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

Winter 2020

Thank You

The winter season is upon us once again; that means the end of one year and the beginning of another. The West Virginia WIC Program extends its gratitude to all WIC authorized vendors for your hard work and support of the WIC Program throughout the year. Thanks to your efforts, we can provide effective delivery of nutritious WIC approved foods to WIC participants throughout the state. Thanks for all you do to make WV WIC Program successful.

Peer Group Changes

For cost-containment purposes, federal regulations require WIC vendors to be organized into peer groups. Effective January 1, 2020, the West Virginia WIC vendor peer group classification system is transitioning to group vendors by business model.

Peer Group Number	Peer Group Description	Number of Vendors in Peer Group
1	**Mass Merchandiser**: Retailer that a) sells a wide variety of merchandise but also carries groceries, b) owns a distribution center and c) operates nationwide.	38
2	**National Grocery Chain**: Retailer that a) primarily sells groceries, b) has own distribution center, and c) operates in 10 or more states.	57
3	**Regional Grocery Chain**: Retailer that a) primarily sells groceries, b) orders from a corporate or national grocer distribution center, and c) operates in 4-9 states and/or corporate headquarters not in WV.	40
4	**Local Grocery Chain**: Retailer that a) primarily sells groceries, b) orders through corporate or national grocer distribution center, and c) operates in 3 or less states and/or in more than one WIC region of WV.	38
5	**Rural Independent Grocer**: Retailer that a) primarily sells groceries, b) uses a third-party distribution center, and 3) operates in only one WIC region of the West Virginia. *May include franchisee of national grocer.	44
6	**Isolated Independent Store**: Retailer that a) sells a wide variety of merchandise but has a limited assortment of grocery items, b) uses third-party distribution center, and c) operates in only one WIC region of WV.	32

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Additional Yogurt Options

Beginning October 14, 2019, Noosa Whole Yoghurt in 8-ounce tubs and 4 pack of 4-ounce containers is authorized for purchase with West Virginia WIC benefits. Noosa is available in the following flavors and sizes. Please ensure your store's Approved Product List (APL) file is up to date to allow purchase of all Noosa products.

8 oz tubs	UPC	4 packs-4 oz	UPC
Blueberry	853923002251	Blueberry	853923002176
Strawberry Rhubarb	853923002558	Strawberry Rhubarb	856923002541
Raspberry	853923002459	Raspberry	853923002497
Key Lime	853923002596	Salted Caramel	853923002695
Coconut	853923002145	Vanilla	853923002589
Lemon	853923002152	Cherry Vanilla	815909020116
Blood Orange	853923002947	Passion Fruit	853923002725
Vanilla	815909020338	Strawberry	815909020789
Apple Cinnamon	815909020093	Mixed Fruit	815909020772
Strawberry	815909020086		
Peach	853923002657		
Mango	853923002305		
Honey	853923002053		
Tart Cherry	853923002954		
Blackberry	815909020307		
Pumpkin	853923002114		

Activia Lactose Free is now an available option to participants receiving Lactose Free Milk Benefits. The following flavors are WIC approved.

4 pk 4-oz	UPC
Activia Lactose Free LF Vanilla 4 pk 4-oz	036632029478
Activia Lactose Free LF Strawberry 4 pk 4-oz	036632029492
Activia Lactose Free LF Peach 4 pk 4-oz	036632029508
Activia Lactose Free Black Cherry 4 pk 4-oz	036632029485

2020 Annual Training

The WIC Annual Training will be released as an email newsletter in March 2020 to all stores not completing a face-to-face reauthorization training between October 2019 through September 2020. The annual training will also be available on the West Virginia WIC Program website (https://dhhr.wv.gov/WIC). For each store, a manager or representative is required to acknowledge that the training newsletter has been read by completing an online survey. **All training and surveys must be completed by April 30, 2020.**

Fiscal Year 2019 at a Glance

Participant Activity	
Active Participants (average per month)	32,674
Active Families (average per month)	20,700
Authorized Retailers (as of 9/30/19)	269
Total Reimbursements	$24,212,970
Store Monitoring Visits	
Total Reviews	123
First Failed Reviews (warning letter)	19
Educational Buys	
Total Buys	3
Compliance Buy Investigations	
Total Buys	82
Warning Letters	15

Mid-Ohio Valley Reauthorization

The existing Vendor Agreement between authorized vendors in the Mid-Ohio Valley WIC Region will expire on March 31, 2020. This area includes the following counties: Calhoun, Gilmer, Jackson, Mason, Pleasants, Ritchie, Roane, Wirt, and Wood counties. A new Vendor Agreement must be in place effective April 1, 2020 for stores to continue to be authorized. 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 West Virginia WIC Program. The State WIC Office will offer in-person training at the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department, 1st Floor Conference Room, 211 6th Street, Parkersburg, WV 26101 on February 26, 2020 at 9:30 am and 1:30 pm. 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. All applications and agreements with original signatures must also be received by the Vendor Management Unit no later than February 5, 2019. Please note applications will be submitted online through the vendor portal. You will receive a username and password in the reauthorization notification packet that should arrive at your store or corporate headquarters in mid-January 2020.

Tips to Increase Benefit Usage

Shopping for WIC foods can be the most difficult part about participating in WIC. Customer confusion about brands or WIC allowable foods often results in unredeemed benefits because of not purchasing a WIC item or embarrassment at the checkout.

What can you do to take advantage of these unredeemed benefits?

- Work with your Local WIC Agency Vendor Liaison to better understand opportunities in your area and establish partnerships;
- Maintain inventory;
- Use WIC shelf labels;
- Provide Universal Product Code (UPC) data to the State WIC Office to ensure an up-to-date Approved Product List (APL) file;
- Take advantage of hands-on cashier training by WIC staff with an in-store training session; and
- Address challenges to the stores' internal register system, such as difficulties voiding unwanted items, denial of allowable foods, and identifying WIC products as they are scanned at the register.

Request to Add Food to the Approved Product List (APL)

Changes to the West Virginia WIC Program APL occur a minimum of two times per month to assist in smoother transactions for WIC approved products. If your store has an integrated system, confirm your point of sales (POS) contractor or IT support downloaded a copy of the WIC APL, and applied it to your system, to ensure your store has the most current information available to you and your customers. If your store is equipped with a state provided POS device, a download of the APL occurs nightly if the machine retains access to the internet.

New products must be reviewed and approved before they can be added to the APL. Requests to add a food to the APL can be submitted at the West Virginia WIC Program UPC Approval Request form located at http://ons.wvdhhr.org or by using the WIC Shoppers App. The following information must be in the request:

- Full UPC or PLU code
- Brand Name
- Full product description, including size
- Image of the product and barcode

Foods are reviewed to ensure they meet the required nutrient content, ingredients, size, cost and availability. If a food item is approved, it is available in the APL within 24-72 hours of being added.

Tips for Cashiers

To ensure each WIC cardholder receives the correct foods prescribed to them, cashiers should always:

- Keep the WIC Approved Shopping Guide at the register for easy reference;
- Follow-up with management to have the UPC added to the West Virginia WIC Approved Product List if a presumed, allowed item does not scan; and
- Refer to the WIC Approved Shopping Guide or call for manager assistance if questions or issues arise.

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MAIL TO:
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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1
400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

FAX: (202) 690-7443
EMAIL: program.intake@usda.gov

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