

# **wic** MICHIGAN **VENDOR NEWS**

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**Information for Store Owners, Managers and Cashiers**

**Summer 2023**

## **New Vendor Section Manager**

We are happy to introduce Dawn Pline as the new Section Manager for Vendor Relations & Program Integrity. She replaces Kim Keilen, who retired from this position at the end of 2022.

Dawn brings more than 30 years of experience working within state government. Dawn previously served as Manager of the WIC Vendor Relations Unit and many of you may recognize her work on behalf of the more than 1,400+ WIC-authorized Vendors.

Dawn looks forward to continuing to build upon the partnerships established with our Vendors and the successes of the Vendor Section. She encourages our Vendors to reach out to her with any questions or concerns. We extend our congratulations and welcome Dawn into her new role.



## **2023 WIC Vendor Conference**



Don't forget to register for this year's WIC Vendor Conference on Thursday, September 14 at Treetops Resort in Gaylord. The theme is *Piece by Piece, Making a Difference in the Mitten*. To this end, we aim to highlight the important work being done around the state by our Vendors, local agencies and WIC participants.

Come learn about program updates and network with state staff and other Vendors while fulfilling your mandatory federal training requirement. We hope to see you there!

[Click here to register.](#)

**HAPPY SUMMER!**

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

# OPEN APPLICATION PERIOD: For Northern Contract Cycle Vendors

WIC Vendor Contracts for all authorized Vendors located in the Northern region will expire on June 30, 2024. The Open Application Period for Vendors in this region will begin October 1 and run through December 14, 2023.

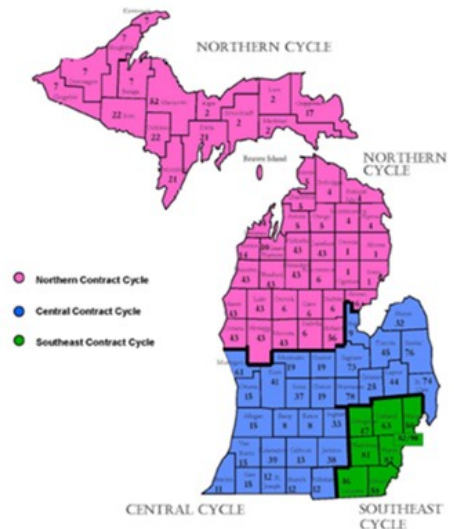
On October 1, applications will be emailed to all currently authorized northern WIC Vendors and any stores on the Vendor Waitlist. These applications will be due on December 14, 2023.

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

Vendors who are approved 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 counties in the **Northern Contract Cycle**:

ALCONA	ALGER	ALPENA
ANTRIM	ARENAC	BARAGA
BENZIE	CHARLEVOIX	CHEBOYGAN
CHIPPEWA	CLARE	CRAWFORD
DELTA	DICKINSON	EMMET
GLADWIN	GOGEBIC	GRAND TRAVERSE
HOUGHTON	IOSCO	ISABELLA
IRON	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	WEXFORD	



The completed application must be received by the Department as soon as possible upon receipt, but no later than **5 p.m. on Thursday, December 14, 2023**. **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.



## TRAINING REMINDER:

Vendors who have not completed their mandatory WIC Vendor Training prior to the start of a new contract cycle will not be reauthorized.

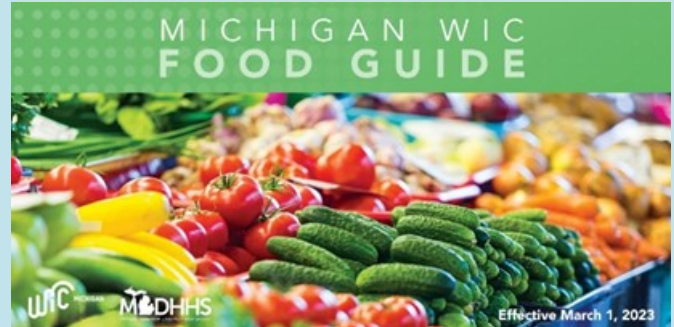
# THE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

## Michigan WIC Food Guides

Michigan WIC Food Guides are a helpful visual reference for identifying WIC-approved foods, brands and sizes. Michigan WIC supplies Vendors with Food Guides to aid with sourcing WIC foods and helping WIC shoppers identify the appropriate items on a WIC participant's shopping list.

