS device up and running and still have your old POS stand beside device, make sure you **send it back to your previous POS provider**. If you have any questions or concerns about your current FIS POS device or the service being provided, please contact the **FIS Merchant Help Desk at 1-888-529-1693**.

Items Not Scanning



If you are scanning a WIC-approved food item and it is not scanning, but you know that this particular item is WIC-approved, the issue may be that the UPC code has changed. You can inform WIC by filling out and submitting the [WIC Vendor UPC Request Form](#).

The form should be completed with all relevant information about the food item, including the UPC code and name of manufacturer, and faxed to Michigan WIC at **517-335-9206**. In many cases the new UPC's can be entered into our system, downloaded overnight, and made available to stand-beside point-of-sale (POS) systems the following day.

For integrated POS systems, a scanning error may also occur if the most recent Approved Products List (APL) has not been uploaded by the store's Third Party Processor (TPP). Once this step is taken, the WIC-approved food item should successfully scan.

Uploading Prices on an FIS Stand-Beside Device

The FIS-issued Verifone Vx 520 devices can save WIC prices into the machine. As a reminder to Vendors, all prices must be loaded into the machine. Prices may not be saved during a transaction and must be saved using the Edit UPC List function. WIC Vendor Analysts will be checking prices during monitoring visits.

Steps to Load Prices:

1. Select FIS-WIC.
2. Press **MORE** (1st purple function key).
3. Press **F3** (Edit UPC List).
4. To add a new item:
 - a. Scan the item's UPC code. If it is WIC eligible, the description displays.
 - b. Press **F3** (Edit) to enter the price.
5. To change the price for an existing item:
 - a. Scan the item's UPC code or press **F1** (Prev) and **F2** (Next) to navigate through the list to locate the desired item.
 - b. Press **F3** (Edit) to edit the price.
6. Repeat steps 3 and 4 for remaining items.
7. Press **CANCEL** when you have finished adding items or updating prices.
8. Press **F1** (Yes) to save the changes.



A very helpful bonus feature is that the new machines can also **print out a list of each item loaded** into the machine with shelf prices. This will be useful for checking the machine for any price updates and checking the shelves for stocking as well.

1. Select FIS-WIC.
2. Press **MORE** (1st purple function key).
3. Press **F3** (Edit UPC List).
4. Press **F4** (No Text) to print a list of all shelf prices loaded for WIC Items in your store.

YOUR STORE NAME	
1234 ANY STREET ADDRESS	
YOUR TOWN, STATE, ZIP CODE	
TERMINAL ID:	WICW006
MERCHANT TERM ID:	WICW006001
CLERK ID:	123
DATE & TIME:	09/17/20XX 3:34 PM
SHELF PRICES	
Kroger 2% Milk 1/2 Gal.	\$2.20
Kroger Whole Milk 1 Gal.	\$3.99
Kroger 2% Milk 1 Gal.	\$3.65
Mont Jack Cheese 8 oz.	\$2.99
Cheddar Cheese 16 oz.	\$3.76
Medium Eggs Dozen	\$0.99
Large Eggs Dozen	\$1.26
Peanut Butter 16 oz.	\$2.99
Pink Salmon 6 oz.	\$5.99
Tuna 6 oz.	\$1.89
Black Beans 16 oz.	\$0.87
Wheat Chex 16 oz.	\$2.25
Wheat Chex 8 oz.	\$2.25
Whole Grain Bread 24 oz.	\$1.25
Corn Chex 16 oz.	\$1.25
Corn Chex 8 oz.	\$1.25
Kix 16 oz.	\$2.25
=====	
Number of Items = 17	
=====	

VENDOR-TO-VENDOR TIPS

1. Check dates on items before buying them.

Whether you purchase your inventory from a wholesaler or from another grocery store, you may better be able to maintain stock and save dollars if you search for items that have the longest remaining time before expiration. Searching the backs of shelves or requesting wholesalers provide inventory with a longer remaining shelf life are good ways to reduce the need to throw away dated food items.

