

# wic MICHIGAN VENDOR NEWS

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Information for store owners, managers and cashiers

Spring 2024

## 2024 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WIC!

From its humble beginnings as a pilot program in 1972, the Women, Infants and Children program (WIC) has evolved into the nutrition assistance program we know and love, operating in 50 states, 33 Indian Tribal Organizations, 5 territories and the District of Columbia, and serving over 6.2 million individuals annually.

**1972:** WIC was piloted as a supplemental food program aimed at improving the health of pregnant mothers, infants, and children in response to growing concern over malnutrition.

**1974:** The first WIC site opened in Kentucky in January.

**1974:** WIC was operating in 45 states, including Michigan where the first clinic was opened in the U.P.

**1975:** WIC was established as a permanent program by federal legislation P.L. 94-105.

**1975:** Eligibility was extended to non-breastfeeding women and children up to age 5.

**1978:** Legislation introduced new elements into the program, including nutrition education, dietary requirements for supplemental foods, and referrals to social services.

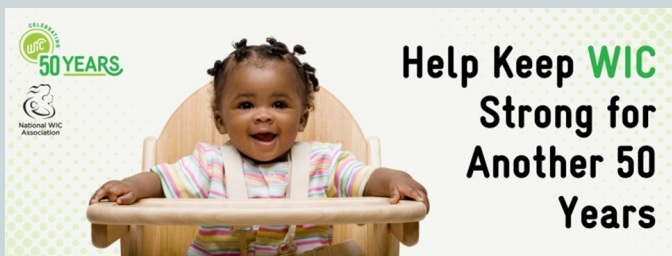
**1992:** WIC introduced an enhanced food package for exclusively breastfeeding mothers to further promote breastfeeding.

**1997:** USDA implemented the [\*Loving Support Makes Breastfeeding Work\*](#) campaign to increase breastfeeding rates among WIC mothers and improve public support of breastfeeding.

**2004:** The [\*Breastfeeding Peer Counselor initiative\*](#) was launched.

**2009:** Based on Institute of Medicine [\*recommendations\*](#), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) introduced a new food package, which increased access to fruits, vegetables and culturally sensitive foods, and enhanced the food package for exclusively breastfeeding mothers.

Want to share your favorite WIC memory and potentially be featured in our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations? Click [here to share with us](#). Thank you for your continued partnership!



**WIC** HONORING  
THE PAST.  
**50** NOURISHING  
THE FUTURE.

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

# PROGRAM UPDATES



COMING TOGETHER  
FOR A BETTER FUTURE

2024 WIC Vendor Conference

SEPTEMBER 12, 2024

SHERATON GRAND RAPIDS AIRPORT HOTEL  
5700 28TH ST SE, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49546

REGISTRATION COMING SOON!

## SAVE THE DATE!



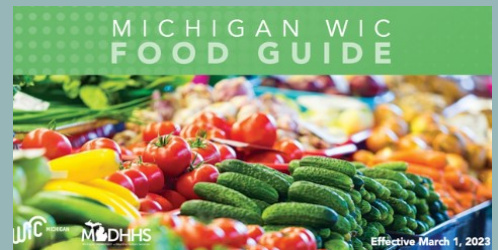
Questions or comments? Call or email us at 517-335-8937 / [mdhhs-wicvendor@michigan.gov](mailto:mdhhs-wicvendor@michigan.gov)  
For the latest information, visit [miwicevents.com/vendor-conference](https://miwicevents.com/vendor-conference)

## Ordering vendor materials online

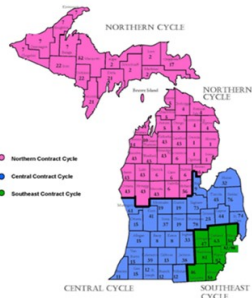
Michigan WIC is happy to announce a new user-friendly online form that allows you to request vendor materials (food guides, door signs, shelf labels, etc.) for your store with just a few clicks! You can find the [online material request form](#) at [Michigan.gov/wicvendor](https://Michigan.gov/wicvendor) under "Vendor Promotional Materials."

Key features of the online material request form include:

- **User-Friendly Interface:** Our intuitive online form is designed with simplicity in mind. You can easily navigate through the platform to submit your material requests effortlessly.
- **Sample Images:** You can see exactly what each material looks like as you make your request.
- **24/7 Accessibility:** Say goodbye to traditional office hours! The online form is accessible 24/7, allowing you to submit requests at your convenience.
- **Immediate Confirmation:** You will receive a confirmation email as soon as you submit your request. Our office will send materials out to you with our next mailing.



## Northern OAP updates



The open application period for the Northern Contract Cycle closed on December 21, 2023. All applications received by the deadline are being reviewed for eligibility.

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 their [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, have the option to e-sign the contract.

