

WIC MICHIGAN VENDOR NEWS

Inside This Issue

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

Information for store owners, managers and cashiers

Spring 2026

A salute to the vendor staff

Just as our vendors play an important role in the successful functioning of the WIC program, state staff and the work they do are key to program operations.

Through authorizing, monitoring, training and ensuring compliance, members of the vendor relations and program integrity team ensure that Michigan's vendor population can effectively provide healthy foods and serve our WIC participants. The team also excels in customer service, using communication, empathy, responsiveness, problem-solving and consistency to build the vendor/state relationship.

A salute is in order to the WIC vendor staff for their hard work and dedication to the program and our vendor partners.



We want to hear from you.

نريد أن نسمع منك.

Queremos escuchar de ti.

CLICK HERE TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS DURING OUR
PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD MARCH 1 - APRIL 30.

Annual public comment period

The annual Michigan WIC public comment period opened March 1 and runs through April 30. This period provides an opportunity for the public to formally comment on any aspect of the WIC program. The WIC Division will then use this feedback to consider program priorities and make improvements. Comments may be submitted via mail, the [online tool](#) or [an email to the WIC outreach mailbox](#).

Miss the deadline? Submit general feedback about the program at anytime [here](#).

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

PROGRAM UPDATES



WIC Vendor+ certification

The Vendor+ certification is an opt-in program that provides vendors with personalized training, materials and in-store assistance focused at improving the WIC shopping experience. While the second round of pilot visits wraps up, we are excited to announce next steps for the project.

1. *Vendor+ website.* The website highlights authorized vendors that have successfully completed their Vendor+ certification and ways they have Improved WIC operations in their stores. The website can be used by clients to identify stores in their area that are committed to helping participants shop.
2. *Online application.* The Vendor+ website also includes a link for interested stores to apply for certification. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and selection will take place based on application quality and staff capacity. We hope you apply!



2026 WIC vendor conference

Save the date for the annual WIC vendor conference on Wednesday, Sept. 9 to “Level Up Your WIC Game.” This year’s conference will be held at the Crystal Mountain Resort located in Thompsonville, MI. We are excited to share program advancements and how vendors like you continue to elevate the WIC program around the state.

NOTE: This event fulfills the federal training requirement; however, it is not a mandatory event.

LEVEL UP
Your WIC Game



2026 WIC VENDOR CONFERENCE

Southeast contract cycle updates



The open application period (OAP) for the southeast contract cycle closed on Dec. 15. 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 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 are listed as the individual that is authorized to sign a contract for the store.

All new contracts have the option for e-signature. 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.

New food guide and minimum stock requirements

Michigan WIC recently published a new [food guide](#) (effective March 1) and [minimum stock requirements](#) (effective April 1).

These were mailed to authorized vendors along with a description of changes and [new food handouts](#) to help stores identify changes and newly approved foods. Please make sure you are updating your inventory and product labeling accordingly.

Reach out to the [Vendor Relations Unit](#) with any questions.



SPOTLIGHTS

Vendor spotlight: Jen Timmer of Price Cutter



Jen Timmer is the general manager of the popular WIC-authorized vendor Price Cutter, located on 28th Street in southeast Grand Rapids. Price Cutter has been Timmer's primary stop in a long career with grocery stores. When describing Price Cutter she said, "This store has been in business for 25 years with the same owner. It's a well-known market and in a great location." Not only does Price Cutter have an on-site bakery and offer a large variety of produce, meats and canned foods, they also have digital coupons, a mobile app and services like online ordering with curbside pickup or delivery. Its great assortment of WIC-approved foods keeps customers coming back.

Timmer acknowledged the impact of the WIC program: "It's been a very good experience. We get lots of clients on WIC buying frozen fruits and vegetables. Also, fresh produce is popular as well." Further adding: "It's a great program. It helps lots of families and moms." She also knows what times of the month to expect higher EBT traffic: "It's busier on the weekends. Food stamp (SNAP) days are busy for both WIC and SNAP. Three, five, seven. Every odd day through the 21st of the month is when we get our clients in store. Every day is a different day though. Not one day is ever exactly the same as the last."



Staff spotlight: Kristen Hanulcik

Kristen Hanulcik serves as the Michigan WIC Nutrition Program and Evaluation section manager and holds the role of State WIC Nutrition Coordinator. A registered dietitian with a master's degree in public administration, she brings both nutrition expertise and strategic leadership to the program.

