

wic MICHIGAN VENDOR NEWS

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Information for Store Owners, Managers, and Cashiers

Winter 2021/2022

Greetings Michigan WIC Vendors!

The Winter Vendor Newsletter is traditionally devoted to looking back on the year. My recap of 2021 must begin with thanking each one of you for a successful year of providing WIC-approved foods to the many women, infants, and children that we serve. In the midst of turbulent times and great uncertainty, you all made it happen through hard work, diligence, maintaining minimum stock requirements and your participation in completing required trainings.

The Michigan WIC program accomplished many goals this year. We will continue into 2022 with strengthening customer service across the state to ensure families remain with WIC until their children turn 5 years old.

Some highlights of 2021:

- EBT Conversion – October 16.
- CVB increase implementation – October 1 to December 31.
- WIC Formula transition from Mead Johnson Enfamil products to Abbott Similac products – November 1.
- Implemented electronic file storage system for all Vendor files (FileNet).
- Restructuring and updating of all [Vendor Policies](#) (can be found on Vendor website).
- Redesign of the Vendor website; making it user friendly; and allowing for increased transparency (Michigan.gov/WICVendor).

The WIC Vendor Staff has shown true dedication and determination; and without your support, the WIC Division could not have gone that extra mile. I am truly graced with partners like you. A huge thank you to each one of you!

As we come to the end of 2021 and begin to embark on a new year, I look forward to what the future will hold for WIC, as we continue to prioritize the needs of the families we serve.

Warm Regards,



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

WIC NEWS

Sharing the Newsletter!



As a reminder, we encourage our WIC Vendors to share the quarterly newsletters with all store employees as part of your contractual requirement to train and update your employees (WIC Vendor Contract, Section IV, Paragraph 3).

Though we understand that it can be difficult for cashiers and other store employees to know and understand everything about the WIC program; we know that they are the frontline workers who interact with WIC participants on a daily basis. The knowledge and insight store employees gain from our Vendor Newsletters will go a long way toward serving your WIC clients; and ultimately increase your WIC sales.

State WIC Dollars

The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program is a federally funded Special Supplemental Nutrition Program of the Food and Nutrition Service that is administered by the State of Michigan.

Federal funds are used to serve low and moderate income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk. These funds are also used to support the Vendors who provide essential food benefits to WIC participants in all regions of the state.

Did you know that the FY 2021 statewide total of WIC dollars spent in Michigan communities totaled **\$123,099,899.89**? That is money well-spent to serve our WIC families throughout the state. The WIC Program is here – and will always be here – to serve our most at-risk populations.

STAFF PROFILE—Karen Batterham

Karen Batterham is a WIC Program Integrity Analyst for the State of Michigan WIC Program. As a senior analyst in the Program Integrity Unit, Karen reviews and audits WIC Vendors' purchase records for accuracy and program compliance according to federal and state regulations. Karen has served the Program Integrity Unit for over two years and is a member of the WIC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion workgroup. She takes pride in the work that she does and is happy to work with a group of people that love serving Michigan WIC families and Vendors.

Karen has a bachelor's degree in Family Community Services from Michigan State University. Before coming to WIC, she worked as a Contract Manager for the Michigan Health Link Program that helps integrate services for individuals and families who are both Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. Karen managed 3 primary Medicaid providers within the southeast part of the state. Karen has also held many other positions within the State, including Ingham County Community Resource Coordinator, Family Resource Specialist at Wexford and Grand River Elementary Schools, Prevention Specialist and Family Independence Specialist.



Karen has recently received her 20 years of service with the State of Michigan. She hopes to continue working in WIC until retirement. We are excited to have her as a part of our team and we value her work ethic and commitment to ensuring program integrity in the Michigan WIC program.

VENDOR PEER GROUPS

As you know, as part of a federal mandate to support cost containment efforts, the Michigan WIC Program restructured WIC Vendor Peer Groups in June of this year. This restructuring reduced the number of peer groups from nineteen to seven and revised the Not to Exceed (NTE) calculation to reflect statewide averages and peer group assignment. Please note that we continue to monitor this process as part of an ongoing operation to ensure Vendors receive fair reimbursements while also supporting cost containment requirements.