To e-sign the contract, the authorized signee must simply click the highlighted signature box on the contract and the document will be automatically sent to the department for execution.



# SPOTLIGHTS

## Vendor spotlight: Paul Petros

Paul Petros is the store owner at Midtown Fresh, a popular WIC-authorized vendor in Kalamazoo that opened in 2018. Midtown Fresh was awarded a grant to help Paul and his family fulfill their dream of increasing access to nutritious foods in their community. Midtown Fresh is a family-owned business that offers much more than WIC-approved foods in their onsite Midtown Kitchen, café and meat department.

Midtown Fresh was awarded Small Business of the Year in 2019 and Top 50 Small Businesses to Watch in 2020 according to Southwest Michigan First. Paul is very proud of their accomplishments, but often tells his employees, "My number one item in the store is the customer."

Midtown Fresh has also partnered with their local WIC office to help new WIC customers learn how to shop for their food benefits in their store. Paul says it's a great partnership that he hopes to maintain. Overall, Paul loves his job and community, and hopes to one day see his children running the business.



## Leaders in labeling

Two of Michigan WIC's long-time partners have developed new ways of identifying WIC items that will benefit both the vendors and the clients.

**Family Fare** stores now have unique tags for WIC items. Each item has an identifiable red triangle in the upper left corner with WIC plainly printed, making it very easy for WIC clients to identify approved items.



**Spartan Nash** stores have a handheld device to monitor their inventory. Store employees can use it to scan any UPC code and see if the item is WIC-approved. This is a unique innovation that makes identifying WIC items easier for employees when labeling items or assisting clients.



Congratulations to these two WIC Vendors for making it easier to identify WIC items; and in turn improving the WIC client shopping experience.



## Staff spotlight: Andrea Felska

Andrea joined WIC in December and is enjoying her new role as Vendor Module Analyst in the Vendor Relations Unit. She is especially grateful for all the help, support, training, and encouragement that she has received from her colleagues.

For the last 15 years, Andrea worked in education in varying capacities including as a substitute teacher, gifted and talented program facilitator, elementary teacher (kindergarten, second, fourth and fifth grade), and as a Junior High Special Education teacher (seventh and eighth grade). She is a compassionate and caring person who enjoys helping others.

Andrea lives with her wonderful family including her husband, Chris, and their kids, Jacob (18) and Makenzy (9). While Jacob is away attending Grand Valley State University, Makenzy keeps them on their toes with dance, competition dance, basketball and 4H. When Andrea is not working (or putting rhinestones on dance costumes) she enjoys cooking, kayaking and binge-watching Netflix.

Andrea is thankful for this opportunity to learn new things and to be part of improving the availability of healthy and nutritious foods for women, infants and children in our communities. Thank you all for welcoming her to our team!

# TRANSACTIONING WIC

## NTEs and cost containment

Upon authorization, all vendors are assigned to a vendor [peer group](#) based on chain status, store type and the number of registers. This peer group is listed on the top right of your [WIC Vendor Contract](#).

Peer groups are used to automatically calculate how much WIC will pay your store above the statewide average price for each specific item. The maximum allowable price WIC will pay for an item is called the Not-To-Exceed (NTE) price and is unique to its UPC code and your peer group. NTEs help ensure cost containment and that our program can serve as many clients as possible.

With each WIC transaction, the point-of-sale (POS) device compares the scanned price to the NTE. If the scanned price exceeds the NTE, this difference will be noted on the sales receipt as shown. If you see an NTE, it means your store will not be paid the full requested amount for that item and will only be paid the amount shown on the receipt.

### What can you do if your payment is reduced?

If you find that WIC reimbursements are not keeping pace with market costs, you can submit documentation to our office. Please send pictures of your WIC receipts (with the NTE) and your purchase invoices to [MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov](mailto:MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov). Michigan WIC will use these documents as part of the larger body of evidence to inform payment adjustments for your store and NTEs as a whole. The sooner you tell us, the sooner we can prevent further issues for you and stores across the state!

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

TERMINAL ID: WICW006  
MERCHANT TERM ID: WICW006001  
CLERK ID: 123  
DATE & TIME: 09/17/20XX 10:30 AM  
SEQUENCE NUMBER: 038  
CARD: \*\*\*\*\*0007  
AUTH CODE: 123500

**WIC PURCHASE**

QTY	UNITS	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
12.00	OZ	Crispy Rice	
		1.00 @ \$3.99	3.99
1.00	CON	Canned Beans	
		1.00 @ \$2.35	2.35
		NTE 1.00 @ \$1.68	0.67
1.00	CAN	SenGentive12pwr	
		1.00 @ \$18.69	18.69
		NTE 1.00 @ \$10.00	8.69
0.50	GAL	1% Milk	
		1.00 @ \$4.49	4.49
1.00	CON	Juice - Calcium Fortified	
		1.00 @ \$5.99	5.99
		NTE 1.00 @ \$4.99	1.00
7.00	\$\$\$	Fruits and Vegetables	
		7.00 @ \$1.00	7.00
PURCHASE SUBTOTAL			42.51
DISCOUNTS APPLIED			0.00
PURCHASE TOTAL			42.51
NTE ADJUSTMENT			10.36
PAYMENT TO MERCHANT			32.15
BALANCE DUE/OTHER TENDER			-\$ 0.00

