

wic MICHIGAN VENDOR NEWS

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Information for store owners, managers and cashiers

Fall 2024

Share your WIC joy

As our yearlong celebration of the 50th anniversary of WIC comes to an end, we wanted to share some of the comments we've received from our "Share Your WIC Joy" campaign and our annual public comment period. It is clear that Michigan WIC makes a positive impact on people's lives in all facets of the program. We hope these testimonials can serve as a reminder of the importance of our work and collaboration with vendors, local WIC agency partners and others.

"Michigan WIC is so helpful in so many ways and they are very informative, kindhearted people helping those in need with some extra help and information."

"The Michigan WIC has so many helpful resources for new mothers and pregnant women. It is a very great program and is definitely worth being part of. If you are a family with needs, this program will provide you with many opportunities for you and your family. Thank you, Michigan WIC!!"



"Michigan WIC is something that truly saved my family from what easily could have been financial ruin after having my second child. I found myself going from a very lucrative career, to without a job at the drop of a hat after having my baby. We very quickly lost all our life savings because of this, a not so small number, and the price of formula and food was getting to a crushing point. Being able to not worry about purchasing formula for my infant, and being able to get a variety of fruits and veggies for my toddler kept my sanity while I was trying hard to get back on my feet financially while also physically recovering from giving birth. I am SO appreciative of the assistance of WIC."



Share your favorite [WIC story](#).

Thank you for your continued partnership.

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

VENDOR SPOTLIGHT

Cindy Arthur of Sage Market

Cindy Arthur is a manager at Sage Market, an iconic grocery store located in the central Michigan town of Laingsburg. Born and raised in Laingsburg, Arthur is very familiar with the area. She took over management of Sage Market in 2019 and has had a great relationship with WIC participants over the years, going above and beyond to advertise the program and assist clients in finding WIC foods.

However, despite her best efforts to make the shopping experience more accessible to customers, Arthur explained that the store has been through its ups and downs. "We don't have as many customers as we used to," Arthur explained. "There are a few that are consistent clients and we are here to serve them." She likes that WIC helps the families, particularly with infant formula getting more and more expensive.

She added, "Everyone knows everyone else, almost by name most of the time. We know the families in the area, and we enjoy being a part of their growth and success. We give them the personal touch." Sage Market exists to benefit the members of the Laingsburg community and customer service is number one in their book.



OPEN APPLICATION PERIOD: For Central Contract Cycle Vendors

[WIC Vendor Contracts](#) for authorized vendors located in the **central** part of the state will expire on **June 30, 2025**. Central cycle [applications](#) will be emailed to all currently authorized WIC vendors and stores on the waitlist on Oct. 1.

The open application period for the Central cycle is Oct. 1 through Dec. 16. [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 central counties will receive a three-year contract valid from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2028.

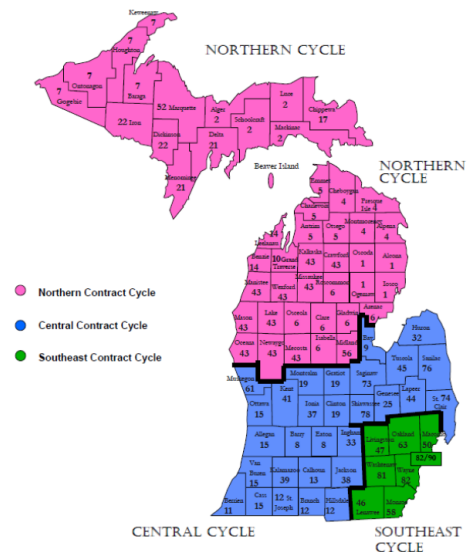
Below is a complete list of Northern counties:

Allegan, Barry, Bay, Berrien, Branch, Baraga, Calhoun, Cass, Clinton, Eaton, Genesee, Gratiot, Hillsdale, Huron, Ingham, Ionia, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Kent, Lapeer, Montcalm, Muskegon, Ottawa, Saginaw, Sanilac, Shiawassee, St. Clair, St. Joseph, Tuscola, Van Buren.

The completed application must be received by the department as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. Monday, Dec. 16. LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

Please note, neither the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), 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, 2025, 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, 2025 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.



50 YEARS OF WIC

2024 WIC Vendor Conference

Thank you to everyone who helped make the 2024 WIC Vendor Conference a huge success. Held on Thursday, Sept. 12 at the Sheraton Airport Hotel in Grand Rapids, there were more than 150 people in attendance.

This year's theme was "50 Years at WIC: Coming Together for a Better Future." Fifty years of WIC wouldn't be possible without you. It is the work done in your stores, in collaboration with WIC clinicians and state staff, that secures a better future for the infants and children in our program. To commemorate 50 years of service, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed a proclamation honoring the WIC Program, and we at the state WIC office took a moment to honor vendors. From five years to 40+ years, our office provided certificates to vendors to commemorate important milestones in serving Michigan families.



