

wic MICHIGAN VENDOR NEWS

Inside This Issue

Program Updates	2
Spotlights	3
Program Compliance	4
Transacting WIC	5
Breastfeeding & Formula	6
WIC Food Corner	7
Training/Resources	8

Information for store owners, managers and cashiers

Summer 2024

Meet Bill Dokianos, new Program Integrity unit manager



Bill Dokianos began serving as Program Integrity unit manager in May. Bill joined the WIC Vendor Relations unit in 2018 where he started as senior analyst assisting with the monitoring of vendors and conducting inventory audits. In 2020, he was transferred to the Program Integrity Unit where he was integral in restarting the Compliance Buy initiative, updating Program Integrity policies and training staff.

Bill has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice with a specialization in security management, and master's degree in law enforcement intelligence and analysis from Michigan State University. Prior to joining WIC, Bill worked in fraud investigations for over 10 years in the private sector for major retailers, which included compliance with federal regulations, supporting multistate organized retail crime investigations, safety and threat response, and internal theft and fraud investigations. Additionally, he worked as a crime analyst for a short time with a local police department supporting the detective bureau and identifying crime trends in surrounding communities. He is excited to be in this new role!

Share your wic joy

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



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

PROGRAM UPDATES

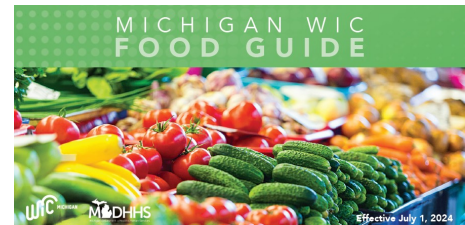
New food packages with more produce \$\$\$



The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently revealed new WIC food packages with a two-year implementation deadline. WIC food packages now align with current dietary guidelines for Americans and recommendations from the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM).

One of the first changes is a permanent increase to the fruit and vegetable cash value benefit (CVB). This means that CVBs will remain at their current elevated monthly level of \$26 for children, \$47 for pregnant and postpartum participants and \$52 for breastfeeding participants.

Coming this summer, new Food Guide available on Michigan.gov/WICfoods.



Open Application Period

WIC Vendor Contracts for all authorized vendors located in the central region will expire on **June 30, 2025**. The Open Application Period for vendors in this region will begin October 1 and run through December 16.

On October 1, applications will be emailed to all currently authorized WIC vendors and any stores on the vendor waitlist located in the central region. These applications are due December 16.

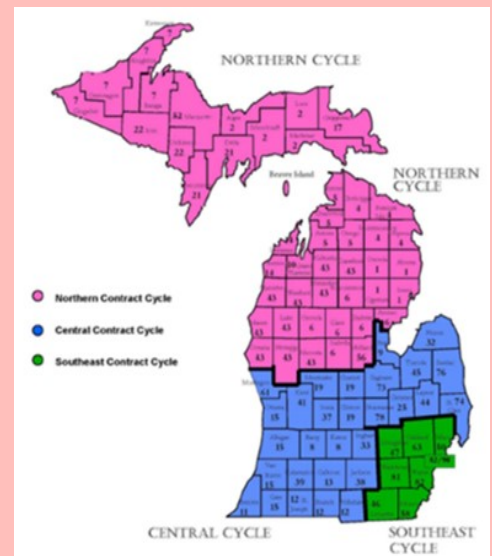
WIC Vendor Applications can also be printed from the [Michigan WIC website](https://Michigan.gov/WIC), as well as mailed to the Vendor upon request. Requests for mailed applications should be sent to MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov or by calling 517-335-8937.

Vendors who are approved in the central region counties will receive a three-year contract valid from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2028. The completed application must be received by the Department no later than 5 p.m. on **Monday, December 16. 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.

Below is a complete list of counties in the central contract cycle:

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



SPOTLIGHTS

Staff spotlight: Joshua Moss



Joshua Moss is the new WIC online shopping project manager. He will play a pivotal role in setting up the online shopping platform for WIC. Joshua started in April and is adjusting to his new role with great enthusiasm. "I like working with the team. We can have fun while we complete our work."

Originally from Michigan, Joshua attended Ferris State. He has previously worked as a coordinator with a software development company, in retail as a manager and as a project manager at an equipment install in Arizona. Joshua also spent time on the issue management team at American Express where he tackled administrative problems.

Having been an admirer of the program for a long time, Joshua is happy to have joined the team. He brings experience in varying capacities and will use that knowledge to drive program change.

