

wic MICHIGAN VENDOR NEWS

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Information for Store Owners, Managers and Cashiers

Spring 2022

Dear Vendor,

Spring is here and the start of so many new beginnings. As we put away our winter gear and snow equipment, I am excited to welcome warmer weather with hope and optimism for the future.

This winter has been very busy and challenging for our WIC team. We continue to seek out opportunities to meet the needs of our WIC families. Our collaboration with WIC Vendors has been amazing and your efforts allow us to continually improve service to our WIC participants. I remain positive about our future together delivering important services, and am grateful for our valued WIC Vendors who remain committed partners in the Michigan WIC Program.



You will find a lot of great information in this newsletter about important initiatives and program changes, including transacting WIC, the formula recall, and upcoming events, and more. As always, please remember to check your email periodically for important WIC program updates and other information that may impact your WIC contractual requirements.

As we work together to bring important services to WIC families, please feel free to contact us with your questions or concerns. Thank you for all you do!

Sincerely,

Kimberly Keilen

Section Manager—Vendor Relations & Program Integrity

THANK YOU VENDORS!

You, the Vendors, are the most important fuels in our engine. You are not dependent on us; we are dependent on you. You are not an outsider in our business – you are an integral part of it.

Staff with the Michigan WIC Program wish to thank you for standing alongside us as we continue to serve WIC families across the state. We are both humbled and grateful for your passion and dedication. We couldn't do it without you!



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



WIC PROGRAM Federal Regulations require that state agencies ensure that the public has an opportunity to provide comment on development of the WIC Program State Plan of Operations.

The Michigan Department of Health & Human Services will accept written comments regarding the operation of the WIC Program in Michigan between March 1, 2022 and April 30, 2022. Comments may be related to any aspect of the operation of the WIC Program in Michigan. These comments will assist the Department to constructively review WIC operations and make improvements in the operation of the WIC Program in Michigan.

Comments should be mailed to:

**WIC Division
Michigan Department of Health & Human Services
Elliott-Larsen Building
320 S. Walnut
Lansing, MI 48933**

or emailed to [WIC Outreach](#)

Please visit the [WIC Vendor website](#) to find a copy of this statement in [Spanish](#) and [Arabic](#).

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [How to File a Complaint](#), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Published March 1, 2022

PROGRAM HAPPENINGS

Vendor Conference Fall 2022

Please join us **September 8** for our first in-person WIC Vendor Conference since 2019 at the Doubletree in Dearborn!

And remember, participating in this conference counts toward your federal training requirement. Watch for additional details and registration information. We look forward to seeing you in-person again!



Quarterly Vendor Calls

Michigan WIC is excited to announce the launch of our new **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.



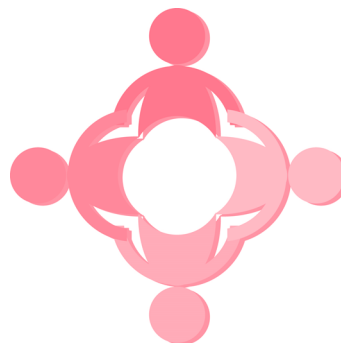
Calls will last one hour and will be hosted via Zoom. The first Quarterly Call is scheduled for **2:30 p.m., Monday, April 4**. [Click here to access the meeting](#).

We hope you can join us!

Vendor Advisory Council Updates

We are excited to announce that the following WIC Vendors have been selected to serve on Michigan WIC's inaugural 2022 Vendor Advisory Council (VAC):

- Walmart Co.
- Meijer Co.
- Walgreens Co.
- Bryan's Supermarket – North Branch
- Dearborn Fresh Supermarket - Dearborn
- Jim's Jubilee Foods – Ishpeming
- Quick Pic Party Store III – Flint
- Supermercado La Victoria – Wyoming
- Supermercado Michoacan – Grand Rapids



To celebrate the launch of the VAC, Michigan WIC held a **virtual kick-off meeting** on Monday, February 7. The event was opened by WIC Director Christina-Herring Johnson and brought together state staff and a diverse group of Vendors with representation from stores of different sizes from around the state. Our VAC members have a wide range of experience serving Michigan WIC participants, from 3-20 years, and most agreed their favorite thing about being a WIC Vendor was helping WIC participants.

