

ANNUAL TRAINING NEWSLETTER

Vendor Management Unit 350 Capitol Street, Room 515 Charleston, WV 25301 | **PHONE:** 304-558-1115



IMPORTANT DEADLINE

Response required by September 15, 2023.

A management representative from each authorized WIC Retailer is required to certify that they have read the entire **Annual Training Newsletter**. This mandatory training is required in order for a store to retain its WIC Authorization and accept WIC benefits.

REQUIRED ACTIONS

Per United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), federal regulation 246.12e, each WIC-authorized store has to designate a manager or representative to complete and verify training annually.

To verify the 2023 Vendor Annual training:

1. Read this newsletter in its entirety.
2. Acknowledge that you have completed your annual training. Go to <https://forms.gle/hRyPWidYgzPT4r1X8> or click [here](#) to complete the survey.
3. Share this newsletter with other store personnel (i.e., cashiers, bookkeepers, and customer service managers).

Please complete training and submit survey by **September 15, 2023.**

You may also print this newsletter, post a copy in a central location, and include a copy in your Vendor Handbook for future reference.

This newsletter can be an additional resource and training tool for cashier and staff training.

The West Virginia Women, Infants & Children Program (WV WIC) is required to offer annual training to WIC Authorized Vendors. The information in this newsletter covers the following required elements set forth in the federal regulations:

- Program Purpose
- Formula Sources
- Complaint Process
- Vendor Eligibility Criteria
- Conducting eWIC Transactions
- Sanction System
- Authorized Foods
- Cashier Guidelines
- Incentive Items
- Minimum Stock Requirements
- Claims Process
- Program Changes



PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

WIC was established in 1974 with services aiming to prevent serious nutrition problems and to improve the overall health status of pregnant, breastfeeding, postpartum women and infants, and children up to age five. WIC is for families: married and single parents, working or not working, receiving other types of aid, or not participating in any other programs. WV WIC is funded through the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), and is administered by the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health, Office of Nutrition Services.

VENDOR ELIGIBILITY

The WV WIC Program accepts new vendor applications on a rolling, continuous basis. Eligibility requirements include:

- being authorized by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- suitable hours of operation which are visibly posted and adhered to;
- obtaining and maintaining inventory that meets minimum stock requirements; and
- being in good standing with Workforce West Virginia and Workers' Compensation.

REAUTHORIZATION

Once every three years, WV WIC accepts reauthorization applications to authorize WIC vendors with adequate history of compliance during previous agreement periods.

Vendor participation agreements are not transferrable. If you acquire another store, you must apply for WIC authorization at each location. Likewise, should you sell your store, the privilege to conduct WIC business does not transfer to the new owner.

PEER GROUPS

For cost-containment purposes, federal regulations require WIC vendors to be organized into peer groups.

The assigned Vendor Peer Group influences the maximum allowable redemption rate (not to exceed price) your store may charge for individual food items. The “not to exceed” price applied to WIC purchases at your store will be fair and equitable since this price is derived from a peer group of stores which are the same store type and business model. Vendor Peer Group review occurs annually.

AUTHORIZED FOODS

WIC authorized foods offer a wide variety of products intended to help WIC participants meet their nutritional goals. The **WV WIC Approved Shopping Guide** outlines food items authorized for purchase with WIC benefits.

This in-store tool is intended to assist customers and cashiers with understanding of permitted and prohibited WIC products to support a smooth shopping experience and transaction. The shopping guide is provided in both English and Spanish. A copy of the WIC Approved Shopping Guide must be at each register in your store for quick reference during WIC transactions.

Additional copies may be requested by calling the Vendor Management Unit at 304-558-1115.





MINIMUM STOCK

Minimum varieties and quantities of authorized WIC foods are required of all authorized and applicant vendors. The inability to obtain, or continue to maintain, minimum stock requirements in any food category may result in reauthorization denial and/or a sanction. When signing a Vendor Agreement, the store agrees to keep shelves stocked or have products immediately available on-site to satisfy minimum stock requirements. The specific brands, package sizes, and quantities required are outlined in the [Vendor Handbook](#). WIC approved foods must be located in areas readily accessible to WIC participants or within the stocking area; outdated food will not be counted toward minimum stock requirements. If the store does not have the required minimum stock, the discrepancy must be corrected within 72 hours of request by the WV WIC Program or WIC participant. Stores may request minimum stock exemptions per policy 8.11 found on our website <http://dhhr.wv.gov/WIC>.

eWIC TRANSACTIONS

While stores utilizing a stand-alone point of sale (POS) device do not experience difficulty with mixed basket transactions (e.g., WIC items combined with purchase of other items), integrated stores are unable to inform participants if the eWIC benefit balance is insufficient, or if

product substitution has occurred, until all items have been scanned. Hence, it is important to provide the first receipt printed from an integrated system. This is intended to advise the participant of items which will be deducted from their WIC benefits PRIOR to approving the transaction. Participants must be offered all receipts that print from the register and POS device. All systems must allow participants to pay the difference for Cash Value Benefits (CVB) using another form of payment (cash, SNAP, or credit). If an item is not approved when scanned, check the Approved Product List (APL). Integrated stores have 48 hours to apply an APL file to their system once released from the WV WIC Program.