Kristen influences policy and supports the delivery of key services across local WIC agencies, including nutrition assessment, nutrition education, breastfeeding support and health and community referrals. Her responsibilities also extend to food authorization, staff training, local agency monitoring, compliance activities and statewide outreach efforts.

This year marks Kristen's 20th anniversary with Michigan WIC. Throughout her tenure, she has embraced the opportunity to lead within a progressive team on several statewide initiatives. Examples include transitioning to a more client-centered service model and operationalizing multiple updates to the WIC food package. She also served on the core team responsible for modernizing WIC technology, helping set the stage for electronic benefit transfer (EBT) implementation.

Kristen is passionate about the power of nutrition to shape lifelong health outcomes, especially for the Michigan residents who rely on WIC services. Reflecting on her work, she noted, "It is a privilege to collaborate with the dynamic and talented State WIC team as we work to strengthen the client experience and support long-term well-being for families." She adds that hearing positive client testimonials remains one of the most rewarding parts of her role.

As Kristen reflects on two decades of service, she also offered the following message for WIC vendors: "WIC is proud to share its successes with vendors across the state, whose role in supporting positive client outcomes cannot be overstated. As essential partners in the WIC network, vendors can help improve benefit utilization, enhance client satisfaction and assist with program retention, contributions that directly strengthen Michigan families."



TRANSACTIONS AND TRAINING

New cashier training on WICwise

Last year, Michigan WIC launched [WICwise](#), our new online vendor training platform, and the base **WIC Vendor Training**, which allows vendors to complete the federally mandated training requirement more easily than ever.

This year, we introduce a supplemental **Cashier Training** specifically for cashiers. Instead of focusing on policy and compliance, this training is meant to help front end employees, old and new, become more comfortable with transacting WIC and troubleshooting common errors. It even includes short “how-to” videos based on several actual store checkout systems. In coming years, we plan to add even more examples to the course.

The course takes less than an hour and cashiers receive their own certificate of completion. If you need help sending invites to your employees using WICwise’s management suite, send us an email at MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov.

Lesson Categories



WIC Vendor Training Course



Cashier Training

What to do for reduced payments

If you find that WIC reimbursements are not keeping rate with market costs, you can submit documentation to our office. Please send pictures of your WIC receipts (with the price adjustment) and your purchase invoices to MDHHSWICVendor@Michigan.gov.

Michigan WIC will use these documents as part of the larger body of evidence to inform payment adjustments for your store and not-to-exceed (NTE) prices as a whole. The sooner you tell us, the sooner we can prevent further issues for you and stores across the state.



How you transact WIC matters

Before becoming a WIC vendor, stores should decide what type of point-of-sale (POS) system they would like to use, stand-beside or integrated.



Stand-beside devices are separate from your existing cash register and require vendors to transact WIC separately from other purchases. In Michigan, all WIC stand-beside devices are Verifones and must be rented from FIS, our electronic benefit transfer (EBT) contractor.

Integrated systems allow you to transact WIC using your existing cash register and participants can mix WIC items with non-WIC items at checkout (i.e., a mixed-basket transaction). However, you must choose a [system certified by Michigan WIC](#).

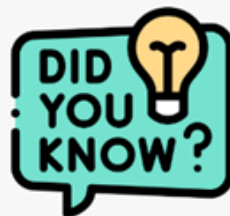
If your store would like to go integrated, continue using your stand-beside device until your new system is installed and working. Then, send your stand-beside device back to FIS.

Training your staff

Avoid violation points by training store employees on WIC program requirements. Make sure you keep records of internal trainings and can provide them to WIC staff when asked.

In addition to on-the-job training, we recommend sharing the [quarterly newsletter](#), inviting staff to attend the [quarterly vendor calls](#) and encouraging staff to take the online vendor and cashier training courses at [WICwise.org](#). You can also request an in-person training at your store by emailing MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov.

Pro tip: An easy way to keep track of staff trainings is to print completion certificates directly from [WICwise](#) and keep them with your other WIC materials.



359 vendors have completed the new vendor training at [WICwise.org](#).

VENDOR COMPLIANCE

Policy points Q&A: vendor sanctions

1. **True or False:** Infant formula must be purchased from wholesalers, distributors and retailers licensed with the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD) or from infant formula manufacturers registered with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Answer: True. Failure to do so may result in termination of your WIC Vendor Contract.

2. **Multiple Choice:** Which of the following state agency sanctions may be applied after a vendor accumulates 35 or more administrative violation points?

