

WIC MICHIGAN VENDOR NEWS

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Information for Store Owners, Managers, and Cashiers

Winter 2020/2021

To All of Our Dedicated WIC-Authorized Vendors,

As Director of the Michigan WIC Program, I want to simply say **'thank you!'**

As you all know, our year started out as any other year. But in early March, we soon found ourselves in the midst of a worldwide pandemic that produced much fear and uncertainty for all of us... and, rightfully so. The global coronavirus outbreak created hardship, pain and suffering for individuals, families, and businesses alike. We heard from you; and we listened. We allowed Vendors who were hard-hit by the pandemic to temporarily close to ensure the safety of employees and customers. We suspended our normal monitoring activities and expanded WIC food options.

Throughout it all, you persevered; and you were there for our WIC clients and families when they needed you the most. I am happy to report that based on a recent Vendor survey conducted in late summer, 65 percent of respondents reported that things had improved since the start of COVID; and 68% reported having no current stocking issues. Though we do not know what the future holds with this worldwide public health emergency, one thing we do know is that we are here to support you. As partners in bringing healthy and nutritious foods to our WIC families, we must lean on each other to get the job done! As the year comes to a close, let us remain hopeful and optimistic that better days lie ahead.

I wish you and your families a very safe, happy and healthy holiday season. On behalf of the entire WIC Program staff, thank you for all you continue to do for our WIC families. We look forward to working with you in the New Year!

Christina Herring-Johnson
WIC Division Director



Email Communications

As a reminder, all communications to Vendors are now being sent electronically. This includes warning and violation letters, policy updates, newsletters, and WIC Vendor Contracts. Please make sure to check email regularly and respond to communications in a timely manner. If you believe you are not receiving WIC-related emails, please call (517) 335-8917 to ensure we have the correct email on file for your store.

Please email MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov or call 517-335-8937 with all questions and input.

REGIONAL VENDOR FORUMS

Thank you to all the Vendors that participated in our first ever virtual **Regional Vendor Forum** for Upper Peninsula Vendors on October 14th. We appreciate all of your ideas and feedback; from creating marketing materials for use at the register to learning about problems some of you are having with your integrated software providers. We hope you found the dialogue as fruitful as we did!

As a reminder, the purpose of these online forums is to give you, the Vendors, an opportunity to ask questions and join us in a discussion around your experience as a WIC Vendor and ways to improve the WIC Program.

Vendor feedback is important to us and we know that Vendors from different areas of the state have different perspectives and needs. We hope you join us for your region's forum (dates below). Additional registration information will be sent to Vendors via email. You can also register by visiting <https://miwicevents.com/vendor-webcasts-trainings/>.



Northern Vendors
Central Vendors
Western Vendors
Southeast Vendors
Southwest Vendors

December 9, 1-3 p.m.
February 17, 1-3 p.m.
April 14, 1-3 p.m.
June 16, 1-3 p.m.
August 11, 1-3 p.m.

STAND-ALONE POS DEVICES

As per **Public Law 113-79** of the 2014 Farm Bill, authorized WIC Vendors are required to pay for their own stand-alone point-of-sale (POS) devices:

...the Secretary shall require participating retail food stores (including restaurants participating in a State option restaurant program intended to serve the elderly, disabled, and homeless) to pay 100 percent of the costs of acquiring, and arrange for the implementation of, electronic benefit transfer point-of-sale equipment and supplies, including related services.

As such, Vendors currently using state-funded stand-alone WIC POS devices provided by Conduent will be required to return these devices and obtain a new POS device from the company of their choosing. Please do not return your device to Conduent until you have a new POS device set up and functioning properly.



Your store will be contacted individually with more information regarding next steps and the return of your current POS equipment. Please note, if you are a Vendor serving a client access need you may still qualify for state-funded equipment and will be notified of this status by the Department.

To read more about the 2014 Farm Bill, visit <https://www.congress.gov/113/plaws/publ79/PLAW-113publ79.pdf>. Please contact the Vendor Relations Unit at 517-335-8937 or via email at MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov with questions.