Vendors won prizes throughout the day by playing Michigan-related trivia, completing an interactive WIC client timeline activity and participating in a networking game. Conference attendees also received take-home bags with updated WIC materials and custom swag, including Michigan WIC mugs, notebooks and pens.

HIGHLIGHTS

Food authorization committee (FAC) lead Maggie Heidenreich shared the new food rule published by the federal government which expands the types of foods that Michigan WIC will offer in the future. Kate Bauer, Ph.D. from the University of Michigan and Feeding MI Families, shared key takeaways from families throughout the state about their experiences utilizing food assistance programs. Vendor Relations unit manager Katherine Groble shared an upcoming opportunity for Vendors to receive state funding assistance to upgrade point-of-sale (POS) systems from stand-beside devices.



Vendor module analyst Andrea Felska shared the development of new online training resources, which should serve to better meet the needs of Vendors. Finally, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and health equity implementation specialist Myra Lee Fowler shared the results of a survey of WIC clients on their shopping experiences, how Vendors and state staff were able to use feedback to improve shopping experiences, and how the Michigan WIC program seeks to use this tool to further improve WIC shopping across the state. We also had attendees from the Indiana and Ohio WIC Programs and were so proud to show off all the excellent work done by our Vendors.

A special thank you to our keynote speaker, Cindy Brown, for sharing her insights for success in customer service and to our exhibitors: Michigan Works!, University of Michigan, BMC, Kent County Health Department, Midwest Independent Retailers Association, WIC promotion and outreach strategist Whitney Jackson, WIC management information system (MIS) contractor Kunz, Leigh & Associates, and Nuby.

WIC 50th Anniversary Reception

On July 17, Michigan WIC held a reception in honor of the program's 50-year milestone. Past employees and local agency staff were invited to join us at the Elliott-Larsen Building in Lansing to reminisce, mingle and discuss the evolution of the program. We were joined by Brenda Jegede, director of the Bureau of Health and Wellness, Dr. Sarah Lyon-Callo, the senior deputy director of the Public Health Administration, and Kristi Fox, the branch chief of the Supplemental Food Programs with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (pictured with Michigan WIC Director, Christina Herring). There was food, prizes and even singing. A great time was had by all. Fifty years of WIC for a better future.



VENDOR COMPLIANCE

Ways to stay up-to-date and get involved

Michigan WIC offers multiple opportunities to help WIC vendors stay up-to-date on program changes and upcoming initiatives and events. We encourage vendors to take advantage of these materials and opportunities, and to make sure the information is disseminated to staff.



Quarterly vendor calls are hosted by Michigan WIC state staff and provide vendors an opportunity to learn about program updates as they happen, share individual store experiences, ask questions and engage in dialogue with staff. Dates and zoom links are posted on the [WIC webpage](#) and the back page of this newsletter.



Vendor newsletters are emailed to vendors quarterly and posted on the [WIC webpage](#). They include important reminders about compliance and are a great training tool for staff. Please make sure you are sharing the newsletter with store employees.



Vendor notices are emailed to vendors when there is a time-sensitive program update, such as supply chain shortage, an upcoming event or policy changes. Please make sure you are opening and reading all communications from Michigan WIC and that you have a valid email address on file with us. Copies of old notices can also be found on the [WIC webpage](#).

Michigan WIC facilitates the **Vendor Advisory Council (VAC)**, an organization composed of authorized WIC vendors that advises the program on important matters, including vendor policies, improving the in-store shopping experience, developing training materials and more. We are always looking for new participants and would love your input. Please submit an [electronic application](#) if you're interested in joining us.

Saving and storing your purchase receipts

All Vendors must maintain purchase and inventory records and make records available upon request. Purchase and inventory records include invoices, receipts and any other documents that record a sale of goods or services in exchange for payment. Remember, handwritten purchase records will not be accepted.

Save all receipts purchased exclusively from WIC-accepted suppliers after final payment is made. Have a separate location to keep receipts.

Track inventory of all your receipts and organize them in date order. Whether you use an accordion-style folder or scan your receipts to your computer, remember to label them so they are easy to access if asked to submit them to the department. Don't have anything to keep your receipts in? WIC staff can bring you an accordion folder specifically for your records during your next monitoring visit, inventory audit or we will ship it to you.

Store all receipts in a safe environment away from sunlight, moisture, or any location that could damage the receipt. All receipts must be legible and presented in their entirety. Choose your storage location wisely because lost, damaged or faded receipts will not be accepted during an inventory audit. Prepare now so you are ready for your next inventory audit.