EBT TRANSITION

The EBT transition that took place October 16 is now in full effect. The new system has had its share of “growing pains” and there have been some challenges and obstacles, especially for Vendors with FIS-issued stand-beside point-of-sale (POS) devices. Procedures have been put into place to resolve these issues as quickly as possible, and fixes have been sent via e-mail to Vendors having extended problems.

Identified issues with the new devices has decreased considerably. The WIC Program, along with our new EBT provider, FIS/CDP, is committed to assisting our WIC Vendors in daily transactions that serve the WIC participant population. If you encounter any issues in transacting utilizing your stand-beside POS device, please contact the **FIS Merchant Help Desk at 888-529-1693**.



Using the Merchant Portal

Vendors using an FIS stand-beside point-of-sale (POS) device can view monthly deposits and invoices in the FIS merchant web portal at www.ebtedge.com.

Invoices for any fees associated with your FIS-provided device are made as ACH requests directly to the same account that payment is paid to and will be accounted for separately. These fees will never be taken directly from payments.

Payments associated with WIC transactions will include a hyperlink. If you click on the hyperlink, you will see transaction details, including card numbers displaying last 4 digits and a transaction total amount and time.

More information may be found in a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document created by FIS and the Michigan WIC Program. This resource and other helpful information can be found at Michigan.gov/WICVendor under “[Point of Sale Equipment and Systems](#).” Keep in mind that FIS uses the bank account information that was provided in your FIS Merchant Agreement when requesting a device.

Voiding Transactions

Whether you use a stand-beside device or another point-of-sale (POS) system to transact WIC, your system is able to void the most recent WIC transaction. For many systems, this feature is often tied to “mixed-basket” transactions in which customers are buying both WIC and non-WIC items. The final receipt may show the customer making an unexpected payment or purchasing the wrong item. The steps to cancel this transaction may look different based on your system, but below are example instructions for both LOC-SMS system and the FIS stand-beside device:

LOC-SMS

1. From the tender screen, hit the Void Tender button. A 'C' will show in the entry line.
2. Type in the dollar amount from the receipt for the WIC total
 - Be careful not to hit “enter” or another button.
3. Once the amount is entered hit the Electronic Tender button.
 - The system should prompt to swipe or insert card.
4. Proceed with the WIC card as if you were purchasing the items.
 - This step will reverse the payment and return benefits to the card.

FIS Stand-Beside Device

1. Select More (left-most purple function key)
2. Press F2 (Void Last)
3. Press F1 (Yes)
 - This step will reverse the payment and return benefits to the card.

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 10:24 AM
SEQUENCE NUMBER:	007
CARD:	*****0007
AUTH CODE:	123517
VOID LAST SUCCESSFUL	
WIC PURCH VOIDED	
** DO NOT DISP CASH **	
**** MERCHANT COPY ****	
****PLEASE SAVE THIS RECEIPT****	

Keep in mind that this process is helpful but will only work for the **most recent** WIC transaction. Completing other transactions will limit your ability to void a customer’s payment so it is important that cashiers and customers are confirming the transaction details at the time of purchase.

WIC FORMULA

Formula Transition

As of December 1, there are no customers with benefits for standard Enfamil formula. In replacement, Similac formulas are now the most prescribed WIC formulas (known as “contract formulas” listed in a [conversion guide](#) on our site). Some customers will still have Enfamil special formula such as [Nutramigen](#) or [Enfamil NeuroPro EnfaCare](#) on their WIC benefits. **Please continue to order those special formulas.**



Michigan WIC has also updated the [minimum stock requirements](#) to reflect these new Similac products: Similac Advance 12.4 oz and Similac Total Comfort 12.6 oz. However, please keep in mind that if you are a stand-alone pharmacy or a grocer Vendor with a pharmacy on-site, you are contractually required **to order specialty formulas**, as requested by participants.

Michigan WIC is aware that there are also formula shortages in our state and throughout the country. We are continuing to work with the manufacturer, Abbott, wholesalers, and our WIC Vendors to help secure Similac contracted formulas for you to provide to WIC customers.