REMINDER: If there is a broken or unused stand-alone point-of-sale device in your store, it is the Vendor's responsibility to contact Conduent at 1-888-529-1693 to arrange for the replacement and/or return of the POS equipment.

APPROVED FOOD UPDATES

Canned and Frozen Fruits & Vegetables

On June 1, 2020, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables became eligible for purchase with the same cash-value benefit (CVB) used to buy fresh fruits and vegetables.

When transacting CVBs, please keep in mind the following:



1. Vendors **should** scan the UPC for **frozen/canned fruits and vegetables** when conducting a WIC transaction.
2. Vendors **should not** scan the UPC for **fresh fruits and vegetables** and should instead use the actual PLU or **PLU #44691** for fresh produce.
3. The **Split Tender Policy** applies to both fresh and frozen/canned fruits and vegetables. CVBs will be charged and the client should be allowed to pay any remaining costs for WIC-approved fruits and vegetables with an alternate form of tender.

| Michigan Department of Health and Human Services WIC Division UPC Request Form | | |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| <small>Instructions: Complete the items in the Vendor Information area. Print or type information, and Fax to: (517) 335-9206. Questions should be directed to 1-800-942-7639 for Vendor Assistance. If fax not available mail to: MDHHS, Lewis Cass Bldg - WIC, 320 S Walnut, Lansing, MI 48913. Telephone requests will not be allowed.</small> | | |
| Vendor Information | | |
| Vendor Name: | Vendor WIC Number: | |
| Address: | Phone Number: | |
| City: | ZIP Code: | Fax Number: |
| Product Information | | |
| Food Item: <small>Example: Milk (cheese, yogurt, etc.)</small> | 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: YES NO (Please Circle one) | | |
| Authorized Vendor: (PLEASE PRINT) | | |
| Authorized Vendor Signature: | Date: | |
| STATE USE ONLY | | |
| Date Received: | Received By: | |
| Date Reviewed: | Reviewed By: | |
| Decision: | Approved | Not Approved |
| Reason: | Review Pending | |
| Date UPC Entered: | Entered By: | |
| Category: | Sub Category: | Vendor Peer Group: |
| <small>This institution is an equal opportunity provider</small> | | |

Adding Additional UPCs

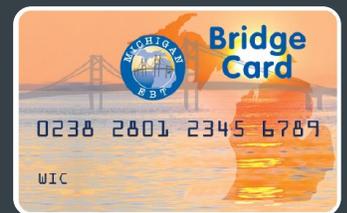
Michigan WIC added thousands of UPCs when this expansion was launched, but we are aware there may be additional eligible UPCs that have not yet been identified. Please know the Michigan WIC Program continues to evaluate new foods for authorization. Vendors may submit additional WIC food item requests for consideration by using the **UPC Request Form** found on our website at Michigan.gov/WICVendor.

If you think that a product might be eligible, please complete and fax a UPC Request Form to 517-335-9206 or email the request to MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov. Please include any relevant product labels and nutritional information.

HELPFUL REMINDERS

- ◆ Remember to keep the required minimum stock in your store at all times. If you run out of an item before the scheduled delivery, you **MUST** supplement your stock from another source. The **WIC Required Minimum Stock** sheet can be found on our website at Michigan.gov/WICVendor.
- ◆ Besides maintaining minimum stock; please stock as many WIC food items as possible from the Approved Product List (APL). This ensures that clients have options and are able to find the items they need when they shop at your store.

- ◆ Please **DO NOT** cover product expiration dates with price stickers. Both WIC staff and clients should be able to easily find this information.



- ◆ Remember, WIC and SNAP cards look very similar. If a client is having trouble with a transaction, please confirm they are using the correct card. Additionally, a WIC card should always be scanned first to ensure the eligible benefits are correctly debited.

