

wic MICHIGAN VENDOR NEWS

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Information for store owners, managers and cashiers

Fall 2023

New Vendor Relations Unit Manager

We are happy to introduce Katherine Groble as the new Vendor Relations Unit Manager. She is replacing Dawn Pline, who was promoted to Vendor Section Manager earlier this year. Katherine joined WIC in 2018 where she started traveling around Michigan as a monitoring analyst before taking on the role of Vendor Module Analyst in 2019. Katherine brings five years of extensive knowledge of WIC program policies and regulations, making her the best candidate for this position.

Katherine looks forward to continuing her work with WIC and would like to encourage vendors to reach out to her with any questions, comments or ideas to help improve the vendor and WIC shopping experience. Please welcome Katherine into her new role.



Vendors Can Now Use WIC Connect



Michigan WIC has set up a **test account** for vendors on the Michigan WIC Connect mobile application. Once you create an account, the app allows you to **scan barcodes** using your phone camera to see if an item is WIC-approved. This can be useful in double-checking store inventory and correctly placing WIC labels, which in turn can help prevent frustrations with incorrect items at checkout.

Follow the [instructions](#) on our [website](#) under WIC Vendor Promotional Materials to set up a test account. Please call our office at 517-335-8937 or ask for assistance during a site visit if you need help.

10 Ways to Prevent Shoplifting

- | | | |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| 1. Hire security guards. | 4. 'Face' your products. | 7. Offer customers help. |
| 2. Install CCTV. | 5. Update security systems and alarms. | 8. Staff checks. |
| 3. Check labels on self-service tills. | 6. Lock up securely. | 9. Put up warning signs. |
| | | 10. Watch customer behavior. |

Please email the [Michigan WIC Program](#) or call 517-335-8937 with questions and feedback.

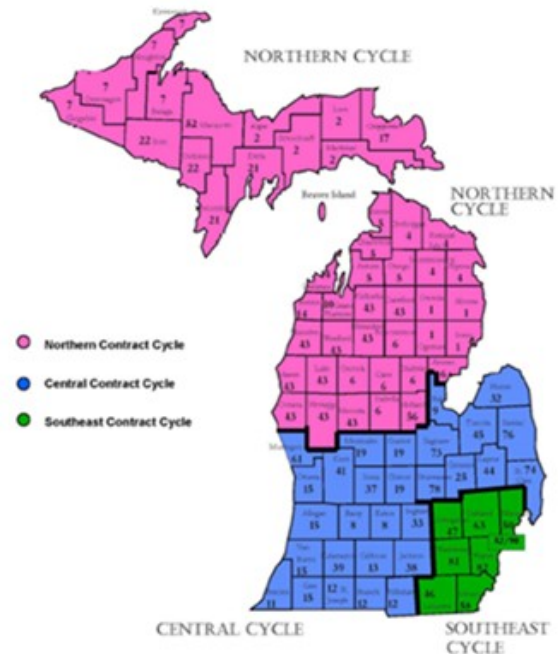
OPEN APPLICATION PERIOD: For Northern Contract Cycle Vendors

WIC Vendor Contracts for authorized vendors located in the Northern part of the state will expire on **June 30, 2024**. Northern cycle applications will be emailed to all currently authorized WIC vendors and stores on the "waitlist" on October 1. The open application period for the Northern cycle is October 1 through December 21. WIC Vendor Applications can also be [printed from our website](#) or mailed to the vendor by request. Requests to have an application mailed should be made by emailing MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov or calling 517-335-8937.

All approved vendors in the Northern counties will receive a three-year contract valid from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2027.

Below is a complete list of Northern counties:

Alcona, Alger, Alpena, Antrim, Arenac, Baraga, Benzie, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Chippewa, Clare, Crawford, Delta, Dickinson, Emmet, Gladwin, Gogebic, Grand Traverse, Houghton, Iosco, Iron, Isabella, Kalkaska, Keweenaw, Lake, Leelanau, Luce, Mackinac, Manistee, Marquette, Mason, Mecosta, Menominee, Midland, Missaukee, Montmorency, Newaygo, Oceana, Ogemaw, Ontonagon, Osceola, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle, Roscommon, Schoolcraft and Wexford



The completed application must be received by the department as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. Thursday, December 21. 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 Vendor Contract.