We have also taken a temporary break from on-site monitoring visits. We trust you are doing everything you can to assist WIC customers. You may also implement the following strategies, as deemed necessary, for continuing service with limited supplies:

- If feasible, and you deem it necessary and appropriate, **consider holding WIC-authorized formula behind the customer service desk** and alert WIC customers of the change.
- If feasible, and you deem it necessary, **consider enforcing quantity limits**, to ensure adequate stock of WIC-authorized infant formula and foods.
- You may **shop at multiple wholesalers** to find formula (a non-comprehensive [list of wholesalers](#) may be found on our website).
- You may **contact our office** with any challenges maintaining inventory or ideas you have to assist Vendors.

New Formula— Similac Pro Sensitive 32 oz RTF

Due to shortages of Similac Sensitive 32 oz RTF, Michigan WIC has decided to temporarily add **Similac Pro Sensitive 32 oz RTF** to the Approved Product List (APL), effective immediately.

Clients with Similac Sensitive 32 oz RTF food packages can choose **either** of these products to purchase based on store availability.

At this time, Michigan WIC is not adding the Similac Pro line for any other formula types.

This is only the Similac Pro Sensitive RTF currently approved.



Formula Purchase Requirements

The Michigan WIC Program requires that all WIC authorized Vendors **MUST** only purchase infant formula from wholesalers, distributors, and retailers and/or manufacturers **licensed** by:

- The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (**MDARD**);
- The Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (**LARA**); or
- The Food and Drug Administration (**FDA**).

This requirement also applies to all **online purchases**.

In the past, Vendors have been able to visit the MDARD website to verify the licensure status of a Michigan wholesaler or retailer; this process has recently changed. Now, please find the published lists of [MDARD Licensed Retailers](#) and [FDA-Approved Manufacturers](#) on our website.

Vendors can still search LARA licenses at Michigan.gov/lara.

PROMOTIONS AND INCENTIVES

Vendors are allowed to use promotions and incentives to attract customers. It is important to remember that all promotions and incentives must be made available to ALL customers, including WIC participants. Failure to do so is a violation of the WIC Vendor Contract. As a reminder, incentive items may not exceed a value of \$2.00 and formula and diapers are not allowed.

Allowable promotions and incentives that are exceptions to the \$2 limit are:

- **Discounts** applied directly to the total transaction amount to be charged to the WIC program.
- **Loyalty programs or clubs** requiring participant enrollment or documented membership (the loyalty programs or clubs must meet all state and federal regulations).
 - Membership to the program or club must include proof of enrollment or some form of membership identifier issued to the member at time of enrollment.
- **Manufacturers' coupons.**
- **Free ounces** added to food item by manufacturer (bonus size items).
- **Buy one, get one (BOGO)** – the sale of one WIC food item as part of a normal WIC transaction and the provision of an additional item at no added cost, or a second item at a reduced price.
 - Infant formula may not be included as part of any BOGO promotion.

Please note that cash or cash equivalent (debit cards, gift cards, phone or gas cards, etc.), lottery, alcohol, and tobacco are NOT allowed under any circumstance.



SUBMITTING A VENDOR COMPLAINT

Complaints may be submitted for a variety of program issues regarding WIC staff, participants, or Vendors.

For general complaints, fill out the linked [WIC Vendor Complaint Form](#) and fax it to 517-335-9514. The form is designed to capture information necessary for the Michigan WIC Program to best resolve the issue. It is best to fill out the form as completely as possible and include as much detailed information as possible, such as:

- Nature of the issue
- WIC Vendor Name
- WIC Participant name/ID number/card number
- Date and approximate time of occurrence
- Receipts, photographs of items, and POS error messages, if applicable.

If you need any assistance or guidance in helping you meet these or any other requirements, please contact the WIC Program at 517-335-8937 or via email at MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov.

To report suspected participant fraud or abuse of the WIC program, please call our toll-free hotline at **1-800-225-5942 (1-800-CALL-WIC)** or email us at wicfraudinvestigations@michigan.gov.

Individuals making complaints **may remain anonymous**. However, please be as specific as possible with details of the complaint so that the program is able to efficiently follow-up on the allegation.

