

MICHIGAN VENDOR NEWS

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Information for Store Owners, Managers and Cashiers

Summer 2022

Dear Vendor,

Welcome to our Summer Newsletter! It is exciting to enjoy warm sunny days and to be able to start planning for fun outdoor activities throughout the summer months.

The last several months have continued to be very busy and challenging for both the WIC team and our WIC Vendors. We continue to persevere and through our partnership are finding ways to better serve the needs of our WIC families. My team and I remain positive about our future, and we must continue our important work and commitment to the WIC program throughout these summer months.

As always, please remember to check your email periodically for updates; 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,

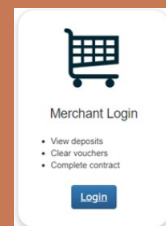
Kimberly Keilen

Section Manager—Vendor Relations & Program Integrity

Using EBT Edge to View Payments

Did you know? Vendors using an FIS stand-beside point-of-sale (POS) device can register for an account with EBT Edge to view monthly payments and invoices online for free.

- Step 1: Go to ebtedge.com.
- Step 2: Click on Merchant Login (see image at right).
- Step 3: Click on [Register online now](#).
- Step 4: Answer the questions and follow the steps. If you have any questions, you may call FIS for assistance at 1-800-894-0050.



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 on the [WIC Vendor website](#) 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.

Please email the [WIC Vendor Relations Unit](#) or call 517-335-8937 with all questions and input.

PROGRAM HAPPENINGS

Vendor Conference

Registration is now open for the in-person 2022 WIC Vendor Conference!

WHERE: DoubleTree Detroit-Dearborn

WHEN: Thursday, Sept. 8



This all-day conference will not only allow Vendors to fulfill their **federal training requirement**, but will also highlight the important work that has been done during the pandemic, address recent and upcoming changes to WIC Program Vendor policy and give Vendors a chance to connect with state staff.

Seats are limited, so visit our [events website](#) to register now. We hope to see you there!

Quarterly Calls

Please join us for our regularly scheduled **Quarterly Vendor Calls**. These calls will provide Vendors an opportunity to:

- Learn more about program updates and changes as they happen.
- Share individual store experiences with the WIC Program.
- Ask questions and engage in dialogue with state staff.



Calls will last one hour and will be hosted via Zoom. The next Quarterly Call is scheduled for **2:30 p.m., Monday, July 11**. [Click here to access the meeting.](#)

Staff Spotlight: Julia Gurley Johnson



Julia Gurley Johnson is the manager of the Program Integrity Unit. Julia joined the MDHHS-WIC Division in 2019 and has a total of 18 years in state government, serving in both management and specialist roles. Prior to joining the State of Michigan, Julia was a contract compliance manager in the private sector. She has a Master of Arts degree in Organizational Management and a Bachelor of Science degree in Health Care Administration. In her spare time, she enjoys thrift shopping, traveling, reading historical fiction, and watching Investigation Discovery.

Julia enjoys working with WIC Vendors and assisting them with their inventory records. She often stresses the importance of maintaining good records to monitor the progress of one's business. Records can show whether your business is improving, or what changes you need to make. Good inventory record keeping increases the likelihood of business success and avoids the possibility of receiving a monetary claim and/or sanctions. Please feel free to contact Julia with questions or if you need additional information.

Did You Know?

- In 2019, **only 64.4%** of eligible people in Michigan participated in the WIC Program? However, this is higher than the **national average of 57.4%**.
- While Illinois and Ohio have more eligible residents, **Michigan leads the Midwest Region in WIC participation**.
- While Michigan has the largest WIC participation in the Midwest Region, **Illinois has the highest WIC food costs**.

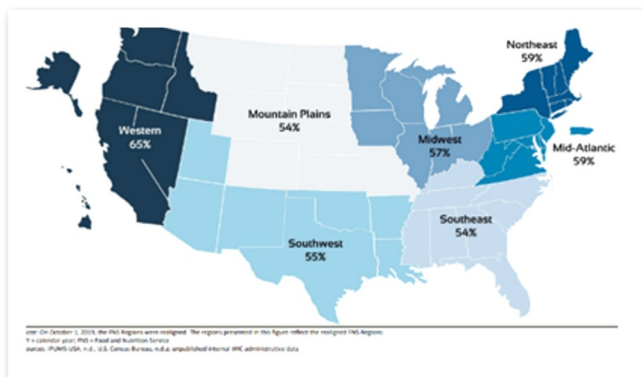


Fig. 1: WIC coverage rate for total eligible individuals by FNS Region, CY 2019

VENDOR COMPLIANCE

Monitoring Visit Update

As of May 1, WIC analysts returned to visiting stores throughout the state. Stores like yours continue to experience unprecedented difficulties in running a retail business. Yet, many of Michigan's Vendors continue to rise to the challenge. In fact, approximately one in two stores visited had **no documented violations**. Our office wishes to offer our sincere appreciation for everything you do to maintain minimum stock and keep your store accessible for WIC customers.