As there is a limited supply of Food Guides, we ask that Vendors keep track of their guides. WIC participants that shop in your stores are given Food Guides by their local agency and should bring them to the store while shopping with their WIC benefits. If a participant asks for a Food Guide, we suggest "lending" a guide to a participant to use while shopping, then having the participant return it when finished.

And remember, an [electronic version](#) of the Food Guide can also be found on the Michigan WIC website.



## 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 grow and maintain a healthy customer base. One good customer service experience can change the entire perception a customer holds towards a 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.



## New Vendor to Serve Indigenous Families

We are excited to welcome LVD Plaza, located in Watersmeet in Gogebic County, as a new WIC-authorized Vendor! The Plaza is located within the tribal community of Lac Vieux Desert Band (of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians). The [Michigan WIC Food Guide](#) includes a wide variety of whole foods that can be used in traditional Indigenous meals.



The recipe on Page 7 can be made with WIC-approved black beans that are nutritious and packed with protein, soluble fiber, iron, and best of all: they taste amazing! Learning how to make beans from scratch is a powerful way to reclaim traditional cultural food skills; plus - dried beans are very economical and can be used in many ways. Soaking and cooking your own beans will produce a dish that is NOT gassy.

- Raeanne Madison, WIC Indigenous Community Liaison

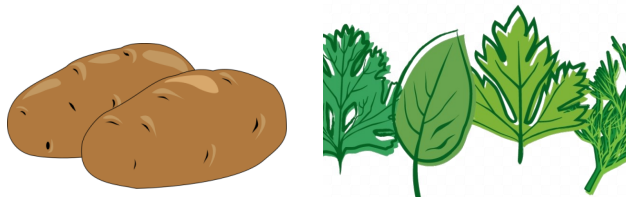
# VENDOR COMPLIANCE

## Minimum Stock Reminders

As a reminder, **white potatoes** ARE eligible for purchase with the WIC cash-value benefit (CVB). White potatoes include varieties like Idaho, russet, Yukon Gold, yellow, red and fingerling. However, white potatoes **will not** count toward the minimum stock requirement.

**Sweet potatoes** and yams **do** count toward the minimum stock requirement. Lemons and limes only count as one variety.

**Parsley** and **cilantro** are also WIC-approved. However, they **do not** count toward the minimum stock requirement.



## Pricing WIC Items

All WIC-approved items for sale must show the price being charged for the item.

It does not matter if the product is a 64-ounce bottle of juice, a box of cereal, or a can of infant formula; each individual item must be priced, or the price must be displayed near the item on a sign or shelf.

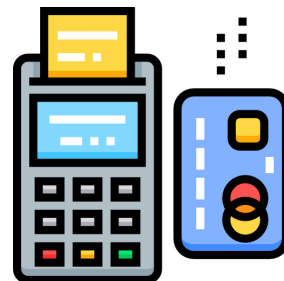
Even if for security purposes infant formula is stored in another location, for example behind the counter, the amount being charged for the formula must be visible to the WIC participant, either by displaying the price on a sign or by pricing an individual item.

**It is a violation of the WIC Vendor Contract if a Vendor does not show the price of a WIC-approved item.** WIC participants have the right to see what they are being charged for an item before making the purchase with their WIC benefits. Additionally, Vendors must charge the WIC program the same price for an item as they charge any other paying customer.

## Disabling the Point-of-Sale Device

WIC-Authorized Vendors are not to disable their POS device without first contacting the department. Vendors ceasing operations or unable to transact WIC for any reason without prior approval from the department are committing a violation that will result in Termination of Contract and immediate disablement of the POS device.

If a Vendor wishes to withdrawal from the WIC program, the Vendor must submit a **voluntary withdrawal request** in writing. Once this step is completed, the Vendor's ability to transact WIC will be terminated, and the Vendor can then disable the machine and call FIS at 1-888-529-1693 to arrange the return of the stand-beside POS device.



## Purchase Receipts—Helpful Hints

The summer season has begun, and this is a quick reminder to avoid inventory audit discrepancies by storing your receipts in a non-plastic container, such as an accordion folder. All too often, Vendors are subject to a monetary claim for reimbursement to the State of Michigan because of faded or lost receipts. Receipts should always be kept in an area with extremely low exposure to temperature changes, heat, and moisture. Clean, oil-free hands also reduce the chances of fading thermal paper receipts.

If you purchase your foods from wholesalers, your wholesalers can send reports directly to our email address for the time frame of the audit. Call and ask them to send you a Movement Report or Shipment Report for the specific foods being audited, and to copy the Program Integrity email address [MDHHS-WICProgramIntegrity@Michigan.gov](mailto:MDHHS-WICProgramIntegrity@Michigan.gov).