Vendor spotlight: Deanna Miscikowski

Deanna is one of the managers and the scanning coordinator of Ebels General Store in Evart. This is a new store for Ebels, with two other locations in Northern Michigan. Deanna has been in the grocery business for more than 23 years and uses this knowledge to help her customers. She has gone above and beyond, utilizing shelf talkers to make the shopping experience easier and more comfortable for WIC clients. The hardest part, Deanna explained, was getting the shelf talkers started. "Then you just have to keep up by checking to make sure nothing drops/falls and add new items," she said. Deanna uses the emails from the state WIC Office and the current food guide to stay up-to-date.

Deanna feels that the store has better, and often times higher, WIC sales because WIC items are clearly marked, improving the customer's shopping convenience.

The Ebels family has been in business since 1920. Each of their stores is WIC authorized. It is always a pleasure to walk into any of the Ebels stores and be greeted with a smile.



2024 WIC Vendor Conference



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!



Don't forget to register for this year's WIC Vendor Conference on Thursday, September 12 at the Sheraton Airport Hotel in Grand Rapids. The theme is *50 Years of WIC, Coming Together for a Better Future*. To this end, we aim to highlight how Vendors come together with local agencies and WIC staff to make a difference for WIC children's futures. Come learn important updates on projects, such as Michigan WIC's online shopping pilot, client shopping experience surveys and modernized training modules. [Click here to register](#). (NOTE: This is not a mandatory event.)

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

PROGRAM COMPLIANCE

Submitting a complaint

Vendors, participants, staff and the general public are able to submit WIC complaints on a variety of issues. Use the appropriate [online complaint portal](#) to submit a complaint on any of the following:

- WIC Vendors – for issues that occurred in-store while shopping for WIC foods.
- WIC Clinics – for issues that occurred with a WIC local agency or clinic.
- WIC Fraud – for suspected fraud or abuse by clients, proxies, or caretakers.
- Other – for any concerns you feel do not fall under the above categories.

Complaints will be sent to the appropriate WIC state staff for follow-up. All information submitted will remain confidential. Make sure to include as much information as possible to ensure the complaint is handled in a timely and effective manner.

Want to share a positive experience instead? Visit our [Share Your WIC Joy page](#).



Training store employees

The [WIC Vendor Contract](#) requires WIC-authorized vendors to designate a staff member who is responsible for internal training and day-to-day administration of WIC at the store. This staff member should oversee informing, training, and updating cashiers and other staff on WIC requirements and ensuring all employees are knowledgeable about WIC procedures. The vendor representative should attend mandatory trainings scheduled by the Department and relay that information by training the staff accordingly.



If the designated vendor representative that received the Department's group or interactive training is no longer affiliated with the store, the vendor must assign a new representative to attend a WIC interactive training as soon as possible. Training opportunities are posted on the [WIC Training page](#). Please note that the WIC Program highly encourages all store employees, managers and cashiers to take the online interactive 10-course training.

Allowing in-store monitoring

As mandated by [federal regulations](#) and the [WIC Vendor Contract](#), Michigan WIC conducts on-site monitoring visits to verify vendor compliance with contract requirements, ensure participants can redeem their benefits, and provide additional training. These monitoring visits are unannounced, and the outcome of the visit is documented on the [Monitoring Visit Report](#). Among other criteria, vendors are selected to be monitored if they are new to the program, if a complaint is made against a vendor, if the vendor has a history of violations and by random selection.

The vendors are required to allow representatives of the Department to monitor the store. It is a violation of the WIC Vendor Contract to refuse entrance or to hinder their ability to monitor a store.



Michigan WIC conducts monitoring visits on approximately 20%, or 280, of its vendors each year. Each member of the monitoring staff is responsible for a particular region of the state.

Once a monitoring case is initiated, it remains open until a vendor has two clean visits in a row or 35+ points are accumulated and adverse action is taken.

TRANSACTIONING WIC



Pricing WIC items

It is important that all WIC vendors are pricing the items they have for sale on the WIC Program. This is a continuing issue with vendors, particularly with infant formula. Per the [WIC Vendor Contract](#), the price you are charging for a WIC item must be on the “package, container, shelf or sign” and clearly visible to the customer. Failure to do so is a violation. Additionally, please ensure that the price in your WIC point of sale (POS) system is the same as the posted price and the price in the store’s general system.