- a.) Termination of the WIC Vendor Contract.
- b.) Denial of a WIC Vendor Application.
- c.) One-year disqualification.
- d.) Reciprocal SNAP disqualification; and/or Immediate disablement of a vendor's POS device.
- e.) All of the above.

Answer: e.) All of the above

3. **Minimum Stock Matching:** Match the Food Group to the Correct Quantity.

1. Vegetables	a. 4 units (1 unit = 32 oz)
2. Bread	b. 4 varieties, at least 2 fresh (\$20 retail value or 15 lbs.)
3. Infant fruits and vegetables	c. 10 units, at least 2 flavors
4. Juice	d. 72 units, at least 1 variety of fruit and 1 variety of vegetable (1 unit = 4 oz.)
5. Yogurt	e. 4 units, any size package

Answer: 1.b., 2.e., 3.d., 4.c., 5.a.

Vendor responsibilities

Vendors play an important role in the delivery of healthy foods to our WIC participants. Because of this, Vendors also have responsibilities, as outlined by the [WIC Vendor Contract](#), they must fulfill to keep things working. These include, but are not limited to:

- A clear understanding of and adherence to the [WIC Vendor Contract](#) and [Michigan WIC Vendor Policy](#).
- Accountability for all actions of employees and store representatives.
- Notifying the State WIC office of any change in ownership, location or store closure.
- Always maintaining [minimum stock](#).
- Verifying foods are authorized for purchase and selling only WIC-approved foods in the amounts specified by the WIC point-of-sale (POS) device.
- Not restricting WIC purchases.

Pro tips

Check back each issue for more pro tips to help you be a successful WIC vendor.

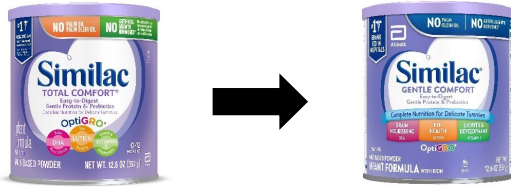
1. **PLU Mapping.** PLU mapping is the process by which universal product codes (UPCs) and store-specific product lookup codes (PLUs) are linked to WIC-eligible PLUs. PLU mapping is a necessary step for clients to redeem many fresh produce items. To help with PLU mapping, you can find a [list of WIC-eligible PLUs](#) as well as a [PLU mapping guide](#) on the [Michigan WIC website](#).
2. **WIC promotional materials.** Did you know that you can order WIC door signs and other promotional materials [directly from our website](#)? Michigan WIC provides our Vendors with engaging tools to attract WIC customers and to help promote successful WIC sales at your store. Our door signs feature bright colors with a crisp design that catches your customers attention.



FORMULA AND BREASTFEEDING

Similac Total Comfort name change

Beginning in April, Similac Total Comfort's name was changed to **Similac Gentle Comfort**. While the labels have changed, the size, UPC and formulation remains the same. Please be aware that this product can still be purchased with WIC formula benefits.



Ordering formula

Did you know that ordering specialty formula is a contract requirement for all WIC pharmacies and grocers with a pharmacy?



It does not matter if you are a big box store or a mom-and-pop shop; if you do not have the specialty formula in stock at the time of request, it must be ordered and available for pick-up by the participant within **two (2) business days**.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Is it okay to prop baby's bottle?

The short answer is no. It may seem like propping your baby's bottle is a great way to multitask, but not only do you miss out on prime bonding time during feeding, bottle propping also has a number of risks.

1. **Aspiration.** This is when food or drink goes into the lungs (instead of the stomach). It can lead to chest infections and hospitalization.
2. **Choking.** Oftentimes choking is silent, so you may not notice your baby is choking. If your baby's bottle is propped they cannot control the flow of liquid.
3. **Suffocation.** When you prop a bottle using pillows, rolled up blankets or other soft items, it increases the risk of suffocation because those items fall over your baby's face and they may not be able to move them.
4. **Ear infections.** Propping your baby's bottle, especially if they are laying flat makes your baby more likely to get ear infections. Milk and bacteria can collect at the opening of the eustachian tubes and cause infection.
5. **Under or over eating.** If you prop your baby's bottle, it can easily fall out of the baby's mouth before they are full. Alternatively, if your baby can't push the bottle out of their mouth, they will drink more than they need.
6. **Tooth decay.** When a baby is drinking a propped bottle, especially if laying flat, milk can pool at the back of the mouth. As that mixes with the baby's saliva it can turn acidic, which will cause tooth decay.