Additionally, if you purchase foods at other retailers, it is beneficial to make online accounts that track your purchases. Typically, you can log into your account and print copies of purchase receipts. This comes in handy if you misplace a receipt or two or if a receipt fades over time. This method may not be available at all retailers, but it is a useful resource to be aware of in case you are audited.

# ALL ABOUT WIC EBT

## Issues Scanning Fresh Fruits & Vegetables

**Attention Vendors with integrated point-of-sale (POS) systems: Are fresh fruits and vegetables not scanning with WIC?**

Mapping is the standard way to ensure all fresh fruits and vegetables can be purchased at your store.

When you scan an item and it does not scan as WIC, typically that means the item is not WIC-approved. This is true for all items except fresh fruits and vegetables. **Michigan WIC does not keep a list of Universal Product Codes (UPCs) for fresh fruits and vegetables. For stores with integrated systems, you can 'map' UPCs for fresh fruits and vegetables to the Price Look-Up (PLU) codes recognized by Michigan's EBT network.**

### What is the difference between a UPC and a PLU?

Scanning a UPC on its own will only work with WIC if your store has mapped the item to the correct PLU.

Due to differences in store systems, scanning a PLU sticker is never advised. You must enter the PLU in the register.

### How do you map items to the correct PLU?

#### Step 1: Find who is responsible for mapping produce.

Some stores or store headquarters have dedicated produce managers, scanning coordinators, or a technical lead who ensures all items are mapped. For other stores, general managers will keep a list of items needing to be mapped and contact their POS provider to complete the mapping process.

#### Step 2: Choose whether your store will do full mapping or minimal mapping.

Full mapping is when all fresh produce UPCs are mapped to specific PLU codes that identify each fruit and vegetable by name. The full list of PLU codes can be found in our public posting of Michigan's [Approved Product List \(APL\)](#). This method allows your store and the state of Michigan to see what varieties of fresh fruits and vegetables are being purchased with WIC. Minimal mapping is when all produce UPCs are mapped to the generic code **44691**.

#### Step 3: Train cashiers to troubleshoot WIC transactions and report produce items for mapping.

All cashiers should know how to check WIC balances and the Food Guide to determine whether an item can be purchased by a WIC customer. They should also have a way to report issues with items to store management – for example, a form at their register.



## Lost & Found WIC Cards

Did a WIC participant accidentally forget their WIC EBT card at the register or lose it somewhere in your store? If you find a WIC card, DO NOT keep it behind the counter.

Instead, please call the number on the back of the card to report it as lost. The card will then be deactivated, and the WIC participant will be sent a new card to their address of record.



# FORMULA & BREASTFEEDING

## Formula Purchase Requirements

The Michigan WIC Program requires that all WIC-authorized Vendors MUST only purchase infant formula from:

- A Michigan-based wholesaler, distributor, or retailer that is licensed to distribute food by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD);
- A non-Michigan based wholesaler, distributor, or retailer that is licensed to distribute food by the MDARD equivalent in the jurisdiction in which it is located;
- A Michigan based pharmacy that is licensed by the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA);
- A non-Michigan based pharmacy that is licensed by the LARA equivalent in the jurisdiction in which it is located; or
- A manufacturer that is registered with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

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

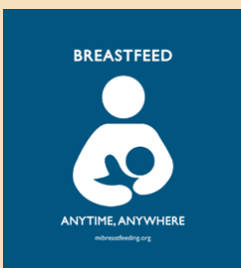
Please find the published lists of [MDARD Licensed Retailers](#) and [FDA-Approved Manufacturers](#) on our website. Or search for LARA licenses at [Michigan.gov/LARA](http://Michigan.gov/LARA).

## Open Your Doors to Public Breastfeeding

As the sun starts shining and families venture out of their homes, you may see more parents breastfeeding their babies in public. After all, a hungry baby waits for no mom! Infants have a right to eat – anytime and anywhere. Consider how your establishment can better support your breastfeeding customers. Here are some helpful suggestions!