During the discussion, VAC members shared their interests in serving on the VAC and identified key issues they would like to address on the council. Katherine Groble, VAC co-chair, also presented results from the Vendor survey that went out in January 2022 addressing COVID and the supply chain (a summary of the results can be found on [page 8](#)).

Following the kick-off meeting, the first regularly scheduled biannual council meeting was held **Monday, March 7**. During the meeting, state updates were provided by Dawn Pline, Vendor Relations Unit Manager. The council then discussed its strategic objectives, Vendor policy and the in-person fall Vendor conference, and more.

Michigan WIC would like to thank the VAC for their leadership and commitment to move this important initiative forward and looks forward to partnering with our WIC Vendors to better serve all WIC children and families in Michigan. If your store is interested in becoming a member of the VAC, please complete and send in the [VAC application](#). Our next meeting will be held **Monday, October 3 at 2:30 pm**.

VENDOR COMPLIANCE

Monitoring Visits

Due to supply chain issues and infant formula shortages, the WIC Program temporarily suspended on-site monitoring visits to give our Vendors the opportunity to adjust to the delays and to stock items on their shelves. However, the Vendor Relations Unit will resume monitoring visits on **May 1**. In preparation for this, we want to remind Vendors of their contractual responsibilities to:

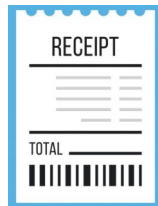


- Have minimum stock in the store at all times;
- Make sure all WIC-approved items are priced at all times;
- Remove all outdated, expired, and spoiled items from shelves; and
- Enter and update all prices in point-of-sale (POS) devices so that the shelf price matches the scanned price.

Preserving Thermal Paper Receipts

A few friendly reminders for preserving thermal paper receipts include:

- Storing receipts away from light and in a dark place with low humidity and temperatures below 77°F.
- Placing receipts in a protective container (i.e., folder, acid free envelope), and **avoid** storing receipts in plastic sleeves.
- Use a pencil to mark your folders/envelopes because many ink pens are water-soluble and could bleed on records making it illegible.
- Be careful not to over-pack a folder/envelope, as receipts/records may become folded or bent.
- A fold or bend in paper becomes permanent, and over time cannot maintain its original integrity.



Record Keeping & Infant Formula

Michigan WIC is aware of varied Vendor store policies on infant formula returns, exchanges, and refunds as they pertain to the voluntary recall of certain Abbott Powder Formulas (Similac, Alimentum, EleCare on February 17, and Similac PM 60/40 on February 28, 2022, respectively).

WIC-authorized Vendors are reminded that the recall **does not change requirements** to maintain invoices and purchase receipts for WIC food items equal to the type and volume of WIC foods and/or infant formula redeemed. Receipts must be maintained for a **minimum of three years**.

Expanding Inventory Audits

MDHHS is vigilant about the integrity of its WIC program. The Program Integrity Unit (PIU) plays a contributing role in WIC monitoring and oversight and pays close attention to Vendor practices and redemption patterns.



Most recently, the PIU has expanded the scope of inventory audits to include legible copies of original invoices, purchase receipts and/or inventory records for all WIC-approved **one (1) gallon, and one-half (1/2) gallon of whole milk, skim (fat free milk), 1/2%, 1% (low fat milk), and 2% (reduced fat milk)**.

Please remember, the WIC Program has the authority to audit the records **for ALL** WIC-approved food items.

Compliance Buys

Undercover compliance buys are still ongoing in the state of Michigan. Make sure your staff is trained on how to process WIC transactions. Common violations found during compliance buys include WIC food items not being priced or priced incorrectly, substituting WIC-approved foods for foods that are not WIC-approved, asking clients for their PIN, and refusing the sale of a product on a WIC client's shopping list.

