

wic MICHIGAN VENDOR NEWS

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Information for Store Owners, Managers, and Cashiers

Winter 2019/2020

Season's Greetings,

As we reflect on 2019, we can take great pride in knowing that throughout the year our collaborative efforts provided over 200,000 WIC clients with healthy and nutritious foods; ensuring good health, growth and development for Michigan families.

The Michigan WIC Program is working to increase the number of WIC clients in 2020 and our WIC Vendors play an important role in client promotion and retention efforts. By stocking shelves with wholesome WIC authorized foods and providing great customer service, Vendors help ensure WIC clients are able to consistently redeem their benefits and have a positive shopping experience.

With the holiday season upon us, remember to stock up on all the foods our WIC clients will need to prepare their favorite holiday meals, including whole grain breads and pastas, sweet potatoes, and other fresh fruits and vegetables.

Peace and joy to you and your family this holiday season. My staff and I look forward to working with you in the coming new year!

Sincerely,

Kimberly Keilen, MSW
Section Manager
Vendor Management & Program Integrity
Michigan Dept. of Health & Human Services



PURPOSE OF WIC

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a federally funded Special Supplemental Nutrition Program of the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture and is administered by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Michigan WIC serves low and moderate income **pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children** up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk.

WIC is a health and nutrition program that has demonstrated a positive effect on pregnancy outcomes, child growth and development. The program provides a combination of **nutrition education, supplemental foods, breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to health care**. WIC participants exchange WIC food benefits at authorized retail grocery stores and pharmacies. WIC foods are selected to meet nutrient needs such as calcium, iron, folic acid and vitamins A & C. To learn more, call the [WIC agency](#) nearest you for more information, or [call 2-1-1](#).

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

NEW FOOD GUIDE COMING IN 2020!

In the Fall of 2018, Michigan WIC launched a new Food Authorization Cycle. We asked food manufacturers to submit current and new products they would like considered for addition to the Michigan authorized product list (APL). During this process, Michigan WIC staff also visited several Authorized Vendors around the state to conduct a price and availability survey (P&A). The survey allowed us to identify if the newly requested foods met the following food authorization criteria:

- Retail cost competitive with similar WIC-approved products
- Commonly used by WIC clients
- Available from WIC Vendors throughout the state

We hope to have a new Food Guide in print and available to WIC clients and Vendors by Spring 2020. Once a final determination of new products is made, we will share this information with you so that you can make appropriate preparations.



TRANSACTING YOGURT

WIC customers are reporting difficulty buying certain sizes of WIC authorized yogurt. To ensure clients can redeem their benefits, please remember:

- WIC yogurts may come in 32 oz tubs or multipacks of 4-oz serving containers.
- These multipacks come in 4-packs of 4 oz (16 oz total) and 8-packs of 4-oz (32 oz total).

Vendors should always scan the item and allow the Point-of-Sale Device to make the determination as to whether the item may be bought with the client's WIC benefits.

PLEASE SEE THE MICHIGAN WIC FOOD GUIDE FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT WIC AUTHORIZED YOGURTS.



A DAY IN MICHIGAN WIC

Did you know...?

- 10,187 clients are served daily throughout Michigan
- WIC families purchase over \$428,523 in healthy foods daily
- 52.9% of babies born in Michigan are enrolled in WIC
- 30.6% of pregnant mothers enroll in WIC during their first trimester
- 89.5% of WIC families live below 150% of the poverty line
- WIC families redeem 85.7% of their fresh fruit and vegetables benefits
- 10.2% of infants are born at a low birth weight
- 66.7% of WIC infants are breastfed
- 58.7% of WIC mothers are overweight or obese pre-conception
- 16.2% of children are overweight and 13.2% are obese

REGISTER QUICK GUIDE

Incentives

Please be advised that incentives ARE permitted on the WIC Program. Additionally, it is against WIC Program policy to charge WIC clients more for food items than other customers. Therefore, Vendors are required to update their point of sale devices or registers with current sale prices. Below is a list of allowable incentives.

- Manufacturer Coupons
- Buy One Get One Free
- Discount Specials
- Store Loyalty Programs
- Free oz. by Manufacturer
- Volume Discounts

Please contact the Vendor Relations Unit at MDHHS_WICVendor@michigan.gov or (517) 335 8937 for more information.

