

wic MICHIGAN VENDOR NEWS

Inside This Issue

Program Updates	2
The Shopping Experience ...	3
Vendor Compliance	4
Vendor Compliance	5
Formula & Breastfeeding	6
WIC Food Corner	7
Training/Resources	8

Information for Store Owners, Managers and Cashiers

Spring 2023

Annual Public Comment Period

The Michigan WIC Public Comment Period is open from March 1 through April 30, 2023. This period provides an opportunity for the public, including WIC Vendors and participants, to formally comment on any aspect of the WIC Program. The WIC Division will then use this feedback to consider policy priorities and make improvements.

For your convenience, the public comment flyer is available in [English, Spanish and Arabic](#). You may print these flyers and display them in your store.

Please submit comments to MDHHS-WICOutreach@michigan.gov or mail to:

WIC Division
Michigan Department of Health & Human Services
Elliott-Larsen Building, 6th Floor
Lansing, MI 48909



**DON'T
FORGET TO
CHECK EMAIL!**

Purpose of the WIC Program

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a Federally funded Special Supplemental Nutrition Program of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In Michigan, it is administered by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). WIC serves low and moderate income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children under five. Grandparents and foster parents may also be eligible to receive WIC benefits. WIC participants are prescribed WIC food benefits in a monthly food package, which they redeem at authorized grocery stores and pharmacies. WIC foods are selected to meet nutrient needs such as calcium, iron, folic acid, and vitamins A&C.

The program has demonstrated a positive effect on pregnancy outcomes and child growth and development.

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

PROGRAM UPDATES

Michigan WIC is excited to bring our annual Vendor Conference to the north in 2023!

Held at Treetops Resort in Gaylord this fall, the goal of the conference is to reconnect with our valued northern WIC Vendors while lifting up this year's theme, *Piece by Piece, Making a Difference in the Mitten*. To this end, we aim to highlight the important work being done by Vendors, local agencies and WIC participants as we work towards accomplishing WIC's mission of improving health outcomes for families around the state.

As a reminder, attendance at this conference will count towards the mandatory WIC Vendor training requirement and there will be ample time for open dialogue and answering Vendor questions. We hope you join us!



Staff Spotlight: Bill Dokianos

Bill has been with the State of Michigan WIC Program for almost five years. He started as a Senior Analyst in the Vendor Relations Unit and then moved into the Program Integrity Unit in March 2020.

Bill works on policy, process improvement, compliance buys, and inventory audits. He graduated from Michigan State University (Go Green!) with a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice in 2008 and again with a master's degree in Law Enforcement Intelligence and Analysis in 2012.

Before joining the WIC Program, Bill worked in various roles conducting internal and external theft investigations for several companies and was a crime data analyst for a local police department.

In his free time, Bill enjoys golfing, tennis, going to movies, and trying out new restaurants with friends.



THE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

Online Ordering

The Michigan WIC Program, alongside United State Department of Agriculture (USDA), is continuing to work toward implementing online ordering and curbside pick-up redemption options. National conversations around this urgent need have increased dramatically, and revisions have been proposed to:



- Remove barriers to online ordering and internet-based transactions.
- Streamline and modernize WIC food delivery.
- Meet the needs of a modern, data-driven program.

While technological and programmatic obstacles remain, online ordering and curbside pickup are important pieces to modernize the program and make food delivery more efficient and accessible for our WIC participants.

FNS recently announced proposed changes to allow for online transactions for WIC. The proposed rule changes are now open for public comment from Feb. 23 to May 24, 2023. FNS encourages all interested parties to provide feedback on the proposed changes by visiting www.fns.usda.gov/wic/fr-022323.

Making WIC Shopping Easier with Dearborn Fresh Supermarket



Eman Hussain (right) and coworkers at the 2022 WIC Vendor Conference.

Our 2022 WIC Vendor Conference panelist Eman Hussain shares how her store, Dearborn Fresh Supermarket, makes WIC shopping more accessible and easier for customers.