All vendors receiving a WIC Vendor Contract for the new cycle beginning July 1, 2024, 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 for July 1, 2024, will have the option to e-sign the contract. To e-sign the contract, the Department needs the name of the individual authorized to sign a contract for the store, please list this person on the application with a valid email address.

Michigan WIC - Infant Formula

WIC recognizes and supports breastfeeding as the norm for infant feeding up to age two and beyond. WIC is here to support your feeding decision.

- Your WIC Shopping Lists shows the type (powder, concentrate, or ready-to-feed) of **Similac Infant Formula** you can buy.
- If your doctor changes your formula to something not listed here, you must contact the WIC clinic to change your food package.

Similac Infant Formula Concentrate (Conc) Options:
Similac Advance, Similac Soy Isomil

Similac Infant Formula Ready-to-Feed (RTF)* Options:
Similac Advance, Similac Sensitive, Similac Soy Isomil
*RTF formula is provided when special conditions are met.

Similac Infant Formula Powder (PWD) Options:

Start Here	These options are available if your infant does not tolerate Similac Advance.		
Similac Advance 12.4 oz powder can  UPC: 070074559582	Similac Total Comfort 12.6 oz powder can  UPC: 070074626000	Similac Sensitive 12.5 oz powder can  UPC: 070074575414	Similac Soy Isomil 12.4 oz powder can  UPC: 070074559643
Milk-based formula	Milk-based formula with broken down proteins & reduced lactose	Milk-based formula with little to no lactose	Soy-based formula with broken down proteins & no lactose
Commonly used Well tolerated by most	May Help With:		
	Gas Fussiness	Gas Fussiness Spit Up	Gas Fussiness

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) does not discriminate against any individual or group on the basis of race, national origin, color, sex, disability, religion, age, height, weight, familial status, partisan considerations, or genetic information. Sex-based discrimination includes, but is not limited to, discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, and pregnancy.
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FORMULA UPDATE

Michigan WIC compiled [a list of recent additions and removals to approved WIC formulas](#). This information is intended to better educate WIC clinicians, including nutrient facts and qualifying conditions for each formula. To better inform your stores, we wish to provide the list to you as well. Please contact our office with questions.

INFANT FORMULA

2023 WIC VENDOR CONFERENCE

Thank you to everyone who helped make the 2023 WIC Vendor Conference a huge success. Held at Treetops Resort in Gaylord, there were more than 100 people in attendance.



THEME: Piece by Piece, Making a Difference in the Mitten!

The goal of this year's conference was to recognize how we all have a different and equally important piece to play in making a difference for Michigan families. Without the work done every day by each of you, as well as the WIC clinicians, WIC families and the WIC state staff, the puzzle could not be completed.

The theme, 'Piece by Piece, Making a Difference in the Mitten,' was reflected in the day's activities. Vendors won prizes throughout the day by playing Michigan-related trivia, completing an interactive puzzle and participating in a networking game. Prizes included WIC banners, Michigan themed gift baskets and an all-expenses paid weekend package to Treetops Resort. Conference attendees also received take-home bags with updated WIC materials and custom swag, including Michigan WIC monogrammed beanies, carabiners, coasters, lens cleaners and pens.

HIGHLIGHTS

Client Advisory Council co-leads Myra Lee Fowler and Whitney Jackson facilitated a WIC client/clinician panel to discuss experiences in the clinic and in stores to identify best practices and areas for improvement. The conversation centered around accessibility, expectations and needs from stores when they are shopping with WIC and other forms of payment. Vendors from the audience responded with their perspectives, informing clients and WIC state staff of considerations like how some POS systems work regardless and other POS systems require clients to announce they are buying with WIC and for cashiers to separate items. WIC state staff took away key items to escalate for sharing with WIC clinics, WIC families and WIC vendors.



Client/Clinic Panel Participants

THANK YOU TO OUR EXHIBITORS! Michigan Works!, Michigan WIC's Nutrition and Program Education Team, POS Provider BMC, and Keynote Speaker David Chinsky.