Change of ownership

Vendors must report all changes of business structure to the Michigan WIC Program in writing immediately. This includes changes in business entity ownership, shareholders, store location and/or operations. Failure to provide notification immediately may result in the termination of the [WIC Vendor Contract](#), disqualification from WIC Program participation and/or denial of future authorization.



The WIC Vendor Contract is **not transferable** to another Vendor or business entity. A store with new ownership cannot redeem WIC benefits under another Vendor's authorized WIC Vendor Contract and POS equipment. These are violations of the WIC Vendor Contract and may result in a monetary claim and/or disqualification from participation in the WIC Program.

The new owner/entity must reapply for a new WIC Vendor Contract. If the old owner was an authorized WIC Vendor, this does not guarantee that the new owner will be granted a WIC Vendor Contract. However, the earlier the WIC Program is notified of the change, the smoother the transition process.

TRANSACTIONING WIC

Stand-beside devices



Vendors are responsible for properly processing WIC EBT transactions in accordance with WIC Program requirements and EBT operating rules, standards and technical requirements. Vendors are responsible for reporting any issue with their POS device to FIS by calling the Vendor Help Desk at 1-888-529-1693.

Remember, you can find information about your stand-beside device and how to troubleshoot issues on the [Point of Sale Equipment and Systems](#) webpage.

Issues with saving prices

As a WIC Vendor, you are required to save prices for all WIC approved items in whichever system you use to transact WIC, including 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 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 on Michigan WIC's website](#)) has been shown to fix this issue. Completing a full download takes about ten minutes; and, once started, must be completed to sell WIC at all.

Mapping fresh produce

Fresh fruits and vegetables are a part of a WIC participant's Cash Value Benefit (CVB). The CVB is a specific amount of funds allocated to WIC participants each month specifically for the purchase of fresh, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables.



If **fresh fruits and vegetables** are not scanning as WIC, see if the item has a product look-up code (PLU) or a universal product code (UPC). A PLU code is a four- or five-digit number, usually included on a sticker or bulk bin. A UPC is a 12-digit barcode, usually included on pre-packaged items.

If a fresh fruit or vegetable has a PLU code and it is not scanning at the register, the cashier should use the generic PLU code 4469(1) to transact the item. Afterwards, the store's scanning coordinator should ensure the product-specific PLU is mapped to a WIC-approved PLU (either product-specific, if available, or the generic PLU 4469(1)). You can also contact Michigan WIC to get a product-specific PLU added to our APL.

If a fresh fruit or vegetable has a UPC code and is not scanning at the register, the client may be trying to purchase an item that is not WIC-approved or has not been correctly mapped to the associated PLU. For more information on how to map fresh produce UPCs and PLUs, visit the [WIC webpage](#) or email MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov for assistance.

Troubleshooting in-store issues

The [Online Complaint Form](#) can be used by anyone to submit complaints electronically. The most common complaint involves problems redeeming WIC benefits at stores. Here are some tips on how to troubleshoot issues that arise in-store:

- Make sure clients know about the WIC Connect app to scan item UPCs to see if they're WIC-approved.
- Ensure store point-of-sale (POS) systems are updated with the most recent version of Michigan WIC's approved products list (APL).
- Do not have clients pay out of pocket at the first sign of an item not scanning as WIC-approved.
- Re-scan and check WIC Food Guide/WIC Connect App.
- Run a benefits check – sometimes clients are trying to redeem food that is not on their benefits package.
- If a client is shopping with mPerks or a similar rewards systems, have the client split their transaction into two—one for non-WIC items and one for WIC items—to avoid applying dollars off to WIC purchases.
- Educate clients to call their local agency for help if it's during operating hours and they want clarification on their benefits.
- Take pictures of items and UPCs that are not scanning so the state office can investigate.

BREASTFEEDING

Breastfeeding myth busters series

Myth: Breast/chestfeeding is a lot of work.

Fact: While breast/chestfeeding does take time and energy, think about the breaks parents get by not having to prepare formula. Especially in the middle of the night. There is no water to boil, no bottles to clean and sterilize, and no formula to mix and get to the right temperature. Lactating parents have breast milk available in the right amount, at the right temperature, and it is always ready as soon as baby shows signs of hunger. No preparation required.

How can you help? Encourage your customers struggling with lactation to call or text the WIC Breastfeeding Warmline at **833-649-4223** for support.



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 FOODS

Updated WIC food guide

Michigan WIC's new food guide was released Aug. 1. All full-line vendors will be mailed copies of new food guide in the coming months. Remember to keep food guides at your registers so cashiers and other staff can access them to help participants if any questions arise during WIC transactions.