Responding to Complaints and Reports of Fraud or Abuse: The Michigan WIC Program will follow-up on the complaint or fraud allegation. For general issues, a state administrator will follow-up with the goal of resolving the issue. For Vendor complaints, the WIC Program may conduct an on-site monitoring visit or a compliance investigation. Depending on the violation, adverse action may also be taken.

WIC VENDOR COMPLAINT REQUEST			
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services WIC Division			
Fax complaint to: 517-335-9514			
Fill out all fields (Use N/A if not applicable):			
Complaint received by <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Phone <input type="checkbox"/> WIC Hotline <input type="checkbox"/> Du Jour <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Fax			
Date	Submitted By	Position	Phone
Email	Local Agency/Unit	Benefits Package Attached <input type="checkbox"/>	
Complainant <input type="checkbox"/> Vendor <input type="checkbox"/> Client <input type="checkbox"/> Phone Number	A Staff <input type="checkbox"/> State Staff <input type="checkbox"/>		
If the complaint involves a client, the following information is needed:			
Family ID	Client ID	Card Number	
May the State Agency contact the client directly? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Complaint Details			
If the complaint involves a WIC Authorized Vendor, the following information is needed:			
Vendor/Grocer Name		Vendor #	
Vendor/Grocer Address			
Date Transaction/ Issue Occurred	Approximate Time	Did Client ask for Assistance from Store Employee? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Store Personnel Involved in Complaint		Point of Sale (POS) Error Message, if applicable	
Error Displayed On <input type="checkbox"/> WIC POS <input type="checkbox"/> Store Register <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	Does the Client have the Receipt? (if yes, include a copy) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
NOTE – All client information is considered confidential, including name, Family ID, Client ID and EBT card number. Facsimile submissions must include confidentiality statement.			
TO BE COMPLETED BY STATE STAFF			
State WIC Office Action/Resolution			
Determined Origin of Complaint <input type="checkbox"/> Client Error <input type="checkbox"/> Client Misuse of Benefits <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance Error <input type="checkbox"/> UPC Issue			
<input type="checkbox"/> Vendor Treatment <input type="checkbox"/> Vendor System Error <input type="checkbox"/> Vendor Compliance <input type="checkbox"/> Vendor Training			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other			
Completed By	Position/Unit	Date	
MDHHS-5789 (Rev. 2-20) Previous edition obsolete. 1			

CUSTOMER SERVICE TIPS

Customer service is the provision of service to customers before, during, and after a purchase. The perception of success of such interactions is dependent on employees "who can adjust themselves to the personality of the guest." We know that customer service is very important to our businesses and to our customers.

Customer service plays an important role in an organization's ability to generate income and in both increasing and maintaining the tendency of a customer

to do repeat business with a store in the future. One good customer service experience can change the entire perception a customer holds towards the store.

Here are a few best practices:

- Treat all customers with respect and dignity.
- Empathize with the customer.
- Respond to questions in a non-threatening manner.
- Listen to the customer.
- Smile and make eye contact.

MIBFN'S WORKPLACE AWARD

Vendors across Michigan are putting their best foot forward to create a work environment that supports their breastfeeding employees and have been noticing the positive [impact](#) their support holds. Michigan Breastfeeding Network (MIBFN), a leader in breastfeeding advocacy, started the Michigan Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace Award to recognize organizations for their dedication to their breastfeeding employees *and* for normalizing breastfeeding.

Why should you apply? Families are more successful in meeting their breastfeeding goals when they are surrounded by an environment in which they feel accepted. If that includes you and your store—you deserve to be recognized! You will find that your support will increase the loyalty of your employees and customers.

Thinking about applying, but not sure if you qualify? Has your organization already been making steps to support your breastfeeding employees by providing flexible breaks and a private, secure area for employees to express milk in accordance with the [Break Time for Nursing Mothers](#) law? If so, then what are you waiting for? Submit your [application](#) today and join the hundreds of [employers](#) already making their employees' breastfeeding goals a priority!

Learn more about MIBFN's Michigan Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace Award by watching this [video](#). If you have any questions, please contact hello@mibreastfeeding.org.



Health Department of Northwest received MI BF-Friendly Workplace Gold Award in 2019.