Unredeemed Benefits = Lost Sales

- Unused benefits do not roll over. When we have a WIC participant in the store, it is an opportunity that we may not have again.
- Making WIC shopping easier makes customers more likely to use more of their benefits.

Use Custom Signs to Help Every Customer

- Our signs are in Arabic and English and have easily understood pictures and symbols.
- Place signs next to specific food items, such as cereals or beans, that show redemption equivalents with images, so a customer does not even need to read.
- Dearborn Fresh custom signs are available for everyone on the Michigan WIC website.

Print and Label Food Guide Pages to Show Options Available

- Useful for brand-limited WIC items, such as bread.
- Printing the bread page of the Food Guide and circling all breads available helps customers know what to look for.

Use Shelf Labels to Identify WIC Items

- Especially helpful for items like baby food or juice, which have non-WIC foods that look just like the WIC ones.
- Prevents issues of bringing incorrect items to checkout.
- Reminds WIC customers to use their benefits for items they were not necessarily going to buy.



One of Dearborn Fresh's custom signs in English and Arabic signs.

VENDOR COMPLIANCE

Vendor Responsibilities

Vendors play an important role in the delivery of healthy foods to our WIC participants. Because of this, Vendors also have responsibilities, as outlined by the [WIC Vendor Contract](#), they must fulfill to keep things working. These include:

- A clear understanding of and adherence to the [WIC Vendor Contract](#) and [Michigan WIC Vendor Policy](#).
- Accountability for all actions of employees and store representatives.
- Notifying the State WIC office of ANY change in ownership, location, or store closure.
- Maintaining [minimum stock](#) in all food categories **at all times**.
- Verifying foods are authorized for purchase and selling only WIC-approved foods in the amounts specified by the WIC Point-of-Sale (POS) device;
- Not restricting WIC purchases.

Vendor Training

Did you know that Vendors authorized on WIC are trained at many different stages during their affiliation with the program including:

- Prior to initial WIC authorization during the pre-authorization site visit;
- A minimum of once every three (3) years;
- At the annual WIC Vendor Conference;
- Whenever a problem is identified;
- There is a change in management and/or staff; and/or
- When a Vendor requests assistance.

It is important that all Vendors fulfill their training requirements to remain an authorized Vendor in the Michigan WIC Program.



Exchanges & Refunds

Current policy states that refunding 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, if that specific item is not available, they may select another WIC-approved fresh fruit or vegetable in exchange for the spoiled expired items.

Additionally, there should be no cash or EBT involved with an exchange. The dollar amount spent during the original transaction should be the **identical dollar amount** of the item obtained by the WIC participant in the 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.

Setting SMART Goals

Whether you are making resolutions for the New Year, setting a sales plan, or changing out your stock, setting goals can help you get there. Using the acronym SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound) when setting goals can help to clarify the direction of a project or initiative, and focus staff attention on what the priority needs are.

Specific – What will be accomplished?

Measurable – How will you know when you have accomplished the goal?

Achievable – Do you have the skills and resources you need?

Relevant – Does this goal align with your overall vision and mission?

Time-Bound – What is your deadline? Do you need check-ins along the way?



Keeping these parameters in mind can help you write clear and concise goals to achieve personal and professional success.

VENDOR COMPLIANCE

FIS Merchant Help Desk

Having issues with your stand-beside point-of-sale (POS) device? Call the 24/7 FIS Merchant Help Desk at **1-888-529-1693**.

When you call the Merchant Help Desk, enter your **location ID** using your telephone keypad and follow the automated instructions.

Additional POS resources can be found by visiting [our website](#).

Before calling, make sure to have the following information ready:

- Merchant (Vendor) name.
- Seven-digit WIC Vendor ID number.
- Location ID number (on the back of your POS device).
- Terminal ID number (near the top of all receipts and reports).
- Problem or error.