OPEN APPLICATION PERIOD

for Northern Contract Cycle

The application deadline for current Vendors and Waitlist stores in Northern Michigan is December 14, 2020. As a reminder, applications received after the due date WILL NOT be accepted for consideration during the Open Application Period (OAP). Below are some of the most asked questions the Michigan WIC Program receives during OAP.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I am not a WIC-authorized Vendor but would like to be, how do I get an application?

A: Please send the WIC Vendor Relations unit a completed **WIC Vendor Application**. This form can be found on our website at [Michigan.gov/WICVendor](https://www.michigan.gov/WICVendor). The website also has additional information about program requirements and becoming a WIC Vendor.

Q: I am already a WIC-authorized Vendor and I received an email with a WIC Vendor Application. Do I need to complete this application?

A: Yes, the contract cycle for Northern Michigan ends June 30, 2021 and the new 3-year contract cycle begins July 1, 2021. If you would like to continue offering WIC to customers in your store you will need to complete the application and send it back on or before **MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2020**.

Q: Who do I contact if I have additional questions about how to complete my WIC Vendor Application?

A: Please call the WIC Vendor Relations mainline at 517-335-8937 or email the WIC Vendor Relations mailbox at MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov.

Q: Do I need to complete all the questions on the WIC Vendor Application?

A: Yes, leaving questions blank is considered an incomplete application and may result in denial based on an incomplete application.

Q: Where can I find the Minimum Stock Requirements form?

A: The Minimum Stock Requirements form can be found on our website at [Michigan.gov/WICVendor](https://www.michigan.gov/WICVendor). Scroll down to the section labeled 'Minimum Stock Requirements and WIC Vendor Monitoring Visit Report.'

Q: I don't understand Question 16c, which states: Do you expect more than 50% of your annual food sales will come from WIC sales?

A: This question is asking you to compare your WIC sales to your total annual food sales. The Michigan WIC program cannot approve Vendors whose WIC sales exceed 50% of their overall annual food sales. For example, if last year a Vendor sold \$500,000 worth of food, but over \$250,000 of those sales were due to WIC, a Vendor would answer YES and would not be eligible for a WIC Vendor Contract.

Q: Where do I mail my completed WIC Vendor Application?

A: Please email MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov, fax 517-335-9514, or mail the WIC Vendor Application to the following address:

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
Elliott-Larsen Building - 6th Floor
WIC Vendor Relations Unit
320 S. Walnut Lansing, MI 48913



SUMMER EBT FOR CHILDREN



Thank You Vendors!

Michigan WIC and the Michigan Department of Education would like to thank all the Vendors that participated in, and processed EBT transactions for, the Summer EBT for Children (SEBTC) program. SEBTC served families eligible for free or reduced-price school meals in 38 counties and allowed them to redeem their SEBTC benefits for nutritious foods during the 2020 summer months.

Numbers worth celebrating

As SEBTC partners, your assistance has been invaluable in making this program a success. Review the transaction data at the right for a closer look at SEBTC redemptions around the state.

Because of your help, **a total of 108,910 SEBTC transactions** redeemed **\$2,000,947 in SEBTC benefits** around the state.

Looking Ahead

If you responded to the WIC Vendor survey regarding SEBTC, thank you! The feedback you provided will help shape SEBTC moving forward. SEBTC will continue for the summer of 2021. The identified service areas will be announced in the upcoming Spring newsletter.

| Category | Redeemed Amount |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Fruits and Vegetables | \$659,139 |
| Cheese | \$379,325 |
| Milk | \$347,148 |
| Cereal | \$274,143 |
| Legumes | \$165,621 |
| Whole Grains | \$153,733 |
| Eggs | \$98,855 |

SEBTC Vendor Survey Results

Thank you to all the Vendors that responded to our SEBTC Vendor Survey, the purpose of which was to understand Vendor experiences with the program this past summer and learn how to better prepare Vendors for SEBTC next year.