2. Do not split multi-packs.

Purchasing multi-packs of canned fish, formula, or any other items can sometimes be the most cost-effective way to stock your shelves. However, opening up the multi-packs and stocking shelves with the individual containers is not allowed as the individual containers from multi-packs do not have nutrition labels required by the FDA nor do they have bar codes necessary to transact with WIC. Additionally, items that are marked NOT FOR RESALE, such as cans of tuna, cannot be counted as individual units that can be scanned separately and therefore cannot be counted towards minimum stock.

3. Separate WIC-eligible products from non-WIC products.

Certain items like juice and infant foods look very similar. For instance, a 100% grape juice may look very similar to a juice cocktail. To prevent confusion and issues with WIC participants selecting non-WIC items for purchase, we recommend organizing shelves so that juice cocktails are not mixed in with 100% juices. The same goes for infant desserts/infant meals and infant fruits/vegetables.

4. Keep Food Guides and WIC Quick Reference Guides at the register.

If an issue comes up, we want to avoid situations in which cashiers appear to be the ones preventing a WIC customer from making a purchase. We recommend always scanning the item (even if you believe it to be incorrect), showing the customer the error message, and making an honest effort to troubleshoot/show correct options using a WIC Food Guide. For some benefit issues, you may call the WIC Client Helpline at 1-800-942-1636: press #1, then #2.

RECORD KEEPING

Record Keeping in High Temperatures

During the warmer months, Vendors are encouraged to be proactive in protecting their records from extreme heat and light, especially if your records/receipts are printed on **thermal paper**.

Thermal paper is susceptible to UV light, heat, friction, abrasives, and plastics when exposed for a prolonged time, causing the **ink to fade**.

All too often, Vendors incur a monetary claim when they are unable to produce legible inventory records. If the following conditions are met, images on your thermal receipts should remain legible for at least five years.

- Keep receipts away from heat and light.
- Do not store receipts in plastic sleeves.
- Thermal receipts should be stored in a dark place at a relative humidity level between 45% and 65%.
- Room temperature should be below 77°F (25°C).

Best Practice Time Savers

- Make a copy of WIC receipts daily/weekly.
- Compile copied receipts in chronological order.
- Store copied receipts in an accordion-style file organizer.



Please Remember

According to Section V of the WIC Vendor Contract:

“The Vendor must maintain required records for three (3) years after the final payment is received. Failure to maintain or produce records as required may result in one or more sanctions, termination of the WIC Vendor Contract; and disqualification from the Michigan WIC Program for a period of up to three (3) years.”

FORMULAS AND BREASTFEEDING

WIC Infant Formula Change

As previously announced, Abbott Laboratories, Inc. was awarded the WIC infant formula contract for a five-year contract term **beginning November 1, 2021**. Michigan WIC's current infant formula contract with Mead Johnson will remain in effect until it expires on **October 31, 2021**. As valued partners in our efforts to support the nutritional needs of WIC families, it is essential that authorized WIC Vendors carry adequate supplies of both Enfamil and Similac products during this transition to ensure participant access to contract WIC formulas.



Throughout the month of November, WIC participant benefits will gradually transition from Enfamil to Similac, effective with each family's benefit period start date. It will be important to continue to make Enfamil formulas available throughout the month while ensuring Similac formulas are also available for redemption. Beginning in December, the second month of the Abbott contract, all Similac products will be issued and redeemed. Vendors should plan accordingly with adequate inventory for 100% Similac redemptions (Enfamil products will no longer be issued or redeemed in December).

Take note that effective November 1, infant formula minimum stock requirements will transition to 12 cans of Similac Advance and/or Similac Total Comfort, replacing 12 cans of Enfamil Infant and/or Enfamil Gentlease. In addition to maintaining minimum stock requirements, we do encourage WIC Vendors to stock as many of the other contracted formulas as possible.

Please follow this link to the [formula conversion table](#) as you begin transitioning your inventory from Enfamil to Similac infant formulas. We appreciate the support of our Vendors during this period of change. By ensuring WIC participants have access to adequate nutrition, you are helping to support their positive growth and development. If you have any questions throughout this transition, please contact the Vendor Relations Unit at MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov.