1. **Know your customer's rights.** Public breastfeeding is protected by law. Under the Michigan [Breastfeeding Anti-Discrimination Act](#), women have the right to breastfeed in any place that is open to the general public, including stores, restaurants and city buses.
2. **Keep breastfeeding policies updated.** This policy should include a person's right to breastfeed in public, a private lactation room policy, employee etiquette, how to handle harassment from other customers when families breastfeed in public, etc. Share this policy regularly with your staff.
3. **Make your support noticeable.** Print the [“Anytime, Anywhere” poster](#) and display it in a visible location. This lets breastfeeding families know they will be supported if they need to feed their baby in your store.
4. **Designate a private lactation space.** Public breastfeeding is important in the movement to normalize breastfeeding. However, some families are not comfortable breastfeeding in public. Designate a lactation room for your customers in a clean space (not a bathroom), making it available upon request.
5. **Have their backs.** If you see a family breastfeeding comfortably, let them be. Consider offering them a chair. Smile kindly to ease their anxiety. If you see a nursing family being disturbed and harassed by other customers, step in and help. Support your breastfeeding customers and they will keep coming back to your establishment, guaranteed!



Interested in more information on how to better support breastfeeding customers? Check out Michigan Breastfeeding Network's [“Anytime, Anywhere” toolkit](#) or their [System Changer's Guide](#)!

Is your store a leader in protecting breastfeeding families from discrimination and promoting their rights to nurse in public? Michigan Breastfeeding Network has launched its “Anytime, Anywhere” Campaign where businesses can pledge their support for breastfeeding families. Sign your [pledge](#) today.

# WIC FOOD CORNER

## Homemade Black Beans

### Ingredients:

- 2 cups dried black beans\*
- 1 medium onion, peeled and rough chopped\*
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and mashed or finely chopped\*
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon dried smoked paprika or other chili powder
- 1 tablespoon dried cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried black pepper
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 heaping tablespoon tomato paste\*

\* indicates a WIC-approved item



### Directions:

Sort through dry beans, discarding any rocks. Rinse dry beans under water to remove any dust. Soak beans in a large bowl of water overnight or for at least 6 hours. Remove beans from the soaking water and rinse thoroughly.

**Slow Cooker Method** - Place all ingredients, except for salt, in a slow cooker and cover generously with water, vegetable stock, or chicken stock/bone broth. Add salt in the last hour of cooking. Cook on medium for 4 hours.

**Stovetop Method** - Place all ingredients, except for salt, in a heavy-bottom stock pot and cover generously with water, vegetable stock, or chicken stock/bone broth. Add salt in the last hour of cooking. Cook on medium-low for 3-4 hours; stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. Add more water as needed, as this method requires a little more diligence to prevent sticking.

## Ways to Eat Black Beans

- Serve with the cooking liquid in a large soup bowl for a light and flavorful bean soup. Serve with a side of rice, rice porridge, or toasted tortillas.
- Make homemade black bean quesadillas using WIC-approved ingredients—corn tortillas, shredded cheese, diced onions, bell peppers, tomatoes, shredded lettuce, etc.
- Use a blender or food processor to blend your cooked beans into a sauce (first, remove the bay leaf). Use your bean sauce as a dip for toasted tortillas or pour onto baked enchiladas.
- Toss a cup of your cooked beans into other soups or stews.

You can store your cooked black beans in the fridge for up to three days, and in a freezer for up to six months. Be sure to label your container with the name of your dish and the date you cooked it.

## Discontinued WIC Breads

Due to changing bread recipes and/or sizing, the following items can no longer be purchased with WIC benefits.

DISCONTINUED PRODUCT	IMAGE	REASON NO LONGER WIC-APPROVED
Aunt Millie's Swirl Whole Grain Raisin with Cinnamon		New version no longer whole grain
Aunt Millie's Swirl Whole Grain Cinnamon, No Raisins		New version no longer whole grain
Aunt Millie's Healthy Goodness 100% Whole Wheat		New version no longer WIC-eligible size (from 16 oz to 22 oz)
Pepperidge Farm Stone Ground 100% Whole Wheat		New version no longer WIC-eligible size (from 16 oz to 22 oz)

# 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.



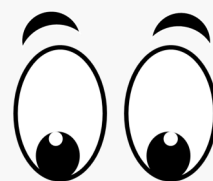
Calls will last one hour and will be hosted via Zoom. The next Quarterly Call is scheduled for **2:30 p.m., Monday, July 17**. [Click here to access the meeting](#). We hope you can join us!

## RESOURCES

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

Elliott-Larsen Bldg., 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
320 S. Walnut St.  
Lansing, MI 48913

Phone: 517-335-8937  
Fax: 517-335-9514  
Email: [MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov](mailto:MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov)  
Website: [Michigan.gov/WICVendor](https://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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