Always defer to the point-of-sale (POS) system to determine if something is WIC-approved and whether or not a client has benefits available for the item, as some **food benefit options have been expanded** due to the pandemic and formula recall.

It is important for all staff to be properly trained as the compliance buys are performed year-round and any Vendor may receive one.

TRANSACTIONING WIC

Steps for Conducting a WIC Transaction

Whether you are new to the WIC program or an experienced Vendor, it is always good to review WIC transaction procedures. Please remember that training your employees on WIC transactions and policies is a contractual requirement.



1. WIC participant, or authorized representative, shops at an authorized WIC Vendor.
2. Participant proceeds to checkout lane and identifies the form of tender as WIC.
3. Cashier swipes WIC card and prints benefit balance.
4. All items are scanned in the POS device. (Exception: fresh fruits and vegetables for stand-beside devices.)
5. The cashier hits the key to tender the transaction as WIC.
6. The participant approves the transaction, and the items are debited off their WIC EBT card.
7. The cashier completes the transaction.

How to Use Coupons

A coupon is a certificate for a product that is exchanged for a reduction in price. On the FIS stand-beside device, however, the coupon feature may be used to apply **any discount or special**. Understanding this function is important as WIC participants are federally required to receive all discounts available to non-WIC customers.



Follow the steps below to enter coupons using an FIS stand-beside device:

1. WIC customer presents a coupon.
2. After all WIC items have been scanned and Cash Value Benefit (CVB) fruit/vegetable items have been entered into the system, press **F1** (Yes) (if the customer does not have a coupon, press **F2** (No) to skip this step).
3. Enter the coupon amount and press **ENTER** after each coupon is entered.
4. After all the coupon amounts have been entered, press **F1** (Total).
5. Press **F1** (Yes) to complete the transaction.
6. The discount will appear on the receipt.

If you experience any challenges or have any questions regarding discounts, you may [email the WIC Vendor Relations Unit](#).

Guidelines for WIC Vendors

We would like to remind Vendors of a few guidelines when dealing with WIC customers:

1. Treat all customers, regardless of WIC status, equally and with respect.
2. The participant must have their physical card at the time of the transaction. The card number may only be entered manually if it is not scanning.
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.
6. Give the participant the opportunity to review and/or cancel the transaction before debiting the items off their WIC EBT Card.
7. Make sure to give the participant their final receipt showing the items purchased and the ending balance.



WIC FORMULA

Abbott Recall: Expanded Formula Choices

Effective March 9, 2022, the Michigan WIC Program has **further expanded powder formula options for our WIC families** in response to the Abbott formula recall.

Please keep in mind that depending on the size purchased, **one or two cans** of Similac formula will be removed from a WIC participant's benefit balance. See the ['Temporary Choices for Powder Formula' chart](#) for guidance on replacement formula options. We suggest you print this chart and post it near the formula shelving aisle in your store to assist WIC families in selecting the appropriate replacement formula(s).

Tips for Transacting Expanded Formula Choices

Michigan WIC is aware that there is some confusion, for both Vendors and clients, when it comes to redeeming the expanded formula choices. Below, we've provided some useful tips to improve this process for all.

Tip 1: Never tell a WIC participant that they cannot redeem a specific formula; but rather allow your point-of-sale (POS) system make the determination as to whether a formula is allowable.

Tip 2: Post the ['Temporary Choices' chart](#) in your formula aisle to assist WIC clients with selecting the appropriate replacement formula based on their benefits. For example, a client prescribed Similac for Spit-Up 12.5 oz powder, can redeem their benefits for any of the formulas shown to the right (see image below).

Tip 3: Remember to regularly download the current Approved Product List (APL) file to capture any newly added UPCs.