Welcome Breastfeeding Anytime, Anywhere

Public breastfeeding comes easy to some families and can be a source of anxiety for others. After all, a hungry baby waits for no mom! The truth is a hungry baby has a right to eat – anytime and anywhere. Babies should be fed without a cover over their head and in a clean space (not in a bathroom). Public breastfeeding is the key to normalizing breastfeeding, which can lead to a healthier future! Here are some suggestions to help support your breastfeeding customers.

- 1. Know your customer's rights.** Public breastfeeding is protected by law. Under the Michigan [Breastfeeding Anti-Discrimination Act](#), women have the right to breastfeed in any place that is open to the general public, including stores, restaurants and municipal buses.
- 2. Keep breastfeeding policies updated.** This policy should include a person's right to breastfeed in public, a private lactation room policy, employee etiquette, how to handle harassment from other customers when families breastfeed in public, etc. Share this policy regularly with your staff.
- 3. Make your support noticeable.** Print the "Anytime, Anywhere" [poster](#) and post it in a visible location. This lets breastfeeding families know they will be supported if they need to feed their baby in your store.
- 4. Designate a private lactation space.** Public breastfeeding is important in the movement to normalize breastfeeding. However, some families are not comfortable breastfeeding in public. Designate a lactation room for your customers and make it available upon request.
- 5. Be supportive.** If you see a family breastfeeding comfortably, let them be. Smile kindly to ease their anxiety. If you see a nursing family being disturbed or harassed by other customers, step in and help (keeping store protocols in mind). Support your breastfeeding customers and they (and their friends) will keep coming back to your establishment, guaranteed!

Interested in more information on how to better support your breastfeeding customers? Check out Michigan Breastfeeding Network's "Anytime, Anywhere" [toolkit](#) or their System Changer's [Guide](#)!



OPEN APPLICATION PERIOD

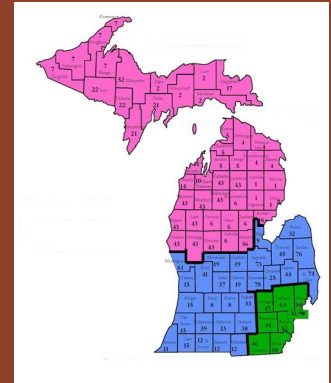
for Central Contract Cycle

Currently authorized WIC Vendor Contracts located in the Central part of the State of Michigan will expire on **June 30, 2022**. On October 1, 2021, applications for the Central Contract Cycle will be emailed to all currently authorized WIC Vendors and Vendors on the “waitlist.”

The open application period for the Central Contract Cycle begins **October 1, 2021** and runs through **December 14, 2021**. WIC Vendor Applications can also be printed from the WIC Vendor website Michigan.gov/WICVendor, as well as mailed to the Vendor upon request. Requests to have an application mailed should be made by emailing MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov or calling 517-335-8937.

All approved Vendors will receive a new three-year contract valid from **July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2025**. Below is a complete list of counties in the Central Contract Cycle:

- Allegan
- Barry
- Bay
- Berrien
- Branch
- Calhoun
- Cass
- Clinton
- Eaton
- Genesee
- Gratiot
- Hillsdale
- Huron
- Ingham
- Ionia
- Jackson
- Kalamazoo
- Kent
- Lapeer
- Montcalm
- Muskegon
- Ottawa
- Saginaw
- Sanilac
- Shiawassee
- St. Clair
- St. Joseph
- Tuscola
- Van Buren



The completed application must be received by the Department as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. Tuesday, December 14, 2021. LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

Please note, neither the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services nor WIC Vendors are obligated to renew a WIC Contract.

All Vendors receiving a new WIC Vendor Contract will have their contract sent to the email address provided on the WIC Vendor Application. It is important that the email address and store contact be listed as the individual that is authorized to sign a contract for the store. All new contracts have the option for **e-signature** (electronic signature). Please include the authorized person(s) and a valid email(s) on your application.