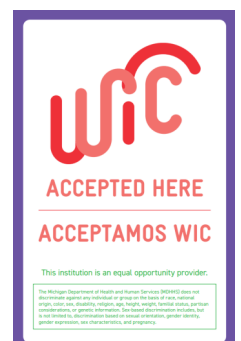
Michigan WIC State Staff



Vendor Attendees

New Promotional Materials Revealed

Michigan WIC provides marketing materials to help vendors promote WIC at their stores. In response to vendor feedback, we designed new materials and provided them to attendees of the 2023 WIC Vendor Conference. Print-ready versions are available on our website under [WIC Vendor Promotional Materials](#). Some new materials, like WIC utility items including magnets, pens and lens cleaners, may be provided during in-person visits by WIC staff. Print items like newly redesigned door signs shown here can be requested at any time.

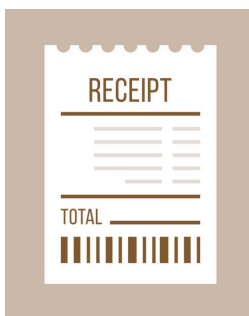


VENDOR COMPLIANCE

Storing Purchase Records

Over the past couple of months, Michigan exceeded prior record average temperatures and rainfall. Avoid storing records in direct sunlight, attics or below ground level to decrease chances of fading and records being destroyed from roof leaks and basement floods.

The warmer and more humid the environment, the faster the thermal coating will degrade. Keeping these conditions as stable as possible is essential for the long-term storage of POS thermal paper.



On-Site Audits

The Program Integrity Unit hopes to soon begin conducting on-site audits. The difference between desk and on-site audits is described below:

Desk Audit means an inventory audit conducted remotely by a WIC analyst from the office. This has been the standard audit process when the vendor is requested via mail to submit inventory records for a given time period.

On-Site Audit means an inventory audit where the WIC analyst conducts an in-store count of the audited WIC-approved foods prior to comparing purchase records to redemption records.

On-site audits began October 1 (see [MI-WIC Vendor Policy 5.04](#)). Vendors selected for inventory audits (desk or on-site) are required to submit to the Department their purchase records for WIC-approved foods for a particular period of time, up to three years, to substantiate their WIC redemptions during the audit period.

Exchanges and Refunds

WIC vendor policy states that the refunding of any food item purchased using WIC benefits is **strictly prohibited**. This policy also applies to fresh fruits and vegetables. Exchanges are only allowed if the original purchase included **recalled, expired, or spoiled** items. During the exchange, WIC participants should obtain the same items originally purchased. However, specifically for WIC-approved fresh fruits and vegetables and recalled items, if that specific item is not available, the participant may select another WIC-approved item from the same category.

Additionally, there should be no cash or EBT involved with an exchange. As is currently the case, the issuance of credit or rain checks is prohibited. The exchange should occur as if the original transaction was successful and no exchange was needed.

Minimum Stock

WIC-authorized vendors are required to carry a minimum amount of WIC-approved items. Carrying minimum stock **at all times** is not only a contract requirement, it also helps ensure that WIC clients are able to redeem their benefits when shopping.

The [WIC Vendor Minimum Stock Requirements](#) outlines in great detail the minimum stock requirements for each food category, while the back page also provides guidance for items that are not WIC-approved.

The [WIC Vendor Minimum Stock Requirements](#) can be found online at Michigan.gov/WICVendor and in the Vendor Handbook.

CATEGORY	REQUIREMENTS
Fruits	4 Varieties (2+ must be fresh)
Vegetables	4 Varieties (2+ must be fresh)
Whole Grains	8 units (4 must be bread)
Peanut Butter	4 units
Beans, Lentils and Peas	4 units (Bags or cans)
Fish	12 cans
Cereals	12 units 6 varieties 3 whole grain
64oz Juices	10 units, 2 flavors
48oz or 11.5/12oz Juices	5 units, 2 flavors
Infant Fruits and Vegetables	72 units
Infant Cereals	6 units, 2 varieties
Formula	12 units
Eggs	5 units
Whole Milk	4 units
Lowfat and/or Fat Free Milk	4 units
Yogurt	4 units (32oz)
Cheese	5 units

STAND-BESIDE POS DEVICES

New FIS Stand-Beside Devices Coming Soon

FIS is working to program Verifone V200c devices to support Michigan WIC transactions. Programming these devices will take time and testing to make sure they work properly. Once available, these devices should be a great improvement over the Verifone Vx520 devices you currently use. Michigan WIC will share more information as it becomes available.