YOUR STORE NAME
1234 ANY STREET ADDRESS
YOUR TOWN, STATE, ZIP CODE

STORE ID: WICW006
TERMINAL ID: WICW006001
CLERK ID: 123
Sign on Date/Time: 09/20/20XX 09:15 AM
Sign off Date/Time: 09/20/20XX 04:45 PM

WIC SIGN-OFF

WIC Checkout	000	\$53.00
Coupons/Discounts		\$10.36-
Adjustments (NTE & Coupons)		\$10.36-

WIC Reimbursement Total \$42.64

END OF REPORT

Reporting Suspected Client Fraud or Abuse

If you suspect someone is committing fraud or abusing the Michigan WIC Program, you can let us know by:

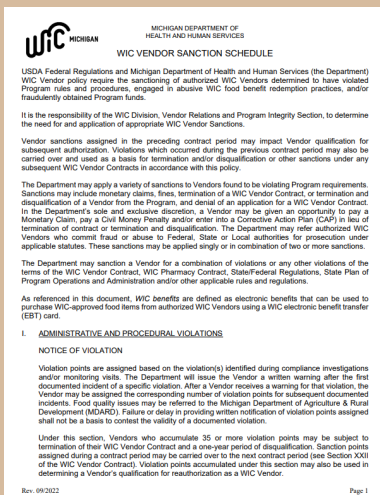
- **Hotline:** 1-800-CALL-WIC
- **Mail:** MDHHS/WIC Division
Program Integrity Unit
320 S. Walnut St.
Elliott-Larsen Bldg., 6th Floor
Lansing, MI 48913
- **Email:** WICFraudInvestigations@Michigan.gov
- **Fax:** 517-335-9206



Individuals making complaints may remain anonymous. Please be as specific as possible with details of the complaint.

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.

Vendor Sanction Schedule & Appeals



USDA Federal Regulations and [Michigan WIC Vendor Policy](#) require the sanctioning of authorized WIC Vendors determined to have violated program rules and procedures, engaged in abusive WIC food benefit redemption practices, and/or fraudulently obtained program funds.

The consequences, or sanctions, of not maintaining compliance with the [WIC Vendor Contract](#) are outlined in the [WIC Vendor Sanction Schedule](#), which is approved annually by the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS).

Vendors being sanctioned will receive a Notice of Adverse Action outlining the violation and action being taken. Some adverse actions may be subject to appeal, via Administrative Review or Hearing, per [WIC Vendor Policy 7.02](#). If applicable, the Vendor has 21 calendar days from the date on the Notice of Adverse Action to file an appeal.

FORMULA & BREASTFEEDING

Formula Update

March 1 marked the official date of the transition back to **only Similac Brand Formulas**. As you are aware, all non-Similac temporary substitutes were deactivated from the Approved Product List (APL). Abbott has assured us that production of the standard contract Similac formulas is in good shape.



So far, we have not heard from Vendors and wholesalers that sourcing of Similac products is problematic. We do ask that you contact our office with any issues stocking Similac brand formulas or with any questions or concerns at MDHHS-WICVendor@Michigan.gov or (517) 335-8937.

Also, please note that Similac brand products in **alternative sizes will continue to be Michigan WIC authorized through April 30, 2023**. These alternative sizes have been shared with you in previous Vendor email communications.

Change to Formula Minimum Stock Requirement

WIC customers with milk-based formula benefits may now redeem any of the Similac standard/contract powder formulas without having to change their food package. These formulas include **Similac Advance (12.4 oz)**, **Similac Sensitive (12.5 oz)**, **Similac Isomil (12.4 oz)**, and **Similac Total Comfort (12.6 oz)**.

To accompany this change, Michigan WIC is no longer requiring Vendors to stock formula with only two acceptable formula options. **Now Vendors may meet the 12-can minimum stock requirement with a combination of any of the four standard/contract formula listed above**, allowing you to meet the requirements while also being flexible in stocking the formula(s) that best meet the needs of your customers.