\*\*\*\* MERCHANT COPY \*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*PLEASE SAVE THIS RECEIPT\*\*\*\*



## Troubleshooting transaction issues

Michigan WIC recently rolled out the [Online Complaint Portal](#) which can be used by anyone to submit WIC store, client or clinic complaints directly from a computer or phone. Most of the vendor complaints we receive are regarding problems redeeming benefits in-store. Here are some tips on how to troubleshoot issues that arise when shopping for WIC that could save time and resolve the situation sooner:

- Make sure clients know about and download the [WIC Connect mobile app](#) to scan item UPCs to see if they're WIC-approved and part of their monthly food package.
- Ensure store point-of-sale (POS) systems are updated with the most recent version of the WIC Approved Products List (APL).
- DO NOT have clients pay out of pocket at the first sign of an item not scanning as WIC-approved.
- Run a benefits check – sometimes clients are trying to redeem food that is not on their benefits package.
- Check the [WIC Food Guide/WIC Connect App](#) for eligible substitutions.
- Educate clients to call their local agency for help if it's during normal business hours and they want clarification on their benefits.
- Take pictures of items and UPCs that are not scanning so the state office can investigate.
- If pictures are not possible, get as many details as possible.

## Reporting POS issues

Vendors are responsible for reporting any issues with their point of sale (POS) system to FIS at 1-888-529-1693 or to their integrated provider.

Inability to transact WIC for any reason is a [WIC Vendor Contract](#) violation. We also encourage vendors to contact Michigan WIC at 517-335-8935 so we can help ensure timely resolution.

You can find additional POS resources, including a list of integrated providers, a stand-beside POS quick reference guide, and instructions for downloading the APL, on the [WIC Vendor website](#) under the [Point of Sale](#) page.



# TRANSACTIONING WIC

## Serving clients at the register

Checkout is an important part of WIC shopping, and a successful transaction depends on the interaction between cashier and client. Please follow these guidelines to ensure a positive checkout experience.

1. Treat all customers equally and with respect.
2. Ensure the participant has their physical card at the time of the transaction. The card number may only be entered manually if the magnetic strip is damaged.
3. Never ask a participant for additional forms of ID.
4. Scan all items. UPC sheets are not allowed.
5. Let the POS device make the determination as to whether an item is WIC authorized and/or a participant has benefits available. If an item doesn't ring up as WIC, help the client find an eligible replacement.
6. Give the participant the opportunity to review and/or cancel the transaction before debiting the items off their WIC card. Always run the WIC card before other forms of payment (SNAP, credit/debit, cash).
7. Make sure to give the participant their final receipt showing the items purchased and the ending balance.



## Incentives and WIC

WIC Vendors may offer incentives to their customers. However, **incentive items must be offered to ALL customers**, including but not limited to WIC participants. Additionally, incentive items not listed below are limited to a **maximum value of \$2.00**. Formula and diapers **are not** allowed. The following are exceptions to the \$2.00 limit:

- **Discounts** applied directly to the total transaction amount being charged to the WIC Program.
- **Loyalty programs** or clubs requiring participant enrollment or documented membership.
  - NOTE: If a client is shopping at Meijer with mPerks, or at other stores that have similar rewards systems where dollars can be applied off the entire transaction, have the client **SPLIT** their transaction into two – one for non-WIC items and one for WIC items – to avoid the discount being applied to their WIC purchases.
- Manufacturers' **coupons**.
- **Free ounces** added to food item by manufacturer (bonus size items).
- **Buy one, get one (BOGO)** – the sale of one WIC food item as part of a normal WIC transaction and the provision of an additional item at no added cost, or a second item at a reduced price. **Infant formula may not be included as any part of a BOGO.**

## Troubleshooting Formula Purchases

Having issues transacting or ordering specialty formulas or medical foods for your WIC customers? Follow these steps for a stress-free transaction.

1. Check the client's benefit balance or WIC shopping list to ensure the client has been prescribed the selected formula.
2. Ensure the supplier does not order a comparable formula if there is low or no stock.
3. Try the UPC on the individual can versus the case UPC. (Note: The case UPC is not always on Michigan WIC's APL.) If multiple cans or cases are being purchased, make sure to key in the correct number (i.e., when using the case UPC and scanning two (2) cases of 24 units, key in '2' and not '48').
4. If issues cannot be resolved after verifying the above, contact the WIC program at 517-335-8935 for additional support.