Tip 4: Keep a copy of the ['Temporary Choices' chart](#) at all checkout lanes to reference and assist WIC families with selecting available formula options if the item(s) they selected are not scanning.

Similac for Spit-Up 12.5 oz powder can  UPC: 070074509600	Enfamil A.R. 12.9 oz powder can  UPC: 300870201423 Counts as 1 can	Enfamil A.R. 27.4 oz powder can  UPC: 300875126424 Counts as 2 cans	Enfamil A.R. 30.4 oz powder refill pack  UPC: 300875100967 Counts as 2 cans	Parent's Choice AR (Walmart) 32.2 oz powder can  UPC: 681131130776 Counts as 2 cans
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Returning Recalled Formula

Please see guidance below for the return process of recalled formula, organized by Vendor type and how you purchased your Similac brand formula.

Chain Supermarkets who Purchase Directly from Abbott

Abbott sent Product Return instructions to all authorized chains who purchase directly from Abbott. Abbott instructed all corporate chain headquarters to work directly with your Abbott representative for any questions pertaining to the return or exchange process.

Vendors who Purchase Formula from Wholesalers

As previously communicated, for Vendors who purchase directly from a wholesaler or distributor, you will want to reach out to them to determine if they can assist with the return process. We are aware of wholesalers who are working with their retailers in taking back recalled product.

Vendors who do not Purchase Formula from Abbott or Wholesalers Directly

Abbott has advised Vendors who do not purchase directly from Abbott or buy from wholesalers to return product to the retailer where product was purchased. Abbott also added an additional option where Vendors may return product included in the recall directly to Abbott via ABF Freight System. Vendors must [email ABF's Return Authorization and Proof of Purchase office](#).

We appreciate everything being done in our communities to ensure that our WIC families have access to formula. For reference, view the ['Temporary Choices' chart](#) for a listing of the expanded formulas with UPCs.

EBT INFO

Check Out The New ebtEDGE Web Page

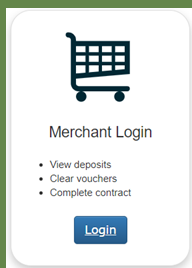
Michigan's EBT Contractor FIS has updated the [ebtEDGE website](#). The website shows you important details such as dates, times, and transaction payments. Here is a brief guide for those of you who want to get started tracking your sales and confirming WIC payments for your business.

Step 1: Go to [ebtedge.com](#).

Step 2: Click on Merchant Login (see image at right).

Step 3: Click on [Register online now](#).

Step 4: Answer the questions and follow the steps. If you have any questions, you may call FIS for assistance at 1-800-894-0050.



Vendor Peer Groups

In June, 2021, Michigan WIC revised its criteria for assigning Vendor peer groups and calculating Not-to-Exceed (NTE) maximum prices. Notable changes include the following:

- Peer group criteria includes Vendor type, number of registers and chain status. Geographic designation within the state no longer affects one's peer group assignment.
- The total number of peer groups was reduced from 19 to 7.
- NTE prices are now calculated by peer group based on a statewide average, by UPC.

The Michigan WIC Program continues to receive feedback from Vendors regarding NTEs and is actively reviewing these changes to ensure that prices are set up in a way that both contains costs and makes sense for your business. If you have any questions regarding these changes, please [email the Vendor Relations Unit](#) or call us at 517-335-8937.

Damaged WIC Cards

During a recent WIC Vendor training, the program was asked to give further guidance regarding the acceptance of damaged cards. We understand that these bar codes can wear down and become unreadable with use. It is still essential that you are only conducting WIC transactions for customers that present a physical card that has not been altered. Here are some tips to share with store clerks:

Tip 1: If the barcode is damaged, you may manually enter the number printed on the card.

Tip 2: If the number is illegible or handwritten with ink, do not manually enter the written number. That card number could be for any person's card. Refer them to request a new card.

Tip 3: If the number on the card is illegible, do not accept someone verbally telling you the card number. Refer them to request a new card.