Split tender

Split tender is the policy that allows clients to split their **Cash Value Benefits (CVBs)** and pay for additional fresh fruits and vegetables with a different form of tender, such as cash, credit, or SNAP Bridge Card.



NOTE: **Fresh fruits and vegetables** are the ONLY WIC approved food item that a Vendor may ask the client to pay the difference for.

Exchanges

As per the WIC Vendor Contract, Section III, Paragraph 5, exchanges ARE NOT allowed for foods purchased with WIC Program benefits.

The **only exception** is when the original authorized food item is defective, spoiled, or has exceeded its “sell by,” “best if used by” or other date limiting the sale or use of the food item. In this instance, the WIC food item may be exchanged for an **identical** WIC authorized food item, defined as the exact brand, type and size, and UPC code (if available) of the original WIC authorized food item obtained and returned by the client.



For example, a one-gallon container of one brand of whole milk that was spoiled at time of purchase may be exchanged for an identical one-gallon container of the same brand of whole milk.

Shopping Reminders

Choose These Brands

All approved brands, sizes and flavors are written in the Michigan WIC Food Guide and/or official update inserts. No deviation is allowed.

Choose Any Brand

WIC participants can choose any WIC-authorized brand, as long as they have been prescribed benefits in that food category.

Organics

Currently, the only food categories that allow the purchase of organics are fresh fruits and vegetables, whole wheat pasta, soy beverages, and select varieties of eggs.

NOTE: The WIC Program will contact Vendors if there are updates to the Approved Product List so that appropriate preparations can be made.

RESOLVING TRANSACTION ERRORS

If a WIC client is attempting to redeem their benefits and there is an issue with items not scanning, it is the Vendor's responsibility to take the following steps to help ensure the client is able to fully redeem their benefits.

1. Check client's benefit balance or WIC shopping list.

The WIC point-of-sale device may be used to conduct a **WIC Balance Inquiry**. This tool verifies the food benefits available to WIC customers and can help resolve many transaction errors.

2. Use the Food Guide to verify the item is WIC authorized.

WIC foods have restrictive ingredient requirements. For example, infant cereals may not have bits of fruit or added oils; and plastic-wrapped slices of cheese are not allowed.

3. Verify the size and brand are approved. If not, help the client identify the correct authorized food item.

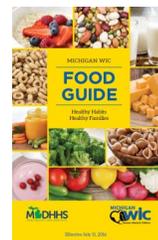
Only certain sizes of WIC foods are approved for purchase. Cashiers may use the Food Guide to resolve confusion and assist customers at the register.

5. Check to make sure the WIC point-of-sale (POS) device is connected.

As POS devices rely on telephone lines to submit transactions, connection errors are often managed by resetting or repairing a modem or line. POS issues may also be resolved by contacting the **Conduent Retailer Help Desk** at **1-888-529-1693**.

4. Check to see if the card is damaged.

If it is, you may manually enter the client's card number and proceed with the transaction.



FORMULA PURCHASE REQUIREMENTS

The Michigan WIC Program requires that all WIC authorized Vendors **MUST** only purchase infant formula from wholesalers, distributors, and retailers **licensed** by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (**MDARD**) or from infant formula manufacturers registered with the Food and Drug Administration (**FDA**). This requirement also applies to all **online purchases**.

MDARD is available to answer any questions as to whether a wholesaler, distributor, or retailer is properly licensed or general questions you may have regarding licensing requirements and procedures. You may contact MDARD in a variety of ways:

- Contact by phone: **1-800-292-3939**
- Contact by e-mail: mda-info@michigan.gov
- Website: <http://michigan.gov/mdard>

If you are unable to confirm MDARD licensure status or have any questions regarding this requirement, please call the WIC Vendor Relations Unit at (517) 335-8937.



SOUTHEAST OPEN APPLICATION PERIOD

The application deadline for current Vendors and Waitlist stores in Southeast Michigan is **December 13, 2019**. As a reminder, applications received after the due date WILL NOT be accepted for consideration during the Open Application Period (OAP). Below are some of the most commonly received questions the Michigan WIC Program receives during OAP.



Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: I am not a WIC authorized Vendor but would like to be, how do I get an application?

A: Please send the WIC Vendor Relations unit a Request for Application form which can be found on our website at www.michigan.gov/WICVendor. This is where additional information can be found about program requirements and becoming a WIC Vendor.