Issues with Saving Prices and How to Fix it

As a WIC vendor, you are required to save prices for all WIC-approved items available for purchase in your store regardless of the POS system you use to transact. This includes the FIS WIC Verifone Vx520 stand-beside terminals. To save prices using the FIS-WIC stand beside device, you must use the **Edit UPC List** feature, [instructions for which are provided on Michigan WIC's website](#).

However, there is a known issue with the Verifone devices: when the machine's memory is overloaded it doesn't let you use the Edit UPC List feature. If this happens to you, resetting your device by completing a full download ([instructions provided here](#)) has been shown to fix this issue. Completing a full download takes about ten minutes; and, once started, must be completed to transact WIC. Call FIS's merchant help desk at 1-888-529-1693, press #1, then #2 to receive assistance over the phone.

Connecting 3 or More Stand-Beside Terminals

FIS offers an option for a "master terminal" that connects to each individual device you have in the store, allowing you to save prices on all 3+ devices at once rather than saving prices on each device individually. Just as with the increased cost for renting multiple devices, there may be an additional cost for renting a master terminal. Contact FIS at 1-888-529-1693 to learn more.

STAFF PROFILE: SHAWN GOMPA

A vendor relations analyst with Michigan WIC since 2018, Shawn Gompa is a jack of all trades. While he initially spent most of his time conducting monitoring visits and trainings, which he finds invaluable to understanding the reality of the WIC shopping experience across the state, his role has expanded to include the Food Authorization Committee, vendor policy and communications, electronic benefit transfer (EBT) support and much more.

Shawn believes that good government requires clarity and transparency and feels privileged to help vendors navigate the challenges of a rapidly changing food access and retail landscape – including those related to our recent EBT and formula contractor transitions and supply strains related to COVID-19 and formula shortages.

Shawn also appreciates the opportunity to learn from vendors. It is from speaking with you that he is able to better understand exactly how much retail has changed even in the past five years. He is especially eager to learn about the technical challenges you face when transacting WIC and spearhead efforts to alleviate frustrations with the sale of WIC foods. Shawn also believes it necessary, as a program that manages a cost-containment system, that we should be sensitive to changes in the rising costs of products, increasing wages, and other factors that impact your bottom line. So please, feel free to share any concerns from your experiences in food retail. They are invaluable to our work.



WIC NUTRITION

Breastfeeding: It's Good For Business

Over the years women have become a huge part of today's workforce. Unfortunately, many parents lack support to continue breastfeeding after they return to work and, in many cases, decide to quit their job so they can continue providing breast milk – the best source of nutrition for their baby! Here are five simple suggestions on how you can help support your breastfeeding employees.

Provide basic accommodations. Designate a private space for employees to express milk with a comfortable chair, table, access to an electrical outlet, refrigerator to store milk, nearby sink to wash hands or pump parts, and/or a company-provided quality breast pump. No restrooms please!

Provide reasonable break time. Allowing parents to express milk for 15-20 minutes 2-3 times during an 8-hour workday helps prevent complications with breastfeeding including painful engorgement and helps parents maintain a great milk supply.

Avoid reduction in pay for pumping breaks. This can have major setbacks for businesses including decreased morale and productivity, and disparities amongst other employees.

Allow babies on-site. Whether it's a family member dropping an employee's baby off to nurse during break time, allowing parents to bring their babies to work, or providing on-site child care, allowing these opportunities have shown to improve employee morale and work productivity.

Develop corporate policies to support breastfeeding employees. A written policy ensures your business leaders will not only respond to accommodations, but also conveys that your business takes breastfeeding support seriously. This can improve employee retention and loyalty.

If one of your employees is experiencing complications with breastfeeding, let them know that breastfeeding support is just a phone call away. Michigan WIC has a [Breastfeeding Warmline](#) with trained staff ready to help!



Hello WIC Vendors!