Our analysts will continue to visit stores with the mindset of doing everything they can to assist you. Having a WIC analyst in your store is an excellent opportunity to have your questions answered and receive valuable promotional and training materials. We hope you look forward to a WIC analyst bringing you a signature Michigan WIC insulated green shopping bag full of useful materials.



Vendor analyst Hal Stratton with a WIC training bag.

Here are a few useful reminders about monitoring visits:

- Vendors are required to allow WIC program staff access to store premises.
- Vendors must comply with all requests made during the monitoring visit, such as requests to view receipts, purchase records, MDARD food licenses, etc.
- Vendor are expected to allow the analyst to scan items with the vendor's POS system.
- Vendors are allowed to ask questions during the visit and the vendor analyst should explain their findings.

Training Your Employees

As an authorized WIC Vendor, you are responsible for training your employees on WIC program policies and regulations. This includes training on what foods are WIC approved, how to transact WIC, how to troubleshoot errors, and a general understanding of WIC operations in your store. You are also responsible for the actions of your employees, especially those who interact with WIC participants.

Withdrawing From WIC

Please **DO NOT** return or disable your POS device without first contacting the WIC program. This can be frustrating to WIC participants looking to redeem their benefits and is a contract violation.

Vendors ceasing operation or who are unable to transact WIC for any reason except for the specific reasons detailed in Section II, Paragraph 9 of the [WIC Vendor Sanction Schedule](#) are committing a violation that will result in termination of the WIC Vendor Contract and immediate disablement of the POS device.

Instead, if you wish to withdraw from WIC, please send a request in writing to MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov. Once we receive your request, we will terminate your [WIC Vendor Contract](#) and your ability to transact WIC will be disabled. You can then **call FIS at 1-888-529-1693** to arrange for the return of any applicable POS equipment.

Sanctions & Appeals

As we slowly return to normal, it is important to make sure you are following your WIC operating procedures. Not having sufficient stock or failure to properly transact WIC can result in violations of the [WIC Vendor Contract](#); and each program violation has a corresponding sanction.

Sanctions can be either federally or state mandated and can include written warnings, violation points, and even termination and/or disqualification from the WIC program. Vendors who commit violations will receive a written Notice describing the sanctions being taken against them. Per [Policy 7.02](#), Vendors have the opportunity to appeal many of the adverse actions taken against them.

Store owners, managers, and hourly staff should review the [WIC Vendor Contract](#) as well as the [WIC Vendor Sanction Schedule](#) in order to become familiar with their rights as Vendors. Depending on the violation, appeals are either heard by an Administrative Law Judge during an Administrative Hearing, or a written decision promulgated by the MDHHS Appeals Section through the Administrative Review process. Information regarding sanctions and the appeal process can be found online on the [Michigan WIC Vendor Policy](#) page of our website.

OPEN APPLICATION PERIOD

Southeast Contact Cycle

WIC Vendor Contracts for all authorized Vendors located in the **Southeast region** will expire on June 30, 2023. The Open Application Period for Vendors in this region begins October 1 and runs through December 14, 2022.

On October 1, 2022, applications will be emailed to all currently authorized Southeast WIC Vendors and any stores on the Vendor Waitlist for Southeast region. These applications will be due on **Wednesday December 14, 2022**. Applications can be submitted via email to MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov, by faxing to 517-335-9514, or by mailing the application to the address below:

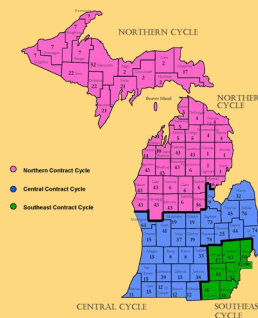
Michigan Dept. of Health and Human Services
Elliott-Larsen building – 6th Floor
WIC Vendor Relations Unit
320 S. Walnut Street
Lansing, MI 48913

[WIC Vendor Applications](#) can also be printed from the [WIC Vendor website](#), or mailed to the Vendor upon request. Requests for mailed applications should be sent to MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov or made by calling 517-335-8937.

Vendors who are approved in the Southeast region will receive a three-year [WIC Vendor Contract](#) valid from **July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2026**.