Q: I am an already approved WIC Vendor and I have received a yellow WIC Vendor Application in the mail. Do I need to complete this application?

A: Yes, the contract cycle for Southeast Michigan ends June 30, 2020 and the new 3-year contract cycle begins July 1, 2020. If you would like to continue offering WIC to customers in your store you will need to complete the application and send it back on or before **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2019**.

Q: Who do I contact if I have additional questions about how to complete my WIC Vendor Application?

A: Please call the WIC Vendor Relations mainline at 517-335-8937 or email the WIC Vendor Relations mailbox at MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov.

Q: Do I need to complete all the questions on the WIC Vendor Application?

A: Yes, leaving questions blank is considered an incomplete application and may result in denial based on an incomplete application.

Q: Where can I find the Minimum Stock Requirements form?

A: The Minimum Stock Requirements form can be found on our website at www.michigan.gov/WICVendor. Scroll down to the Minimum Stock Requirements and WIC Vendor Monitoring Visit Report.

Q: I don't understand Question 16c, which states: Do you expect more than 50% of your annual food sales will come from WIC sales?

A: This question is asking you to compare your WIC sales to your total annual food sales. The Michigan WIC program cannot approve Vendors whose WIC sales exceed 50% of their overall annual food sales. For example, if last year a Vendor sold \$500,000 worth of food, but over \$250,000 of those sales were due to WIC, a Vendor would answer YES and would not be eligible for a WIC Vendor Contract.

Q: Where do I mail my completed WIC Vendor Application?

A: Please mail the WIC Vendor Application to the following address:

**Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
Lewis Cass Building - 6th Floor
WIC Vendor Relations Unit
320 S. Walnut
Lansing, MI 48913**

WIC RECIPES CAN IMPROVE SALES

Posting recipes in your store that utilize a variety of WIC authorized foods can be an effective way to increase WIC sales and help clients find creative ways to use less-redeemed items. Grouping items from the same recipe together also makes them easier for customers to find.

For example, skim milk, eggs, and bread can be combined to make French toast. Or canned tuna, apples and onion can be mixed with light mayo to make tuna salad. And chicken breasts can be coated in plain yogurt, crushed cornflakes, and seasonings to make homemade chicken nuggets. The possibilities are endless!

The recipe on the right is for **vegetarian chili** and all WIC authorized foods are followed by an asterisk (*). For more recipe ideas, please visit wicworks.fns.usda.gov.



Vegetarian Chili

Ingredients:

- 1 #10 can pinto beans*
- 1 #10 can red beans*
- 1 #10 can kidney beans*
- 1 #10 can tomatoes*
- 2 c. fresh onions, chopped*
- 1 c. fresh green bell peppers, chopped*
- 2 tbsp garlic powder
- 2 tbsp black pepper
- 3 tbsp chili powder
- 2 tbsp lemon pepper

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 400° F
- Mix beans and tomatoes in large bowl.
- Add onions, peppers and spices.
- Place in two 4-inch deep pans.
- Cook chili in oven for 15 minutes.

Serving size 1 cup. Makes 50 servings.



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To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD -3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call **(866) 632-9992**. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Michigan Department of Health &
Human Services, WIC Division
Lewis Cass Building
320 S. Walnut St.
Lansing, MI 48913

Questions/Comments
Telephone Number: (517) 335-8937
Email: MDHHS-
WICVendor@michigan.gov



PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

2020 TRAINING SCHEDULE

As a reminder, all WIC authorized Vendors are required to participate in one interactive training each Contract Cycle (i.e. **once ever three years**) to be compliant with the **WIC Vendor Contract** and eligible for reauthorization. Below is the upcoming webcast training schedule for 2020. If your store requires a training, you will be sent an invitation in the mail. Vendors may also participate in trainings more frequently as desired.

Tuesday, January 14th @ 2pm EST
Tuesday, March 17th @ 2pm EST
Tuesday, June 16th @ 2pm EST
Tuesday, September 22nd @ 2pm EST



To register, please visit michigan.gov/WICVendor for a links to each registration page. If you would like to know the date of your most recent training or would like more information regarding registration, please contact the **Vendor Relations Unit** at (517) 355-8937 or by email at MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! The 2020 WIC Vendor Conference will be September 16th or 17th. Location TBD.

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