Competitive pricing and cost containment

While inflation is affecting everyone in food retail, from customers buying groceries to store owners selling them, it is important that our vendors maintain prices that promote cost containment. According to the [WIC Vendor Contract](#) (Section IV Item 8), “The Vendor agrees to maintain prices for WIC foods that are competitive, as determined by the department for vendors within a peer group.”

[Peer groups](#) place vendors with similar characteristics into the same group; and are used to calculate the maximum WIC will pay your store for each specific food item; this is called the Not-To-Exceed (NTE) price. NTEs help ensure cost containment and that our program can serve as many clients as possible.

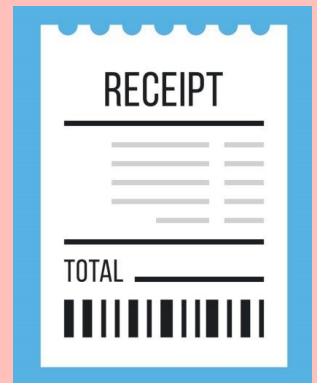
While it is not our role to dictate how to price your items, it is within our scope to remind vendors to be reasonable in pricing items and to be aware of the program’s commitment to cost containment.

Requesting a reimbursement adjustment

The WIC Program requires Vendors to maintain competitive prices within their peer groups, and the program is committed to making sure vendors are reimbursed properly for the foods they sell. However, with the ever changing market, it is difficult to predict when prices will fluctuate.

If you feel that you are not being reimbursed fairly for the WIC foods you are selling, send an email to MDHHS-WICvendor@michigan.gov with the universal product code (UPC), copy of your invoice showing what you paid for the item, and a receipt showing what you charge for it. The program will review each request and determine if adjustments are appropriate.

Failure to include the requested information will make us unable to investigate your request.



Products not transacting?

Is there a product you believe is WIC-authorized, but it is not transacting?
Please do the following:

1. Help the WIC participant find an alternative WIC-approved product.
2. Make sure fresh produce is correctly mapped in your point-of-sale (POS) system.
3. Submit a [UPC Request Form](#) to Michigan WIC.

Making sure all eligible items are clearly labeled as ‘WIC’ can help decrease transaction issues and ensure participants are able to redeem their benefits.



UPC REQUEST				
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services WIC Division				
<small>Instructions: Complete the items in the Vendor Information area. Print or type information, and Fax to 517-325-8259. Questions should be directed to 800-942-1636 for Vendor Assistance. If fax is not available mail to Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Lewis Cass Building – WIC, 320 South Walnut, Lansing, MI 48913.</small>				
<small>Telephone requests will not be allowed.</small>				
VENDOR INFORMATION				
Vendor Name	Vendor WIC Number	Phone Number	Fax Number	
Address		City	Zip Code	
PRODUCT INFORMATION				
Food Item (Example: Milk, Cheese, Tuna, etc.)		Item Price	Package Size (oz)	
Name of Manufacturer				
Food Brand Name				
UPC Code (include all numbers)				
Food Description (Example: Flavor, Type, Added Ingredient, etc.)				
Copy of UPC Code & Label of Food Item Sent (Please Check One) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
Authorized Vendor (Please Print)				
Authorized Vendor Signature				Date
STATE USE ONLY				
Date Received	Received By	Date Reviewed	Reviewed By	
Decision		<input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Not Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Review Pending		
Reason				
Date UPC Entered	Entered By	Category	Sub Category	Vendor Peer Group
<small>The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) does not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, religion, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, genetic information, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political beliefs or disability. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.</small>				
MDHHS-5787 (3-19) 1				

BREASTFEEDING & FORMULA

Breastfeeding myth buster series



Myth: Breastfeeding is painful.

Fact: Many parents experience discomfort in the first few days after delivery when they are learning to breast/chestfeed. Toe-curling breast or nipple pain during feedings is not normal. Much like learning to ride a bike, there may be some uncertainty and a few “falls.” With a few adjustments and a little support, feedings can be relaxing, enjoyable and pain-free!

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



Powdered formula has a shelf life of **18 months**. Please make sure you are removing expired formula from your shelves.

This will ensure both that you are in compliance with contract requirements and that you are helping protect our most vulnerable populations.



Formula supply chain disruption

USDA has notified us of a recent Gerber Supply Chain Disruption that impacted eight WIC State agencies under contract with Gerber. There is currently a limited supply of the contract brand soy-based formula, Gerber Good Start Soy, and their contract brand powder infant formula, Gerber Good Start SoothePro. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has posted official notices to the FNS public webpage which are available [here](#) and [here](#).