Effective March 1, revised [Minimum Stock Requirements](#) for formula:

FORMULA	12 Units (1 unit =	Any combination of 12.4 oz can powder Similac Advance, 12.6 oz can powder Similac Total Comfort, 12.5 oz can powder Similac Sensitive, AND/OR 12.4 oz can powder Similac Soy Isomil.
----------------	------------------------------	---

Milk Expression at Work: It's the Law

We have some exciting news to share in the world of lactation! The [PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act](#) was signed into law by President Biden on December 29th, 2022 as part of the 2023 Omnibus Appropriations Bill and is in addition to the [Break Time for Nursing Mothers](#) law. What does this mean for parents who need to express their milk at work? They now have the right to:



- Take break time and space to pump breast milk at work, including teachers and nurses.
- Be paid for their milk-expression breaks.
- File a lawsuit against their employer for non-compliance.

WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselors are available for families who have questions. Encourage them to reach out to their local [WIC clinic](#) if they need support!

WIC FOOD CORNER

Annual Gross Food Sales

Vendors must report their “Annual Gross Food Sales” on the [Vendor Application](#) and as requested by the program. But what are ‘Annual Gross Food Sales?’

Annual Gross Food Sales include the total dollar amount of **all food products** a Vendor sold including, but not limited to, WIC-approved foods, food sales under the SNAP program, and all other food sales. This includes food items not authorized under WIC, e.g., meat, prepared foods, canned goods, packaged food, frozen food, and deli products.

Annual Gross Food Sales **does not** include the total dollar amount of sales of non-food items such as liquor, tobacco, lottery, paper products, apparel, equipment rental, and general merchandise.

Tips for Maintaining Minimum Stock

The following are useful strategies that can help Vendors maintain the [required minimum stock](#).

1. Maintain a back-stock of WIC-approved foods.

Simply meeting the mandatory minimum stock still puts the Vendor at risk of falling below the requirement throughout the week. Having additional inventory that exceeds minimum stock allows Vendors to replenish shelves without leaving the store.

2. Keep records of WIC food inventory.

Maintaining a regular log of WIC foods and their expiration dates allows Vendors to track which items need to be rotated and/or restocked.

3. Stock shelves to serve community preferences.

Ask WIC customers what items they like, in order to inform your inventory choices and increase sales and reduce waste. Maintaining minimum stock is most cost effective if items are sold before they become outdated.

4. Stock a variety of items for each category.

Carrying a variety of WIC-approved food items allows Vendors to serve the preferences of a more diverse customer base and carry multiple items that satisfy the required minimum stock.