Tip 4: The customer may call the phone number on the back of the card to request a new one, or go to their WIC clinic and get a new card the same day.



WIC EBT Cards Left in Store

If a customer leaves their WIC EBT card in your store, please contact the phone number on the back of the EBT card to report it lost. Reporting a lost card cuts off the WIC participant's access to their benefits and the participant will have to order a new card.

If the card belongs to a repeat customer you are familiar with, you may also try to contact the customer to return the card to them. We ask that you exercise your judgment to best help your customers.

However, keep in mind that it is not a good idea to keep cards at your store for an extended period of time and that encouraging WIC participants to use their benefits exclusively at your store is a violation of your WIC Vendor Contract.

MISCELLANEOUS

Vendor Survey Results

As always, thank you to the 221 Vendors who responded to the Vendor survey sent out in January. Your responses allowed us to learn more about continuing supply chain issues posed by COVID and other concerns facing Vendors. Please see an overview of Vendor responses below:

- Fifty-six percent of respondents said they are not having any difficulty sourcing WIC-approved foods (not including formula) and only 98% of respondents cited the use of quantity limits on select products.
- The top four foods that respondents reported were hardest to source were cereal (31%), whole grains (28%), infant fruits and vegetables, and juice (both 22%).
- Sixty percent of respondents cited experiencing staffing shortages and the most common strategies used to combat this problem were working overtime (67%), increasing staff pay and/or benefits (50%), and cross training (42%).

Thank you again for your responses and please know that we value and listen to your feedback.

Staff Spotlight: Renee Verbeke

Renee Verbeke has been a Vendor Relations Unit Analyst for the State of Michigan WIC Program for 2.5 years. She has an associate's degree in Early Childhood Education-Special Needs and a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education. Renee truly enjoys her job with WIC and combines her education, work experience and enthusiasm into her daily work with Vendors across the state.

During her 18+ years with the State of Michigan, Renee has worked in many positions including: Dept. Analyst with the MI Health Link program, clerical support for Medical Exceptions, a caseworker in Genesee County, clerical work in Genesee, Wayne, and Oakland counties, and a resident care aide at Oakdale Regional Center in Lapeer County. She also serves on the board for her local Outreach Pantry and volunteers with veterans in need.



Renee is one of four field analysts that completes Preauthorization Visits for new Vendors, monitors and assists current Vendors, and is always ready to help where needed. As a senior analyst in the Vendor Relations Unit, Renee monitors Vendors for program compliance statewide. Renee enjoys working with WIC Vendors across the state by providing needed training and hands-on support that helps meet the needs of WIC families. Renee's passion for her work shines through in her daily interactions with Vendors.

Formula Purchase Requirements

The Michigan WIC Program requires that all WIC-authorized Vendors **MUST** only purchase infant formula from wholesalers, distributors, retailers and/or manufacturers **licensed** by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (**MDARD**), the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (**LARA**), or the Food and Drug Administration (**FDA**).

This requirement also applies to all **online purchases**. Keep in mind that just because a seller is listed on Amazon or Wal-Mart's website does not mean that they have a food license. It is your responsibility to check who is selling the food item on their platform and whether they have an active food license.

Tip 1: Check the "sold by" information on the online retailer's platform. Be cautious to purchase food or formula from sellers other than the platform host (Amazon or Wal-Mart).

Tip 2: Check if the seller is on the regularly updated [list of MDARD-licensed retailers](#) on the [WIC Vendor website](#) under the 'WIC Formulas and Medical Foods' tab.

Tip 3: Always maintain purchase records for any item that can be purchased using WIC benefits. Keep your purchase records for **at least three years**, regardless of whether it is an online purchase, or in-person.

Tip 4: When in doubt, contact the WIC office. We can help you understand whether a seller is properly licensed or not.

WIC FOOD CORNER

Tips for Stocking Whole Grain Cereals

Per the [Minimum Stock Requirements](#), WIC Vendors must have at least **three varieties** of whole grain cereals in their store at all times. In fact, having whole grain cereal available is a federal requirement. WIC promotes cereals made with whole grains as they are a good source of fiber and offer numerous health benefits.