Application DOs and DON'Ts



DO: All Vendors **MUST** have a valid email address on the application they submit to the Department. These should correspond with the person that is authorized to sign a WIC Vendor Contract for the store. All communications from the Department will be emailed to Vendors, including application follow-up and contracts.

DON'T: Don't submit an incomplete application to the Department. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed and will be considered ineligible.

DO: Answer all questions on the application truthfully. Answers on the application can be verified with an unannounced in-person visit.

DON'T: Don't skip any questions on the WIC Vendor Application. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

DO: Do talk to a legal representative for your store if you do not understand something you are completing on the WIC Vendor Application.

DON'T: Don't submit a late application! Late applications will not be considered. A complete application must be submitted to the Department by close of business **Tuesday, December 14, 2021**.

VENDOR ADVISORY COUNCIL

Michigan WIC is excited to announce the launch of the WIC Vendor Advisory Council (VAC) this Fall in FY2022. The VAC is an opportunity for WIC Vendors to work together with Michigan WIC to create a collaborative learning environment to share experiences, successes, challenges, and ideas. This will allow the WIC Division to partner with WIC Vendors to leverage collective knowledge and resources to better serve our WIC participants and families in Michigan.

Purpose

The Vendor Advisory Council for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) WIC Division serves an essential role to address the following issue areas:

1. Food access and social determinants of health needs amongst WIC participants.
2. Removing barriers for WIC Vendors to serve healthy and affordable food that is culturally sensitive to the dietary needs of WIC participants in underserved communities.

In partnership with the State Steering Committee, the council will help to inform the direction of WIC Vendor policies and program integrity, while serving as a liaison to improve community relations and inclusive participation between WIC Vendors and WIC participants.

Required Commitment

Council members will serve staggered, two-year terms. The Vendor Advisory Council meets twice a year, and all council members participate voluntarily, and assume responsibility for their travel and accommodation expenses (if applicable).

Timeline for Selections Process

- Applications Open - Oct. 15th
- Applications Close - Nov. 1st
- State Steering Committee Final Decisions - Nov. 15th
- Final VAC Appointments Announced - Nov. 30th

Want to get involved?

Michigan WIC currently has openings to join the VAC! If you are interested in joining the VAC, please complete the linked [application form](#) and submit required materials to MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov or via fax at 517-335-9514 by Monday, Nov. 1st. The VAC bylaws can be found [here](#).



VIRTUAL LIVE DISCUSSION



In lieu of the Annual Vendor Conference, this year Michigan WIC is hosting a **live virtual discussion** with our authorized Vendors. The discussion will be held **Sept. 30, 2021, at 10 a.m.** and serve as an interactive webinar providing updates on recent changes to the WIC Program, including the EBT transition, new Minimum Stock Requirements, updates to the WIC Vendor Contract and Sanction Schedule, and much more.

The discussion will also give Vendors the opportunity to ask questions, share concerns, and enhance their understanding and knowledge of WIC Vendor requirements. Visit Michigan.gov/WICVendor under [Trainings/Newsletters](#) to register. **We hope you join us!**

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Diala Rabah—Vendor Relations Analyst

Diala Rabah is a WIC Vendor Relations Analyst for the State of Michigan WIC Program. She has an associate degree in Human Services, and both a bachelor's and master's degree in Social Work. Before coming to WIC, she worked for Ingham County Health Department as a Refugee Social Worker and as a licensed Arabic licensed interpreter and translator in the medical field and in court for non-native English speakers.

During her eight years at the State, she has held many positions, including a Children's Protective Services Investigator and a Case Manager for Eligibility Services, both in Ingham County. Ms. Rabah also served on the Ingham County Health Board for four years as an advocate for Ingham County residents.

As a senior analyst in the Vendor Relations Unit, Diala monitors Vendors for program compliance statewide. Situations routinely occur that require critical thinking skills and professional judgment in making recommendations based on detailed familiarity with WIC policies, procedures, and the State Plan of Operations. Diala has served the Vendor Relations Unit well in her two years with the Program and enjoys working with WIC Vendors across the state.