# ADVERSE ACTION

## Sanctions

WIC vendor sanctions due to [contract](#) non-compliance. They include but are not limited to:

- Warnings.
- The accumulation of violation points.
- Fines and/or civil money penalties.
- Corrective action plans (CAPs).
- Termination of the [WIC Vendor Contract](#).
- Disqualification from WIC Program participation.



## Appeals

If the WIC Program takes adverse action against a vendor, the vendor may have a right to an appeal in the form of an administrative review or hearing. [Appeal rights](#) depend on the reason the action is being taken and, if applicable, the vendor will be notified in a Notice of adverse action letter.

An [administrative review](#) is an appeals process that is solely a review of written documents and does not involve a hearing in front of a judge. An [administrative hearing](#) is a formal proceeding held before an administrative law judge to resolve disputes between a vendor or vendor applicant and the department.

If given the opportunity to appeal, a request for an administrative review or hearing must be received within 21 days, as noted on the notice of adverse action.

## CAPs and CMPs

Per the [WIC Vendor Sanction Schedule](#), the WIC Program may offer vendors a corrective action plan (CAP) in lieu of termination and disqualification for the accumulation of 35 or more violation points.

A CAP outlines requirements for a vendor to establish a pattern of compliance and includes additional monitoring visits during the 90-day assessment period. If the vendor successfully completes the CAP, the Vendor's violation points are reduced to zero (0).

A civil money penalty (CMP) may also be issued as part of a CAP. The CMP amount is calculated using a standard formula based off the vendor's quarterly redemption history.

# BREASTFEEDING

## Breast pumps, flanges, tubing, OH MY!

A parent approaches Customer Service trying to return a breast pump because "it didn't work." What do you do? A shopper in the breast pump supply aisle stops you and says, "There are so many different flange sizes! How do I know which one I should buy?" What do you say?

Many breast pump companies offer more services than we realize. Did you know that a customer could call the manufacturer of their breast pump and request assistance from a lactation consultant? Depending on the pump manufacturer, shoppers may receive advice from a lactation consultant via live chat, virtual appointment, phone call and/or email. These experts can help with pump troubleshooting, ordering a replacement pump, mailing replacement parts to a customer's home, recommending the best fitting flange, and more!

If a shopper voices an issue with the breast pump they purchased from your store, ask if they've reached out to the pump manufacturer for support. If a parent says they didn't have any luck with the pump company, consider asking if they are a WIC participant. Every [WIC agency](#) is staffed with peer counselors and lactation consultants who have been trained on troubleshooting common breast pump issues. When in doubt, refer your customers to lactation experts for advice and support!



# WIC FOOD CORNER

## Recipe: Citrus-glazed carrots

This easy way to spice up WIC-approved vegetables makes a great, healthy side dish to any meal.

TIP: Never feed honey to a child under one year of age. Also be sure to cut carrots into small pieces for young children.

### Ingredients:

- 2 c. sliced fresh carrots (about 4 carrots)\*
- 1 c. orange segments (about 2 oranges) \*
- 1 ½ tsp honey
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp ginger

\* Indicates a WIC-approved food.

### Preparation:

1. Place carrots in a steamer basket, then place steamer basket in a saucepan filled with 1 inch of water.
2. Bring water to a boil, cover, and steam carrots until tender yet crisp.
3. Combine all ingredients in a small saucepan, stirring gently to coat carrots and oranges.
4. Serve warm.

**Serves 4.** Calories 54.3; Protein 1g; Carbohydrate 13.3g; Fat 0.2g; Sodium 118mg; Fiber 2.8g; Calcium 38.4mg; Iron 0.2mg.



## Everfresh orange juice

Despite recent misinformation, Everfresh orange juice still comes in a 64 oz bottle. According to a company spokesperson, there was a temporary pause in production of the product. Production has restarted and Everfresh orange juice in the 64 oz bottle should be making an appearance once again in the inventory of wholesalers, food distributors and supermarkets.



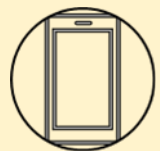
**Use these  
to help  
participants  
find WIC foods**



WIC Shopping List



WIC Food Guide



WIC Connect App

**Share your WIC joy**

Click here to tell us about your positive experiences with WIC.



## 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.



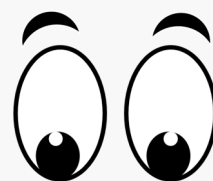
Calls will last one hour and will be hosted via Zoom. The next Quarterly Call is scheduled for **1:00 p.m., Tuesday, July 16**. [Click here to access the meeting](#). We hope you can join us!

## RESOURCES

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

Elliott-Larsen Bldg., 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!

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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