Survey results indicate that the majority of Vendors felt confident in their understanding of the SEBTC Program and SEBTC-approved foods. The most common challenges cited included:

- ◆ Transaction issues when using WIC and SEBTC cards in the same transaction;
- ◆ Lack of client understanding around their benefits and approved food items;
- ◆ Clients waiting until the last minute to redeem all of their summer benefits at once;
- ◆ Client trouble activating cards; and
- ◆ Items not scanning or UPCs not recognized in the system.

Suggestions to improve SEBTC next year included:

- ◆ Improving client training around benefits and approved foods;
- ◆ Requiring clients to redeem their benefits on a monthly basis, with no roll-over;
- ◆ Sending out training materials and informing participating clients/Vendors earlier in the year;
- ◆ Providing Vendors with educational materials for clients to handout in-store;
- ◆ Development of an SEBTC mobile application; and
- ◆ Extending the program to cover school breaks and holidays.



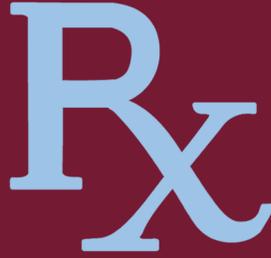
Reminder!

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards look similar. If there is a transaction error, please check to make sure that the client is scanning the correct card. As a general rule of thumb, the client should scan their WIC EBT card first, followed by their SNAP, SEBTC or other form of tender to ensure the eligible benefits are correctly debited.

INFO FOR PHARMACY VENDORS

Pharmacy Quick Facts

- ◆ Pharmacy Vendors may only accept WIC benefits for infant, child, and adult **formula or nutritionals**. Other WIC foods (milk, cheese, juice, etc.) may not be redeemed at a stand-alone WIC-authorized pharmacy.
- ◆ Pharmacy Vendors are required to carry **minimum stock** of the contract infant formulas, i.e. 12 cans total of Enfamil Infant and/or Gentlease.
- ◆ Pharmacy Vendors ARE NOT required to carry stock for ALL WIC-approved formulas. However, they must order them when requested to do so by a WIC client.
- ◆ Pharmacy Vendors are required to **split cases**, as WIC clients are not prescribed formula based on case quantity.
- ◆ All currently WIC-approved formulas can be found on the **Michigan WIC Authorized Formulas** list on the WIC Vendor website at Michigan.gov/WICVendor.



Ordering WIC Formulas

1. Check the client shopping list, benefit balance or WIC Connect Mobile app for **benefit expiration date, quantity and product description**.
2. Pay special attention to the **product name, size, variety, and container type**.
3. Refer to the **Michigan WIC Authorized Formulas list** to verify authorized products.
4. Look up the product using both **individual and case UPCs**.
5. Call the client's **local clinic** or the **DuJour Helpline** (1-800-942-1636) if you are unable to identify the correct product.
6. Formulas and medical foods should be available for pick-up by clients within **2 business days** of order placement.

FORMULA PURCHASE REQUIREMENTS

The Michigan WIC Program requires that all WIC authorized Vendors **MUST** only purchase infant formula from wholesalers, distributors, and retailers **licensed** by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) or from infant formula manufacturers registered with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This requirement also applies to all **online purchases**.

MDARD is available to answer any questions as to whether a wholesaler, distributor, or retailer is properly licensed or general questions you may have regarding licensing requirements and procedures. You may contact MDARD in a variety of ways:

- Contact by phone: **1-800-292-3939**
- Contact by e-mail: mda-info@michigan.gov
- General website: Michigan.gov/MDARD



Additionally, you can find the licensure status of any Michigan wholesaler or retailer on their website at <https://aca3.accela.com/MDARD/Default.aspx>.

For a list of FDA-approved formula manufacturers, please visit our website at Michigan.gov/WICVendor.

If you are unable to confirm FDA/MDARD licensure status or have any questions regarding this requirement, please call the WIC Vendor Relations Unit at **517-335-8937**.

WIC FOOD CORNER

January is National Slow Cooker Month!

Warm up the dark cold winter months by using your slow cooker or Crock Pot to create simple, delicious meals.