Below are some tips to make it easier to recognize and stock whole grain options.

Tip 1: In the Cold and Hot Cereal sections of the [WIC Food Guide](#), look for the **whole grain symbol** (at right).



Tip 2: Look out for varieties of WIC-Approved Cereals that are made with **whole grain**. Examples include **ALL** Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats, Post Grape Nuts and Great Grains and Quaker Life and Oatmeal Squares.

Tip 3: Many **store-brand** cereals are whole grain options as well. See the [WIC Food Guide](#) for more details.

Eggs

WIC-approved eggs are eggs of any size, **white shells only**, in a one dozen package. They may be cage free. The required minimum stock for WIC-approved eggs is five (5) units (one (1) unit = 1 dozen eggs), which you must have available in your store at all times.

Please note, the following types of eggs ARE NOT WIC-approved:

- Organic
- Brown
- Free range or pasture raised
- Grain, grass or vegetarian fed
- Low cholesterol
- Pasteurized
- Eggs fortified/enriched with omega-3 DHA or vitamin E



Beans—no LARD

The Michigan WIC Program would like to extend a friendly reminder that canned beans **cannot have any added oils or fats**. There are some canned beans or refried beans that contain "lard," which is an animal fat. These canned beans with lard **are not** WIC-approved.



Hearty and Healthy Breakfast Tacos

Ingredients

- 4 soft corn tortillas 5-in. diameter*
- 4 eggs*, beaten
- 1 cup cooked or canned black beans*, no salt added
- ½ avocado*, sliced
- 1 cup tomato*, chopped
- ½ red onion*, chopped
- ½ cup fresh cilantro leaves*, chopped (optional)

*indicates WIC-approved food



Directions

1. Warm the tortillas in a non-stick skillet over medium heat.
2. Set aside and keep warm. Coat skillet with non-stick spray.
3. Pour in the eggs and stir with a heat-safe spatula until cooked.
4. Put the black beans in a microwave-safe bowl. Cover and heat on high for about 11 and a half minutes, or until just warm.
5. Top each tortilla with the eggs, beans, avocado, tomato, onion and the chopped cilantro (optional).
6. Serve open-faced or folded over.

Makes 4 servings : Each serving provides 230 calories, 12 grams protein, 26 grams carbohydrate, 8.5 grams fat, 148 milligrams sodium, and 6 grams fiber.

UPCOMING TRAININGS

As a reminder, all WIC-authorized Vendors—including Pharmacy Vendors—are required to participate in one interactive training each Contract Cycle (i.e., **once every three years**). Below is the upcoming webcast training schedule for grocer and pharmacy Vendors.

GROCER VENDORS

Apr. 12 at 2 p.m.

PHARMACY VENDORS

Apr. 26 at 2 p.m.

If your store requires a training, you will be sent an invitation via email. Vendors may also participate in trainings more frequently as desired. This is suggested when there is a new manager or staff turnover. To register, please visit [Vendor Webcasts and Trainings website](#).

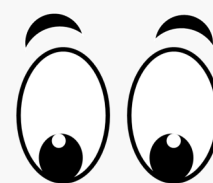


If you would like to know the date of your most recent training or would like more information regarding registration for these events, please [email the Vendor Relations Unit](#) or call us at **517-355-8937**.

A recorded version of the [WIC Vendor Training](#) and the [WIC Pharmacy Training](#) can also be viewed at any time on the [WIC Vendor website](#).

We will soon have training videos available for Vendors to view and stay updated on the WIC program.

RESOURCES



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

Elliott-Larsen Bldg., 6th 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 will not exclude from participation in, deny benefits of, or discriminate against any individual or group because of race, sex, religion, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, gender, identification or expression, sexual orientation, partisan considerations, or a disability or genetic information that is unrelated to the person's eligibility.