Below is a complete list of counties in the **Southeast Contract Cycle**:

- Lenawee
- Livingston
- Macomb
- Monroe
- Oakland
- Washtenaw
- Wayne



The Department must receive the completed application as soon as possible upon receipt, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on **Wednesday, December 14, 2022**. **LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.**

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

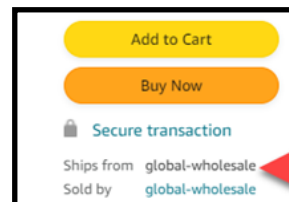
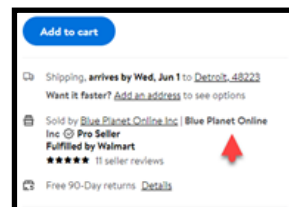
All Vendors receiving a new WIC Vendor Contract will have their contracts sent to the email address provided on the WIC Vendor Application. It is important that the email address and store contact be listed as the individual that is authorized to sign a contract for the store. All new contracts have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

CONFIRMING ONLINE LICENSURE

As of May 1, Vendors may now purchase WIC items from [WIC-accepted suppliers](#), including retailers, wholesalers and distributors, located outside of Michigan. This change gives Vendors greater flexibility to order WIC items from online retailers such as Amazon.com or Walmart.com.

Please note, some items on these sites are sold by companies other than the listing site of Amazon or Walmart. **It is your responsibility to check that these third-party companies are appropriately licensed.**

In the images on the right show examples of **third-party “sellers”** listed underneath the **“Add to Cart” button** on the retailer website. It is best to avoid purchasing from these sellers all together.



INTEGRATED POINT-OF-SALE PROVIDERS

One Vendor's Experience



The following are excerpts from a conversation between Vendor analyst, Shawn Gompa, and owner of an authorized WIC Vendor, Vamsi Ravi, about his decision to go integrated. The Michigan WIC program does not endorse TotilPay.

If you would like more information about all of [integrated point-of-sale providers](#) certified for transacting WIC in Michigan, please visit our [website](#).

Making the Change

"I used the FIS stand-beside device. I wanted to find a POS provider that did not charge transaction fees for WIC or EBT, so I made the change to TotilPay."

Biggest Advantage

"I would say the biggest advantage is that TotilPay does transactions from an iPad. I do not need to have a machine on each register. For a store my size, I can use one iPad for each of my checkout registers."

Selling WIC

"WIC sales are very easy. Everything is programmed on the iPad. You can just scan an item to add it to the cart. It does not dispense the goods that are not WIC-approved, which makes it easier to troubleshoot and also to not lose any inventory with unresolved WIC transactions."

Selling EBT

"Even SNAP/Food Stamps EBT is easier for me with TotilPay."

Getting Reports

"All of the reports are available. Even if the customer comes back 3 hours later, I am able to show the customer an online copy of their exact receipt to show exactly what they purchased and received. I can even look for transactions up to a month ago by searching by date and time."

Cost

"I am saving money from switching to TotilPay. I already had an iPad. There is a one-time cost from buying my own equipment, but I appreciate saving money each month from only paying \$49.95 a month without any transaction fees."

Getting Started

"Getting started with the Novo Dia team was difficult because they did not have anyone to answer a call. Once I reached them through email and their web application on [Totilpay.com/wic](#), it was easy to get started. I believe the only printer option to work with TotilPay on the iPad is the Woosim printer I bought on their website. Then I just bought a barcode scanner from Amazon for 25 dollars, and I was able to get started."

Vamsi Ravi, owner - Northend Convenience Store



Vamsi Ravi with TotilPay on his iPad.

Taking the HEAT in Customer Service

We always want to provide great customer service to our WIC customers, but when they are upset what should we do? The H.E.A.T model, below, can be used to handle complaints with a focus on solving the problem.

H – Hear Them Out

- Be silent and let the customer express emotions, feelings, and concerns.
- Take a deep breath and focus on the customer's words and the feelings behind them.
- Show you are listening by using verbal and non-verbal acknowledgements.

E – Empathize

- Rather than urging the customer to calm down, use empathy to acknowledge the customer's feelings and diffuse his or her anger.
- Use the empathy key principle to address the facts of the situation and the customer's feelings: "I can understand why you're frustrated."

A – Apologize

- "I'm sorry that this happened." "I apologize for the inconvenience." "I'm sorry that the product didn't meet your expectations." "I'm sorry this upset you."
- Keep your tone natural to avoid being perceived as sarcastic or insincere.
- Acknowledge your desire to make things right: "Let me take care of this for you."

T – Take Action

- Define the desired outcome, then connect the customer with someone who can help, like a manager, owner, or customer service representative.
- Follow-up on the issue to ensure the problem has been resolved.



FORMULA FAQs

Q: What should I do if I sometimes receive customers who buy out all of my formula inventory?

A: Some customers will buy whatever they can find on the shelf. We recommend **buying and shelving a surplus of common formulas** currently in high market supply, like 12.4 oz Similac Advance, so shoppers will focus on buying this formula rather than more specialized varieties that are more difficult to stock.

Q: How long will the expanded formula options be available?

A: We most recently added formula options on [June 3](#) to further assist with the formula shortage. We do not currently have a proposed date to return to standard contract Similac formulas. Rest assured that our office will notify you in advance of a rollback in options.