Adapted from CPCAN (Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect).

Breastfeeding myth busters

MYTH: Don't breastfeed if you are sick, you can pass it to your baby.

FACT: When you get sick with a cold, flu or infection, your body makes antibodies, or germ fighters, to help fight whatever bacteria or virus is making you ill. These germs do not pass through your breastmilk, but the antibodies do. And so breastfeeding while you are not feeling well works to help protect your baby from becoming sick. If you switch to formula when you are not feeling well, your baby won't get those antibodies that help protect them.



Adapted from breastmilkcounts.com.

WIC FOOD CORNER

Avocado chicken pesto wraps

Homemade pesto adds a flavorful twist to a delicious wrap. Pesto is a popular Italian spread that combines nuts, parmesan cheese, garlic and fresh basil. With this recipe, you can make your own pesto in under 30 minutes. Finish off your wrap with creamy avocado, crunchy greens and savory chicken for a tasty lunch or dinner.



Pesto ingredients:

- ¼ cup walnut halves or pieces.
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled.
- ¼ cup grated parmesan cheese.
- ¼ teaspoon salt.
- 1 cup packed fresh basil leaves, stems removed.*
- ⅓ cup olive oil.

Pesto Preparation:

- Add walnuts, garlic, parmesan and salt to a food processor. Pulse or grind into a thick paste.
- Add basil and olive oil. Blend for 30 seconds or until just combined. Scrape sides of food processor as needed.

Wrap ingredients:

- 4 whole wheat tortillas.*
- 2 cups cooked chicken, shredded or chopped.
- 2 cups packed greens (such as baby spinach, romaine or arugula).*
- 1 large tomato, sliced.*
- 1 large avocado, sliced.*
- Prepared pesto.

Wrap Preparation:

- Gently heat a tortilla for 10 seconds in a pan or microwave.
- Remove from heat and spread 1 tablespoon of pesto onto the warmed tortilla.
- Add ½ cup chicken, ½ cup greens and several slices of tomato and avocado to the tortilla. Add more pesto, if desired.
- Gently roll the tortilla into a wrap and cut in half.
- Repeat steps 1-4 to make remaining wraps.

Recipe Tips

- For a nut-free version of pesto, replace walnuts with ¼ cup roasted sunflower seeds.
- Pesto pairs well with many other recipes. Make a double batch to try with pasta, pizza, roasted veggies and more.
- Don't have basil? Try making pesto with parsley, cilantro, mint, radish or carrot greens for a flavorful twist.

* indicates a WIC-approved food.

V8 Spicy Hot 100% vegetable juice

V8 spicy hot 100% vegetable juice is WIC-approved, along with the standard and low-sodium V8 vegetable juices. Be sure to mark all three products with WIC shelf talkers to help avoid participant confusion.



However, remember that labeling non-WIC items as WIC-approved is a violation of the [WIC Vendor Contract](#). The [Michigan WIC Food Guide](#) and the scan feature on the WIC Connect mobile app are both useful tools for ensuring accurate product labeling.

Known transaction issues

Whole Fat Yogurt

Issue: Whole fat yogurt cannot be redeemed in the same transaction as low fat yogurt.

Solution: **Families must purchase whole fat yogurt first, in a separate transaction.** Buying low fat yogurt first will deplete the shared benefit and prevent whole fat yogurt redemption.

Nut/Seed Butter

Issue: Dried and canned beans and peas are being deducted from the nut/seed butter benefit instead of the peanut butter benefit.

Solution: **Families must purchase the full benefit of nut/seed first, in a separate transaction from beans and peas.**

Corn meal – one authorized UPC

PAN Whole Grain White Cornmeal (35.27 oz) is the only corn meal that is currently WIC-authorized. **Corn masa flour** is another WIC-approved corn product that may be more readily available.

ONLINE TRAINING

Need to complete your federally required training? The Learning Management System (LMS) has been replaced with the new [WICwise](#) platform.

Visit [WICwise](#) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to complete the five-lesson WIC Vendor Training 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

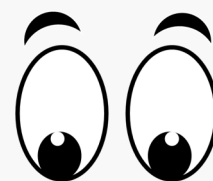
Please join us for our regularly scheduled **Quarterly Vendor Calls**. These calls will provide vendors an opportunity to:

- 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, July. 14.** [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

- ◆ 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.
USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.