WIC VENDOR MINIMUM STOCK REQUIREMENTS	
EFFECTIVE: MARCH 1, 2015	
FOOD GROUP	QUANTITY
A WIC VENDOR MUST HAVE, AT A MINIMUM, THE FOLLOWING FOOD ITEMS IN STOCK AT ALL TIMES	
FRUITS	Any combination of fresh sweet fruit listed in the Food Guide as not allowed. Must carry at least 4 varieties of fresh. At least 2 varieties must be frozen. The other two varieties may be fresh, frozen or packaged. At least 1 variety must be frozen. (1 unit = 1 lb. of whole fruit or 1/2 lb. of frozen fruit)
VEGETABLES	Any combination of fresh vegetables listed in the Food Guide as not allowed. Must carry at least 4 varieties of vegetables. At least 2 varieties must be frozen. The other two varieties may be fresh, frozen or packaged. At least 1 variety must be frozen. (1 unit = 1 lb. of whole vegetable or 1/2 lb. of frozen vegetable)
PROTEIN	Any combination of protein listed in the Food Guide as not allowed. Must carry at least 4 varieties of protein. At least 2 varieties must be frozen. The other two varieties may be fresh, frozen or packaged. At least 1 variety must be frozen. (1 unit = 1 lb. of whole protein or 1/2 lb. of frozen protein)
GRAIN	Any combination of grain listed in the Food Guide as not allowed. Must carry at least 4 varieties of grain. At least 2 varieties must be frozen. The other two varieties may be fresh, frozen or packaged. At least 1 variety must be frozen. (1 unit = 1 lb. of whole grain or 1/2 lb. of frozen grain)
DAIRY	Any combination of dairy listed in the Food Guide as not allowed. Must carry at least 4 varieties of dairy. At least 2 varieties must be frozen. The other two varieties may be fresh, frozen or packaged. At least 1 variety must be frozen. (1 unit = 1 lb. of whole dairy or 1/2 lb. of frozen dairy)
EGG	Any combination of egg listed in the Food Guide as not allowed. Must carry at least 4 varieties of egg. At least 2 varieties must be frozen. The other two varieties may be fresh, frozen or packaged. At least 1 variety must be frozen. (1 unit = 1 lb. of whole egg or 1/2 lb. of frozen egg)
MEAT	Any combination of meat listed in the Food Guide as not allowed. Must carry at least 4 varieties of meat. At least 2 varieties must be frozen. The other two varieties may be fresh, frozen or packaged. At least 1 variety must be frozen. (1 unit = 1 lb. of whole meat or 1/2 lb. of frozen meat)
SEAFOOD	Any combination of seafood listed in the Food Guide as not allowed. Must carry at least 4 varieties of seafood. At least 2 varieties must be frozen. The other two varieties may be fresh, frozen or packaged. At least 1 variety must be frozen. (1 unit = 1 lb. of whole seafood or 1/2 lb. of frozen seafood)
BEAN	Any combination of bean listed in the Food Guide as not allowed. Must carry at least 4 varieties of bean. At least 2 varieties must be frozen. The other two varieties may be fresh, frozen or packaged. At least 1 variety must be frozen. (1 unit = 1 lb. of whole bean or 1/2 lb. of frozen bean)
TOFU	Any combination of tofu listed in the Food Guide as not allowed. Must carry at least 4 varieties of tofu. At least 2 varieties must be frozen. The other two varieties may be fresh, frozen or packaged. At least 1 variety must be frozen. (1 unit = 1 lb. of whole tofu or 1/2 lb. of frozen tofu)
VEGETARIAN	Any combination of vegetarian listed in the Food Guide as not allowed. Must carry at least 4 varieties of vegetarian. At least 2 varieties must be frozen. The other two varieties may be fresh, frozen or packaged. At least 1 variety must be frozen. (1 unit = 1 lb. of whole vegetarian or 1/2 lb. of frozen vegetarian)
OTHER	Any combination of other listed in the Food Guide as not allowed. Must carry at least 4 varieties of other. At least 2 varieties must be frozen. The other two varieties may be fresh, frozen or packaged. At least 1 variety must be frozen. (1 unit = 1 lb. of whole other or 1/2 lb. of frozen other)

Greens with Salmon & Apricot-Ginger Vinaigrette

Apricot-Ginger Vinaigrette

- ¼ c all-fruit apricot spread
- ¼ c fresh orange juice*
- 2 T white wine vinegar
- 1 T sugar
- 2 tsp grated peeled ginger root*
- ¼ tsp crushed red pepper flakes
- ⅛ tsp salt

Salad

- 4 c mixed salad greens*, torn into bite-sized pieces
- 2 c baby spinach leaves*
- 1 c shredded red cabbage*
- 1 c fresh or frozen snow peas*, thawed if frozen, trimmed and halved diagonally
- 7.1 oz vacuum-sealed pouch pink salmon*

Directions

In a food processor or blender, process the vinaigrette ingredients until smooth.

Put the salad ingredients except the salmon on a serving platter. Pour the dressing over the salad. Toss gently. Crumble the salmon on top. Serve immediately for peak flavors and texture.

Serves 4. 128 Calories, 12 g Fat, 18 mg Cholesterol, 366 mg Sodium, 3 g Fiber, 12 g Carbohydrate, 11 g Protein.

*Indicates WIC-approved food



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.



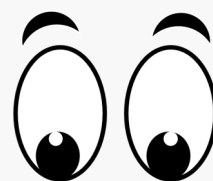
Calls will last one hour and will be hosted via Zoom. The next Quarterly Call is scheduled for **2:30 p.m., Monday, April 17**. [Click here to access the meeting](#). We hope you can join us!

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 (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.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.