WIC FOOD CORNER

Dried Fruits & Vegetables



Dried fruits and vegetables are not WIC-approved. Pre-cut fruits and vegetables with added preservatives are not allowed on the WIC program. Sulfur Dioxide is a preservative that is predominately used in dried fruits and vegetables. It is added to extend shelf life and preserve color. While Sulfur Dioxide is considered safe, it may cause adverse effects in sensitive individuals. Please make sure dried fruits and vegetables are not labeled as WIC-approved on store shelves.

WIC-Approved Yogurt

Yogurt is one of many WIC-approved foods. Yogurt is created through the fermentation of sugars in the milk by bacteria that produce lactic acid, giving yogurt its texture and tart flavor.

Yogurt is high in protein and may aid in digestion due to the presence of active cultures and lactic acid.

WIC-approved yogurts include:

- Nonfat or low fat ONLY
- Plain or any flavor
- Fruit on the bottom

As a WIC Vendor you are required to have 4 units (1 unit = 32 oz) of yogurt in your store at all times. See the [MI WIC Food Guide](#) for additional information on approved yogurt types and sizes.

Cilantro-Lime Yogurt Dip

Ingredients:

- 1/2 c. plain nonfat or low fat yogurt*
- 1/8 c. chopped scallions*
- 1/8 c. chopping cilantro*
- 1 tsp. lime zest*
- 1 tsp. lime juice*
- 1 tsp. hot sauce
- 1/2 tsp salt

* indicates a WIC-approved food

Puree all ingredients together in a food processor or with an immersion blender. Add more liquid if needed. Enjoy with raw veggies, pita, or even hot wings. Enjoy!



UPCOMING TRAININGS

As a reminder, all WIC authorized Vendors—including Pharmacy Vendors—are required to participate in one interactive training each Contract Cycle (i.e. **once every three years**). Below is the upcoming webcast training schedule.

GROCER VENDORS

[Jan. 11 at 2 p.m.](#)

Apr. 12 at 2 p.m.

PHARMACY VENDORS

[Jan. 25 at 2 p.m.](#)

Apr. 26 at 2 p.m.

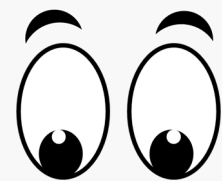


If your store requires a training, you will be sent an invitation via email. Vendors may also participate in trainings more frequently as desired. This is suggested when there is a new manager or other staff turnover. To register, please visit <https://miwicevents.com/vendor-webcasts-trainings/>.

If you would like to know the date of your most recent training or would like more information regarding registration for these events, please contact the **Vendor Relations Unit** at **517-355-8937** or by email at MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov.

A recorded version of the [WIC Vendor Training](#) and the [WIC Pharmacy Training](#) can also be viewed at any time online at Michigan.gov/WICVendor.

RESOURCES



Contact the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services – WIC Division

Elliott-Larsen Bldg., 6th Floor
320 S. Walnut St.
Lansing, MI 48913

Phone: 517-335-8937
Fax: 517-335-9514
Email: MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov
Website: Michigan.gov/WICVendor

Visit our website for links to lots of helpful documents and resources, including:

- ◆ WIC Vendor Selection Criteria
- ◆ UPC Request Form
- ◆ WIC Vendor Complaint Form
- ◆ WIC Vendor Handbook
- ◆ Recording of the WIC Vendor Training webcast
- ◆ WIC Vendor Policy
- ◆ Copies of the WIC Vendor Contract and associated documents
- ◆ Minimum Stock Requirements
- ◆ Previous WIC Vendor Newsletters
- ◆ And more!

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services will not exclude from participation in, deny benefits of, or discriminate against any individual or group because of race, sex, religion, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, gender, identification or expression, sexual orientation, partisan considerations, or a disability or genetic information that is unrelated to the person's eligibility.