Benefits of slow cookers include:

- ◆ Time saving and convenient—just throw your ingredients in and come back to a hot meal!
- ◆ Extended cooking times increase flavor
- ◆ Low temperatures mean less burnt food
- ◆ Inexpensive or tougher meats become tender with long cooking times
- ◆ Easy clean up with just one pot
- ◆ Travels well for family events

Try the recipe to the right, or experiment with some of your own. Enjoy!

Onion Soup Beef Pot Roast

Ingredients

- ◆ 3-4 lbs. chuck roast
- ◆ 2 c. baby carrots*
- ◆ 2 lbs. potatoes cut into 2-inch chunks*
- ◆ 1 yellow onion cut into wedges*
- ◆ 2 (10 oz.) cans condensed cream of mushroom soup
- ◆ 1 1/2 c. water
- ◆ 1 (1-oz.) packet dry onion soup mix

*Designates a WIC-approved food item



Directions

Center roast in the pot of your slow cooker. Line the sides with the carrots, potatoes and onion. Combine the canned soup, water and dry soup mix. Pour the soup mixture over the meat and vegetables. Cook on low 8 to 10 hours or on high for about 3 to 4 hours until the meat and vegetables become tender. Serve with the juices and enjoy.

Makes four to six servings.

Recipe from The Spruce Eats

'Tis the Season for Cranberries

With the holidays upon us, don't forget the pleasures of the cranberry. Grown in bogs throughout the northern United States, the cranberry is a Native American wetland fruit which produces berries on trailing vines like strawberries. In modern day, cranberries are prepared and served in a variety of ways, including fresh, dried, as a sauce, and as juice.

Cranberries are nutrient-dense and have many health benefits. Current research indicates that 10 ounces of cranberry juice daily provides bacteria-blocking benefits that ward off urinary tract infections, ulcers, and gum disease. Fresh and frozen cranberries, as well as some varieties of cranberry juice are WIC-approved!

While cranberries are delicious by themselves, they can also be a main ingredient in many specialty foods and holiday treats, such as the cranberry sauce recipe below. Try it at home and remember to keep eating those cranberries!



Homemade Cranberry Sauce

1. In a saucepan, combine sugar (1 c.), water (1 c.) and bring to a boil.
2. Add fresh cranberries (4 c.) and return to a boil.
3. Lower heat and simmer for 10 minutes or until most of the cranberries have burst.
4. Add mix-ins if desired. Suggestions include orange zest, chopped pecans, raisins and holiday spices.
5. Let cool at room temperature, then transfer to a bowl and chill in the fridge.
6. Serve with your favorite holiday foods!

Recipe from Simply Recipes

FY 2021 TRAINING SCHEDULE

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 FY 2021.

GROCER VENDORS

Dec. 8 @ 2 p.m.
Mar. 9 @ 2 p.m.
June 8 @ 2 p.m.
Sept. 7 @ 2 p.m.

PHARMACY VENDORS

Dec. 15 @ 2 p.m.
Mar. 16 @ 2 p.m.
June 15 @ 2 p.m.
Sept. 14 @ 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 other staff turnover. To register, please visit <https://miwicevents.com/vendor-webcasts-trainings/>.

If you would like to know the date of your most recent training or would like more information regarding registration for these events, please contact the **Vendor Relations Unit** at **517-355-8937** or by email at MDHHS-WICVendor@michigan.gov.

A **recorded version** of the training webcast can also be viewed at any time online at Michigan.gov/WICVendor.

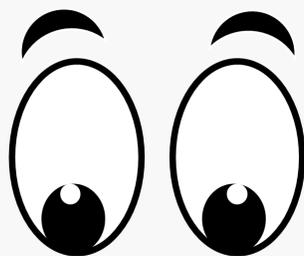
RESOURCES

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

Elliott-Larsen Bldg., 6th Fl.
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
- ◆ A recording of the WIC Vendor Training webcast
- ◆ Copies of the WIC Vendor Contract and associated documents
- ◆ Minimum Stock Requirements
- ◆ Previous WIC Vendor Newsletters
- ◆ And more!

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