

8.02 Local Agency Responsibilities

POLICY:

Local Agency personnel play an important role in the relationship between WIC participants, retailers and the local WIC Program. The Local Agency Vendor Liaison is the primary contact between the Local WIC Program and the retailer.

Each Local Agency will designate a vendor liaison and provide at least quarterly opportunities for direct relationship building with authorized vendors.

The Local Agency Vendor Liaison assists the State WIC Vendor Management Unit in carrying out the vendor management policies and procedures in a fair and consistent manner.

An effective Vendor Liaison:

1. Welcomes comments and input from the WIC retailers and participants;
2. Responds in a timely fashion to vendor questions, concerns and problems;
3. Serves as the local WIC community contact for retailers;
4. Markets the WIC Program through retailer relationships;
5. Serves as the local WIC agency contact for participant shopping and/or retailer complaints;
6. Partners with retailers, and contributes to local agency nutrition education plans, to improve participant benefit redemption;
7. Assists the State Agency with participant access assessments, and in addressing potential access issues within the Local Agency;
8. Fosters a cooperative spirit with the WIC retail community; and
9. Maintains WIC Program integrity through carrying out vendor policies and procedures as directed.

PROCEDURE:

A. Local Agency Vendor Liaison

1. A Local Agency Vendor Liaison will be designated for the Local Agency.

B. Local Agency Vendor Liaison Training Meetings

1. Training meetings for Local Agency Vendor Liaisons are scheduled at least annually by the State Agency Vendor Management Coordinator. The meetings are usually scheduled during September but may also be necessary at other times.

C. Vendor Education Materials

1. The Local Agency Vendor Liaison will keep a copy of the Vendor Handbook and other Vendor information sent by the State Agency for reference to Program information that is supplied to the Vendors.
2. The Vendor Liaison should provide or partner with the State Agency to ensure effective vendor training to Local WIC employees in accordance to the state vendor

8.02 Local Agency Responsibilities

training materials. Information highlighted in the WIC'r Basket Newsletter should be shared quarterly with all WIC personnel.

D. Authorized Vendor List

The State Agency will send a monthly update regarding active, authorized vendors electronically to the Local Agency Vendor Liaison. This update will outline Vendor additions and closures. An electronic list of authorized vendors will be made available to all WIC clinic sites via <https://dhhr.wv.gov/WIC/Pages/storesearch.aspx> and the Crossroads MIS report "Authorized Vendor Listing".

The Local Vendor Liaison will advise each Local Agency WIC clinic of any changes in the monthly vendor listing by maintaining and distributing an agency and/or regional Vendor List. The vendor lists will be distributed to WIC participants, as necessary. The participant may receive a list of vendors by county, region or the entire state. The listing must be in the format outlined in **Attachment #1** to include Vendor name, physical address, phone number, eWIC capability (i.e. integrated or Point-of-Sale device), and if alternate shopping options are available (i.e. self-checkout, scan and go, etc.). Community resources offered on the listing must include County DHHR Office and/or website; www.wvinroads.org; physicians or clinics offering EPSDT, prenatal care and immunizations; Head Start; Right From the Start; homeless facilities; other food assistance services; and behavioral health centers with substance abuse services.

The Local Agency Vendor Liaison is responsible for updating the agency and/or regional Vendor List as needed with retailer changes. However, at least an annual review by January 15th of the active fiscal year will occur to ensure community resource information is up to date.

The Local Agency Vendor Liaison shall notify the State Agency immediately of retail location closures, change in ownership, destruction, inability to accept or process eWIC, or any other issues of non-compliance with the West Virginia WIC Vendor Agreement.

E. Education of WIC Participants

1. Educated participants and caretakers may be less likely to make mistakes or intentional errors when they are informed that Program abuse committed by them may result in the termination of their benefits (see **Policy 3.12 Parent/Guardian Two (2), Caretaker, and Proxy Authorization**).
2. WIC personnel will verbally instruct the participant, parent, or caretaker during each certification appointment of the correct use of food benefits, the **WIC- Approved Shopping Guide (WIC-09)** and the eWIC benefit card.

F. Questions and Comments/Complaints

8.02 Local Agency Responsibilities

1. Vendor questions must be directed to the State Agency unless the question can be easily answered by the Local Agency Vendor Liaison or other Local Agency staff (i.e., whether a certain cheese is allowed).
2. The Local Agency Vendor Liaison must accept and document all vendor related complaints received from participants, caretakers, vendors, or other means. When needed, the Local Agency Vendor Liaison may assist the State Agency in investigating and resolving vendor related complaints.
3. Comments or complaints by Vendors about WIC participants may be completed on the WIC webpage (<https://dhhr.wv.gov/WIC/formsmaterials/Pages/WIC-Comment-Form.aspx>) written by the WIC Vendor or Local Agency staff on a Vendor Complaint Form (<https://dhhr.wv.gov/WIC/formsmaterials/Pages/Vendors.aspx>) and sent to the State Agency, shared by the Vendor or Local Agency staff in an email sent to dhhrwicvu@wv.gov, or by calling 304-558-1115.
4. Comments or complaints by WIC participants about Vendors may be completed on the WIC webpage (<https://dhhr.wv.gov/WIC/formsmaterials/Pages/WIC-Comment-Form.aspx>) written by the WIC participant or Local Agency staff on a Comment Form (WIC-16) and sent to the State Agency (see **Policy 1.15 Comment Policy**), shared by the WIC participant or Local Agency staff in an email sent to dhhrwicvu@wv.gov, or by calling 304-558-1115.
5. All complaints involving shopping issues or Vendors must be communicated via email to the State Vendor Management Unit (dhhrwicvu@wv.gov) within fifteen (15) working days of acceptance or notification.
6. If a Vendor problem or situation is of an immediate and sensitive nature, the State Agency Vendor Unit Coordinator must be informed of the situation at the earliest opportunity.

G. Vendor Training

1. The Vendor Liaison will attend at least one reauthorization training session during the region's three-year interactive training. Duties include partnering with the State Vendor Operations and Training Specialist at face-to-face sessions to answer questions, arranging a training location, assisting with Vendor processing, and verifying Vendor paperwork.

H. Vendor Site Visits

The Vendor Liaison may be responsible for on-site pre-authorization visits (see **Policy 8.05 Selection Criteria, Section D**) assigned by the State Agency to:

- a. Verify Vendor applicant has internet connection;
- b. Assure location is eWIC capable; and

8.02 Local Agency Responsibilities

- c. Confirm minimum WIC food categories are currently in stock
- 1. The Vendor Liaison may be requested to conduct site visits to obtain information for the State Agency such as data collection on food items available at the local vendors, shelf labelling review, Universal Product Code (UPC) collection, or Approved Product Listing (APL) maintenance.
- 2. It is considered a best practice to have Local Agency contact with each Authorized Vendor annually.

I. Vendor Advisory Board Meetings

- 1. Local Agency staff may be asked to assist, if possible, with Vendor Advisory Board meetings. Duties could include arranging a meeting location and providing a Local Agency perspective during the meeting.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1. [Local Agency Vendor Listing Template \(Attachment #1\)](#)