The affected states were granted waivers to prescribe WIC participants non-Gerber formulas. While Abbott has ensured us of a healthy supply of Michigan WIC contract formulas, we are asking our Vendors to keep us informed of any shortages they may become aware of.

Thank you in advance for your assistance!



Troubleshooting formula purchases

Having issues transacting or ordering specialty formulas or medical foods for your WIC clients? 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 Approved Products List (APL).)
4. 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 cases of 24 units, key in '2' and not '48').
5. If issues cannot be resolved after verifying the above, contact the WIC program at 517-335-8935 for additional support.

WIC FOOD CORNER

Recipe: Cucumber salad

Cool and refreshing, this cucumber salad is perfect for summer! It can be made in less than 15 minutes and chilled for optimal flavor. Use it to add the ideal amount of crunch and zing to any meal.

Ingredients:

- 2 large cucumbers*, thinly sliced
- 1/3 cup green onions*, minced
- 1/4 cup white vinegar or lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Handful of the herbs of your choice*, chopped



* Indicates a WIC-approved food.

1. Combine all ingredients together in a bowl.
2. Chill and serve.
3. HINT: Add tomato or avocado for a more colorful salad.

Correction: Bimbo is WIC-approved

In the Winter 2023-24 Vendor Newsletter, an article was published informing you that **16 oz Bimbo 100% Whole Wheat bread** was not WIC approved. This was incorrect. While **this product is WIC approved** and has been on the [approved products list](#) (APL) since April 2021, its image was inadvertently left off the most recent [Michigan WIC Food Guide](#). This omission is being corrected and **16 oz Bimbo 100% Whole Wheat bread** will be included in the new food guide to be released later this summer.

If during a recent monitoring visit, you believe your store was inadvertently assigned violation points for stocking Bimbo 100% Whole Wheat bread, please [email the Vendor Relations Unit](#).



More fruit and vegetable options

The WIC program now considers all **fresh cut herbs**, cut at the root or with the root intact, in a consumable form, as an allowable WIC fresh fruit and vegetable. Herb pastes, dried herbs, or spices, as well as potted plants or seeds are not allowed. "Party trays" or platters marketed to a large group, of *only* fresh fruits and/or vegetables **without dips** are also **now allowed** on WIC.

To ensure participants can purchase these new items, we ask that you make sure your APL is up-to-date and manually map any missing UPCs and product look up codes (PLUs). If an item is not scanning, please contact Michigan WIC to get it added to our APL.



Fresh dates and canned green chiles are WIC-approved

Most dates are considered a fresh fruit and are WIC-approved. The only varieties of dates that **are not** considered a fresh fruit, and thus not WIC-approved, are the varieties that are dried or sweetened. Your WIC customers may not yet know they can buy fresh varieties like Medjool dates, so we recommend placing WIC labels or signs nearby to help your customers and increase sales.



WIC customers are always looking for convenient ways to feed their families wholesome meals. Many cuisines, such as Hispanic, make good use of canned ingredients like green chiles. These are good to simply "pop" the top off and "drop" into your cooking. They're great as taco toppers and in soups and enchiladas. Michigan WIC authorizes several varieties of canned green chiles, including popular national brands such as La Preferida, Goya, Old El Paso and Ortega. How will you use them?

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.



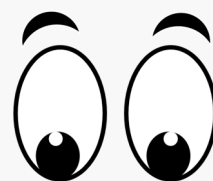
Calls will last one hour and will be hosted via Zoom. The next Quarterly Call is scheduled for **1 p.m., Tuesday, October 15**. [Click here to access the meeting](#). We hope you can join us!

RESOURCES

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

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

Phone: 517-335-8937
Fax: 517-335-9514
Email: MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov
Website: Michigan.gov/WICVendor



[Visit our website](#) for links to lots of helpful documents and resources, including:

- ♦ WIC Vendor Selection Criteria.
- ♦ UPC Request Form.
- ♦ WIC Vendor Complaint Form.
- ♦ WIC Vendor Handbook.
- ♦ Recording of the WIC Vendor Training webcast.
- ♦ WIC Vendor Policy.
- ♦ Copies of the WIC Vendor Contract and associated documents.
- ♦ Minimum Stock Requirements.
- ♦ Previous WIC Vendor Newsletters.
- ♦ And more!

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.