Stores with stand-alone POS devices receive automatic APL updates as long as the machine maintains an internet connection. Vendors may not provide refunds or permit WIC participants to exchange WIC foods for unauthorized items. However, exchanges may be granted for defective or spoiled foods purchased with WIC benefits by replacement with an identical food.

CASHIER GUIDELINES

Acceptable Courtesies for Cashiers

- allow cents off,
- buy one get one free (BOGO),
- store loyalty cards, or
- discounted items if allowed for other customers.

Unacceptable Courtesies for Cashiers

- requesting any form of identification,
- maintaining separate checkout lines for WIC participants, or
- offering rain checks.





CLAIMS PROCESS

Any time there is a question about a WIC transaction, the WV WIC Program may delay payment to the vendor for any redemptions deemed questionable. If an investigation reveals a violation has occurred after the vendor has received payment for WIC transactions, the WV WIC Program can establish a claim to recover the dollar amount paid to that vendor. Sanctions can also accompany this action, as well as monetary fines.

COMPLAINTS

The WIC Program's success is based on the partnership among the State WIC Agency, local WIC clinics, WIC participants, and authorized WIC vendors. The Program expects both participants and store personnel to treat each other with respect and dignity. Participants may file complaints against stores when treated rudely or denied a product which is available for purchase with their eWIC benefits. Likewise, authorized WIC vendors have the right to file complaints against WIC participants who treat store personnel inappropriately, knowingly attempt fraud, or abuse WIC benefits.

If you wish to make a complaint, you may contact via phone or email to: your local WIC clinic; the Vendor Management Unit; or complete and fax, mail or email the complaint form located on the WV WIC website or in the Vendor Handbook. All reports of abuse and/or complaints should be made within 10 days after the incident. The complaint will be discussed with the participant and appropriate actions taken to resolve the concern. Buying, selling or otherwise misusing WIC benefits is a crime.

To report suspected abuse, call 800-424-9121 or visit www.usda.gov/oig/hotline.htm.



SANCTIONS

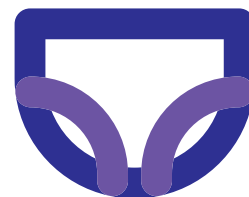
Stores that commit violations of WIC Program policies and procedures, federal regulations, state statutes, or the Vendor Agreement shall be sanctioned, resulting in warning letters, mandatory retraining, administrative fines, or civil money penalty, termination of the agreement, or disqualification. Vendor violations may be intentional or unintentional. Owners, operators, and store managers are responsible for any and all violations conducted by store employees during WIC transactions.

The WV WIC Program may refer vendors who commit WIC fraud and/or abuse to federal, state, or local authorities as well as to SNAP. The WIC Program has two levels of violations: state sanctions and federal sanctions. Any authorized WIC Vendor disqualified or suspended from SNAP will be automatically terminated from the WIC Program without the right for an appeal. Otherwise, you have the right to appeal a sanction or disqualification decision by requesting hearing or pre-hearing conference within 15 days of notification of the decision.

INCENTIVE ITEMS

WIC Participants may not be singled out or offered incentives such as cash, gifts, or free items. Incentives offered to WIC participants must be offered to all customers, have a nominal value of less than \$2.00, and must be approved by the WV WIC Program.





INFANT FORMULA SUPPLIER

All authorized WIC Vendors are required to purchase infant formula from a WV WIC approved supplier. The WV WIC Approved Wholesaler/Distributor Listing is available at <http://dhhr.wv.gov/WIC>. The purchase of WIC approved infant formula from a non-approved source may result in termination of the WIC agreement. You must notify the WV WIC Program at least 30 days prior to changing your primary supplier of WIC approved formula. If your store wishes to utilize a supplier that is not included on the WV WIC approved listing, please contact the Vendor Management Unit at 304-558-1115.

PROGRAM CHANGES

VENDOR PORTAL

The vendor portal is a website which provides an entry point to the vendor record maintained by the WV WIC Office. The portal creates a paperless application process and online access for record updates (i.e., change in manager, address, etc.) The vendor portal can be accessed at <https://www.wicvendor.wvdhhr.org>. If you do not have a login for the portal, contact the Vendor Unit and you will be assigned a user name and temporary password. Corporate level accounts can also be assigned so that owners of multiple stores can view them all in one place. Printed Reference Guides for the portal are available upon request or an electronic version can also be requested by contacting the Vendor Unit at 304-558-1115 or dhhrwicvu@wv.gov.

DOCUSIGN

To further advance the paperless application process, the Vendor Unit has begun rolling out the use of DocuSign, an electronic signature platform, for Vendor Agreements. Instead of receiving a paper agreement requiring a wet signature, vendors will now receive an email with a link from which they can review and digitally sign the document. Once complete, the agreement is automatically emailed back to the State Office.

Vendors with limited internet and email access can still request a paper agreement by contacting the Vendor Unit at 304-558-1115 or dhhrwicvu@wv.gov. This feature will become available to each region during their next reauthorization period.



ANNUAL TRAINING NEWSLETTER

Vendor Management Unit

350 Capitol Street, Room 515 Charleston, WV 25301 | **PHONE:** 304-558-1115

USDA NDS

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter

addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or
2. fax:
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email:
Program.Intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