Q: Is there any leniency on minimum stock requirements for formula?

A: Michigan WIC has the flexibility to count any of the expanded formula options towards your minimum stock requirement. This should make it easier for your store to remain in compliance.

Q: Can you help if our order is shorted by our wholesaler?

A: We do have effective communications with many formula distributors. If you are having issues, we can assist with relaying your issues. There are no guarantees, but our office is willing to help however we can.

Q: Do you know where is best place to buy formula?

A: We have a non-comprehensive [list of wholesalers](#) in Michigan. You may try contacting a wholesaler and asking about their formula inventory.



[Continued on next page.]

Formula FAQs Continued

Q: Can I sell formula to a customer if they only have half a can of benefits remaining?

A: Unfortunately, no, the customer does not have enough benefits for any WIC formula. With 1.5 can (19.4-23.2 oz) and 2.5 can (34-36.2 oz) formula, it is important for the customer to plan out how they can fully use their benefits. See the last page of the [formula expansion chart](#) for a helpful guide.

Q: May I place limits on formula purchases?

A: Only you understand how to manage your store's inventory to best serve families. During this unprecedented shortage, Michigan WIC is not stopping stores from placing limits on WIC foods, including formula, as you deem necessary to ensure customers do not leave your store empty-handed.

WIC FOOD CORNER

JIF Peanut Butter Recall

The FDA, along with CDC and state and local partners, are investigating a multistate outbreak of Salmonella Senftenberg infections linked to certain Jif peanut butter products produced at the J.M. Smucker Company facility in Lexington, Kentucky.

J.M. Smucker Company has voluntarily recalled certain Jif brand peanut butter products that have **lot code numbers between 1274425 – 2140425 and the first seven digits ending with 425** manufactured in Lexington, KY.

BEST IF USED BY:

13524250302:37

Please check your shelves for affected lot numbers and remove the following WIC-eligible items from your shelves.

UPC	Description
5150025516	JIF 16 OUNCE CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER
5150025537	JIF 16 OUNCE CRUNCHY PEANUT BUTTER
5150025565	JIF 16 OUNCE NATURAL CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER
5150025574	JIF 16 OUNCE NATURAL CRUNCHY PEANUT BUTTER



Refunds

You may contact Jif at jif.com/contact-us or (800) 828-9980 for a refund. You may also instruct your customers to contact JIF rather than to seek a refund or exchange from your store.

Creamy Brown Rice Pudding

Ingredients

- 1 ½ c. water
- ¾ c. uncooked brown rice*
- 2 c. low-fat milk*
- 1/3 c. sugar
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 egg, beaten*
- 2/3 c. raisins
- 1 tbsp butter or margarine
- ½ tsp vanilla
- Sprinkle of cinnamon



Directions

In a saucepan, combine water and rice over high heat and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer until tender, about 45 minutes. In a separate saucepan, combine cooked rice, 1 ½ cups of milk, sugar, and salt. Cook over medium heat until thick and creamy. 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in remaining ½ cup of milk, beaten egg, and raisins. Cook 2 minutes more, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and stir in butter and vanilla. Sprinkle with cinnamon (if desired). Serve warm.

*indicates WIC-approved food

NEW ONLINE TRAINING COURSE!

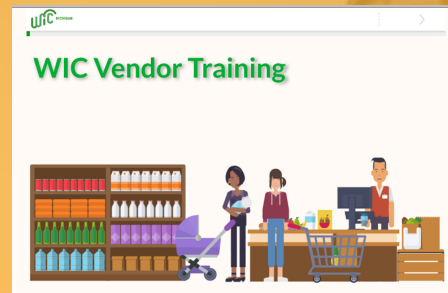
Michigan WIC is excited to announce the launch of our new **online WIC Vendor Training course**. This course went live on **June 1** and is hosted on the State of Michigan [Learning Management System](#) (LMS). The course includes 10 lessons that will allow Vendors to **fulfill their federal training requirement**.

Not only will the training course **replace the quarterly training webcasts**, but it will be available for Vendors to **complete at their convenience** anytime Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The course can also be stopped and restarted if you are unable to complete all 10 lessons in one sitting.

[Instructions](#) to complete the course as well as a recording of our [‘How-to’ Webcast](#) are posted on the [WIC Vendor website](#). We hope you enjoy this new and convenient training opportunity!

If your store requires a training, you will be sent an invitation via email. Vendor staff may also complete the training more frequently as desired. This is suggested when there is a new manager or staff turnover.

If you would like to know the date of your most recent training or would like assistance registering on the LMS, please [email the Vendor Relations Unit](#) or call us at **517-355-8937**.

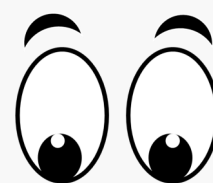


RESOURCES

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.