Try to keep the guides given to your store as long as possible as there is a limited supply. However, if you need to order more, you can do so using the [online materials request form](#). As a reminder, an electronic version of the most recent food guide can always be found on [our website](#).



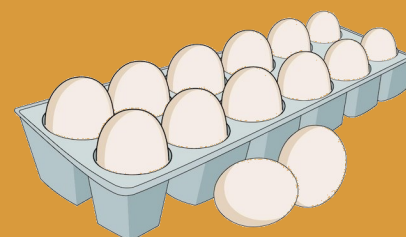
UPC request form

The [WIC UPC Request form](#) is now available online. Remember if you believe a food item is WIC-approved but it is not scanning, or if you believe a food item should be WIC-approved, please fill out the UPC request form. Our office will review the product and if it meets our eligibility criteria, it will be added to the [approved products list](#) (APL).

More egg options

To maintain a robust variety of WIC-allowed options, the Michigan WIC state office has expanded the variety of eggs allowed for purchase with WIC benefits.

Eggs from "Grain, grass or vegetarian fed" hens are now allowed.



WIC FOOD CORNER

Fall produce is full of nutrition

With the sun setting earlier and the nights getting cooler, this is the perfect time to celebrate fall's seasonal produce at your store or market. Get your customers excited to fill their basket with these fall produce picks.

Pumpkins are full of dietary fiber and beta-carotene, which provides its vibrant orange color. Beta-carotene converts into vitamin A in the body, which is great for your skin and eyes. To balance pumpkin's sweetness, try adding savory herbs, such as sage and curry.

Beets are edible from their leafy greens all the way down to the root. The leaves are similar to spinach and are delicious sautéed. Beets are a source of naturally occurring nitrates and may help to support healthy blood pressure. Roasting or steaming beets whole takes the fuss out of peeling — the skin easily slides off after cooking. They also are delicious raw, shredded and tossed in salads or thinly sliced and baked into chips.

Sweet potatoes are full of dietary fiber and vitamin A. They also are a good source of potassium and vitamin C. Try them as a breakfast side dish or serve them at any meal.

Spaghetti squash is a fun, kid-friendly vegetable. Cut one in half to reveal a pocket of seeds; scoop those out and pop the two halves into the microwave or oven and cook until tender. Scrape a fork into the flesh and spaghetti-like strands appear. Toss with pesto or marinara sauce for a quick veggie side dish.

Kale is a nutrient powerhouse. It can survive a snowstorm – and then taste even better. If you plant kale in your garden, you can dig it out of the snow and serve fresh salad in January. One cup of raw kale is loaded with vitamins A, C and K, as well as manganese. Kale is great sautéed and cooked in soup, but add something sweet such as carrots or apples. One advantage of using kale for your leafy greens is that you can add dressing ahead of time; kale becomes more tender and delicious, not wilted.

Encourage your customers to try these great fall favorites by adding some nutrition tips and information to an endcap or shelf talkers. Families are always looking for inspiration – find an easy recipe online to print and share. Enjoy your fall – and the colors and veggies, and nutrition – that comes with it!



Cheesy Stuffed Zucchini



Looking for a new way to enjoy zucchini? Make it the star of the show with these flavorful, Italian-inspired zucchini boats! Filled with savory ground turkey and topped with tomato sauce and cheese, this recipe is a weeknight meal that is sure to impress.

Ingredients:

- 3 zucchini*
- 1 Lb. lean ground turkey
- 1 c. dry breadcrumbs
- 1 clove garlic, minced*
- 1 (32 oz) jar of spaghetti sauce*
- ½ c. grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ c. shredded mozzarella cheese*

*Indicates WIC-approved item.

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- Trim stems from zucchini and slice lengthwise; scoop out seeds.
- Prepare turkey mixture: Mix ground turkey, bread crumbs, garlic, and Parmesan cheese.
- Stuff zucchini with turkey mixture and place in a 9 x13 inch baking dish.
- Pour sauce over zucchini and cover pan with foil.
- Bake in preheated oven for 45 minutes, or until ground turkey is cooked.
- Remove foil and sprinkle dish with mozzarella cheese. Place back in the oven and cook until cheese is melted.

Servings: 6

Nutrition Facts (Per Serving): Calories 370; Carbohydrates 42.9g; Sodium 948mg; Calcium 258mg; Protein 25.4g; Fat 10.8g; Fiber 6.9g; Iron 3.7g

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.



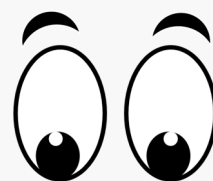
Calls will last one hour and will be hosted via Zoom. The next Quarterly Call is scheduled for **1 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 9**. [Click here to access the meeting](#). We hope you can join us!

RESOURCES

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

Elliott-Larsen Bldg., 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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