Hello, WIC vendors! We are happy to partner with you in providing WIC Foods to our clients. Our goal is to reach as many eligible clients as possible and to retain those we have. However, clients often identify the shopping experience as a barrier to using their food benefits and participation in the program. So, what are we doing about this?

- Educating clients on how to use their benefits before going to the store.
- Establishing the Client Advisory Committee to better address client concerns.
- Promoting and improving the WIC Connect mobile app.
- Providing an online lesson specifically for WIC shopping, available at wichealth.org [Finding WIC-approved Foods](#).
- In collaboration with FNS/USDA, looking at ways of [improving the shopping experience](#) for both clients and store staff.
- Modernizing our MI-WIC data base to better serve clients, staff and vendors.

Reach Out to Your WIC Clinic

Our local WIC clinics have offered to help stores better support WIC families throughout the state.

Some examples of current partnerships include:

- Setting up days to have WIC clinic staff in-store to assist WIC customers with shopping.
- Assisting with making correct formula orders.
- Double-checking store labels.



Find your local WIC clinic and start your own partnership using the [clinic list by location](#) on our website!

WIC FOOD CORNER

Find Approved UPCs and PLUs Online

Both the [Approved Products List \(APL\)](#) and Michigan [WIC PLU list](#) are available on our [website](#) to assist in the identification of WIC-approved foods.

The APL is updated monthly and lists all universal product codes (UPCs) and product lookups (PLUs) of currently approved WIC foods in Michigan. However, the APL does not include detailed product descriptions and substitute formulas are listed with the same description as the formula they are able to replace.

The PLU list includes produce descriptions and can support you in mapping PLUs to ensure WIC families can successfully purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at your store.



Recipe Corner - Cauliflower with Lemon

Change up your traditional steamed veggies with this recipe! Lemon juice adds an extra zing without extra calories.

Ingredients

- 1 pound cauliflower florets (approx. one head)*
- ¼ cup lemon juice (1-2 lemons)*
- Salt and pepper to taste

* Indicates WIC-approved food

Preparation

1. Place cauliflower florets in a steamer basket, then put steamer basket in a saucepan filled with 1 inch water.
2. Bring water to a boil, cover and steam until tender, 6-8 minutes.
3. Transfer to a serving dish, add lemon juice and salt and pepper to taste.
4. Mix gently and serve!



Serves 4. Calories 31.8. Protein 2.3g. Carbohydrate 7.3g. Fat 0.1g. Sodium 33.8mg. Fiber 2.9g. Calcium 25.7mg. Iron 0.5mg.

**STARTING
AUGUST 10**

**ONLY 16 oz
packages of cheese
are WIC approved**

Cheese

See your WIC Shopping List for allowed maximum cheese price.

- 16 oz (1 LB) ONLY
- U.S. made prepackaged cheese

✓ ALLOWED

- String (without individual wrapping)
- American (without individual wrapping)
- Cheddar
- Colby
- Colby Jack (Cojack)
- Monterey Jack
- Mozzarella
- Muenster
- Provolone
- Swiss



✗ NOT ALLOWED

- Organic
- Shredded, grated, cubed, crumbles, shapes or curds
- Sliced cheese, except American
- Individually wrapped cheese slices (singles), sticks or strings
- Cheese foods (for example: Velveeta)
- Cheese products, whips or spreads
- Smoked cheese or raw milk cheese
- Variety wheels or variety packs
- Cracker backers or stackers
- Cheese with pimento, peppers, seeds, meat, etc.
- Soy, farmer or goat cheese
- Fresh mozzarella
- Imported cheese

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ONLINE TRAINING

Need to complete your federally required training? The training webcasts have been replaced with the new **online WIC Vendor Training course**.

Visit the [Learning Management System](#) (LMS) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. to complete the 10-lesson course at your leisure.

[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. Call or email the Vendor Relations Unit for the date of your most recent training or for help registering.

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.



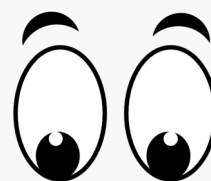
Calls will last one hour and will be hosted via Zoom. The next Quarterly Call is scheduled for **1:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 9**. [Click here to access the meeting](#). We hope you can join us!

RESOURCES

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

Elliott-Larsen Bldg., 5th 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!

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