COMMON POS ERROR MESSAGES

The error messages that populate on the new FIS-issued point-of-sale (POS) device may look a little different from those on your old device. Below is a list of common error messages and the steps to take to resolve them.

ERROR MESSAGE	ACTION/RESOLUTION
Invalid Entry – Try Again?	Entered password could be wrong. Try again with correct password.
Item Not Available to Cardholder	Scanned item is WIC approved, but the cardholder has not been prescribed this item. Try again with a prescribed food.
Not WIC Eligible (May also show as: Invalid WIC Item or UPC Not Found)	Food item is not WIC approved and cannot be purchased with a WIC card. Try again with an approved item.*
Qty Not Available to Cardholder	The cardholder has been prescribed this item but does not have the full quantity of items requested available to them. Decrease the number of that food item being purchased.
Insufficient Balance – Continue?	Entered CVB price for fruits and vegetables exceeds the WIC balance. In this instance, the cardholder has the option of paying the additional amount in another form of tender.

*If you believe an item that has scanned as 'Not WIC Eligible' is approved, please check that your Approved Product List (APL) is up to date. If the item still does not scan, please fill out the [UPC Request Form](#).

WIC FOOD CORNER

Approved Store Brands

Of WIC-approved foods, some categories including whole grains, cereals, yogurt, soy beverages, and juice are limited to only the brands specified in the [Michigan WIC Food Guide](#). Keep in mind that cold cereals and juices have extensive lists of “Store Brands” that are also organized by authorized flavors. For example, Page 22 of the Food Guide shows that Smart Sense has three WIC-approved flavors of 64 oz Juice: **Apple**, **Grape**, and **Vegetable**. Because the Food Guide does not list any other flavors under Smart Sense, all other varieties of Smart Sense juice are not WIC-approved.

The Michigan WIC Program continues to expand options for our WIC families and WIC Vendors. If you find items that meet our authorization criteria but are not listed, our office requests that you send in a [UPC Request Form](#), which provides all the information necessary for us to evaluate the food for authorization. This is one of the main ways we learn what options are available for authorization.



Benefits of Whole Grains

The Michigan WIC Program offers multiple options for whole grains, including oatmeal, brown rice, whole wheat and corn tortillas, whole wheat and whole grain pasta, and whole wheat and whole grain breads and buns. Whole grains contain a variety of important nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, protein and fiber, and they have been shown to have many benefits, including a lower risk of heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers. The fiber in whole grains also supports healthy digestion and helps you feel full, longer. Make whole grains a part of your daily routine!

Chewy Chocolate Chip Oatmeal Cookies

Oatmeal is a great option for whole grains in your Michigan WIC Food Guide. Quick Oats, such as Best Choice Quick Oats (WIC-Approved), are excellent for baking and work well in oatmeal cookie recipes like Chewy Chocolate Oatmeal Cookies.

This recipe is said to have received enthusiastic approval from people who are not oatmeal cookie fans.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup packed light brown sugar
- ½ cup white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 cups quick-cooking oats
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

Servings: 42 **Yield:** 3 1/2 dozen

Directions:

Step 1: Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C).

Step 2: In a large bowl, cream together the butter, brown sugar, and white sugar until smooth. Beat in eggs one at a time, then stir in vanilla. Combine the flour, baking soda and salt; stir into the creamed mixture until just blended. Mix in the quick oats, walnuts, and chocolate chips. Drop by heaping spoonfuls onto ungreased baking sheets.

Step 3: Bake for 12 minutes in the preheated oven. Allow cookies to cool on baking sheet for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving:

145 calories; protein 2.1g; carbohydrates 17.2g; fat 8.1g; cholesterol 20.5mg; sodium 107.2mg.



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 for grocer and pharmacy Vendors.

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.



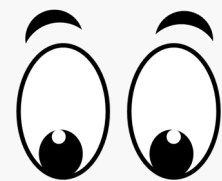
If your store requires a training, you will be sent an invitation via email. Vendors may also participate in trainings more frequently as desired. This is suggested when there is a new manager or staff turnover. To register, please visit miwicevents.com/vendor-webcasts-trainings/.

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.

We will soon have training videos available for Vendors to view and stay updated on the WIC program.

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.