

# THE WIC'R BASKET



## WEST VIRGINIA WIC PROGRAM VENDOR NEWSLETTER

West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources  
Bureau for Public Health, Office of Nutrition Services

Spring/Summer 2021

## Director's Corner

*Heidi Staats, MSW, Director*

For the WIC Program, for your business, and for WIC customers, the past year has been all about survival. Although many of us may have briefly considered retirement or temporary shutdowns to stay home until the threat of COVID-19 passed and the economy recovered, we chose to move forward. I made this decision because I love the mission of the WIC Program, working with my colleagues and interacting with participants, vendors, partners, funders, and communities.

We are down to the lowest number of retailers serving WIC customers in the program's 47-year history in West Virginia, while at the same time experiencing increases in the number of participants due to the pandemic. Luckily, WIC received additional funding through the Families First Coronavirus Recovery Act and the American Rescue Plan Act. Plus, the future looks bright with the Senate Agriculture Committee undertaking the Child Nutrition Reauthorization with a proposal to not only double the value of the WIC food package, but also to extend program eligibility to children until age 6 and women for two years following pregnancy.

We are grateful to the vendors who have stuck with us through thick and thin.

In conclusion, if summer is your favorite time of the year, then you and I have something in common. It is the time of slowing down and enjoying long summer nights. Although business activity slows and families spend more time outdoors, the opposite happens at the State WIC Office. We use this season to complete long-overdue onboarding with new employees, returning to monitoring and compliance investigation face-to-face visits, and piloting the online Vendor Portal for reauthorization.

Stay safe everyone. The vaccines are here but the crisis is not over.

## Increase in Cash Value Benefits

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 is providing increased cash value benefits for WIC recipients in June, July, August, and September. The current monthly amount of \$11 for women and \$9 for children will be temporarily raised to \$35 for all participants. There is no change in requirements for vendors, but WV WIC anticipates increased demand for fresh fruits and vegetables and encourages vendors to be prepared.

## Randolph/Elkins Reauthorization

The existing vendor agreement between authorized vendors in the Randolph/Elkins WIC Region will expire September 30, 2021. This area serves the following counties: Barbour, Grant, Hardy, Lewis, Pendleton, Randolph, Tucker, and Upshur. A new vendor agreement must be effective October 1, 2021, for stores to continue to be authorized as WIC vendors.

One of the requirements of the vendor agreement is that all authorized vendors must receive federally mandated training before being authorized to participate in the WV WIC Program. The State WIC Office will offer virtual training via Zoom on August 11 at 10:00 a.m. and August 12 at 2:00 p.m. Corporate contacts, certified trainers, and retail store managers in this region should make a reservation for one of these sessions as soon as possible by calling (304) 558-1115 or by emailing [dhrwicvu@wv.gov](mailto:dhrwicvu@wv.gov) by Monday, August 2.

All applications and agreements with original signatures must be received by the Vendor Management Unit no later than September 1, 2021.

## Vendor Management Unit Gains New Employees

The WV WIC Vendor Management Unit is excited to announce two staff members have joined the team.

Brent Warden is the new EBT Coordinator. Brent is currently employed with WV WIC as the Information Systems Specialist and has worked in state government for 7 years. Brent will be managing the UPC database, certifying and helping vendors with any POS system issues, approved product list management and helping vendors with any needed download issues with WV WIC.

Courtney Crabtree is the new Vendor Compliance Liaison and will be the go-to for inventory audits, complaints, and compliance investigations. She is new to state government, having previously worked predominantly with non-profits in West Virginia.

Welcome to the new vendor services staff!

## Product Updates

### Gerber

#### New Items: Available April 2021

##### Gerber® 1st Foods® Fruits and Vegetables (Glass)

Description	Product UPC	Size	Packaging Example
Gerber® 1st Foods® Natural Green Bean	015000003166	4oz	
Gerber® 1st Foods® Natural Sweet Potato	015000003159	4oz	

##### Gerber® 1st Foods® Organic Fruits and Vegetables (Glass)

Description	Product UPC	Size	Packaging Example
Gerber® 1st Foods® Organic Butternut Squash	015000003319	4oz	
Gerber® 1st Foods® Organic Pea	015000003302	4oz	

The following items are discontinued effective March 2021:

- Gerber® 1st Foods® Organic Pear (UPC 015000002862)
- Gerber® 2nd Foods® Organic Carrot Apple Pear (UPC 015000002619)

### General Mills

Due to low consumer demand, Vanilla Chex was discontinued in early April.



## PediaSure

Retail versions of PediaSure Grow and Gain and PediaSure Grow and Gain with Fiber are undergoing a reformulation. The reformulated products will have minor changes to the products label and will begin flowing through retailers' shelves May through July 2021.



## Thank You

WIC has been improving pregnancies and preparing kids to learn for more than 40 years. Twenty percent of West Virginia children are food insecure, meaning they lack access at times to enough food or nutritionally adequate food. By providing preventive health services during critical periods of growth and development, WIC helps lower healthcare costs and improve health outcomes for its participants. Thank you for your support – we could not make a difference without our vendors.

*Thank you!*

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