

July 2015
WIC Messenger



Paul R. LePage, Governor

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eWIC Implementation Delayed

Due to some unforeseen circumstances, the implementation of the eWIC system has been delayed until next year. The WIC Program continues to make progress toward preparing our computer systems and staff to accommodate eWIC. We are looking forward to getting the system up and running and will keep you updated on our progress.

Infant Food By The Ounce

Since we changed the language on our infant food checks to list the number of ounces that can be purchased rather than jars, a large number of infant food checks have rejected at the bank. There seems to be much confusion as to exactly how much can be purchased. For example, we have seen 64 jars of infant food purchased rather than 64 ounces.

This spring, we provided our WIC agencies and stores with stickers to place in WIC food lists showing the proper conversions. Please be sure that your cashiers use these conversions to verify that the participant is purchasing the right number of jars of infant foods. If your store needs more stickers, please contact us at 1-800-437-9300.

Price of Eggs

The WIC Program is aware of the sharp increase in the price of eggs. Please remember to identify the **highest** priced eggs (and all WIC-approved products your store carries) on your price surveys. If prices continue to increase between surveys, please contact us.

Authorized Foods and Minimum Stocking Requirement

WIC checks may be used to purchase only foods authorized by the WIC Program. Those foods are:

- Milk and milk alternatives (soy beverages), cheese, eggs and tofu;
- Peanut butter and dry or canned beans, peas or lentils;
- Whole grains: 100 percent whole wheat bread, wheat or soft corn tortillas, brown rice and oatmeal;
- Fresh, frozen or canned fruit and vegetables;
- 100 percent fruit juice (bottled, frozen or shelf-stable concentrate);
- Breakfast cereals;
- Canned fish: tuna, salmon or sardines;
- Infant formula, infant cereal, and jarred infant meats, fruit and vegetables.

Please refer to your WIC Vendor Booklet for all the brands, sizes and varieties of WIC-approved foods. The WIC check will list the quantity and a description of each food item the customer can select. Infant formula checks are specific to the only formula the customer can buy. The cashier is responsible for making sure that all the items the WIC customer has selected are both WIC-approved *and are listed on the WIC check presented*.

The minimum stocking requirements for these products is on the next page.

WIC Minimum Stocking Requirement—WIC-approved products only

WIC-Approved Categories	Page	Quantity	Container
Milk	1	8 gallons and 4 half gallons and 2 quarts	A combination of whole, 1 percent and/ or skim milk
Cheese	1	4 8-ounce packages or 2 16-ounce packages	8 or 16 ounce packages of American, Cheddar, Colby Jack, Monterey Jack, Mozzarella or Swiss cheese
Eggs	2	2 dozen	Grade A—any size brown or white shells
Peanut Butter	2	2 jars	16 to 18 ounce jars creamy or crunchy Any brand
Beans/Peas/Lentils	2	8 cans or 2 bags	15 to 16 ounce cans of plain beans 16 ounce bags Any brand
Whole Grains	3 4	4 packages	2 16 ounce WIC-approved bread loaves and 2 WIC-approved whole grain item : oatmeal, tortillas, brown rice
Vegetables	5 6	64 ounces	fresh or frozen or canned Any two varieties
Fruits	5 6	64 ounces	fresh or frozen or canned Any two varieties
100 percent Juice	7	6 containers	11.5 to 12 ounce of frozen concentrate or 11.5 ounce of liquid concentrate Any two varieties
	8	6 bottles	64 ounce of WIC-approved bottled juice Any two varieties
Cereal	9	6 boxes	12 ounce box or larger One variety must be whole grain. Any two varieties
Fish Canned	10	60 ounces	5 ounce, 6 ounce tuna / 5 ounce, 6 ounce, 14.75 ounce or 15 ounce salmon./ 3.75 ounce sardines
* Enfamil Formula: any 24 can - combination of WIC-approved formula — top six are (list is not all inclusive)			
<i>12.5 ounce Enfamil Premium® Infant PWD UPC 365421</i>		<i>12.9 ounce Enfamil® ProSobee® UPC 214415</i>	
<i>12.4 ounce Enfamil® Gentlease® PWD UPC 100691</i>		<i>12.6 ounce Enfamil® Nutramigen PWD UPC 239418</i>	
<i>12.5 ounce Enfamil® Newborn PWD UPC 100509</i>		<i>12.9 ounce Enfamil® A.R. PWD UPC 201423</i>	
*Beech-Nut			
*Infant Cereal	11	2 8 ounce boxes	8 ounce box *Beech-Nut dry cereal without fruit. Multigrain or Oatmeal or Rice Any two varieties.
*Infant Fruits	12	32 jars	4 ounce jars of *Beech-Nut . Any two varieties.
*Infant Vegetables	12	32 jars	4 ounce jars of *Beech-Nut . Any two varieties.
*Infant Meats	12	24 jars	2.5 ounce jars of *Beech-Nut . Any two varieties.
*= Contract Items			

Helpful Tips:

Always:

- Compare the items the customer selected to the WIC-Approved Foods List **and** the items listed on their check. Be sure to add up ounces, quarts or gallons for items like breakfast cereal, milk and infant foods.
- Be sure today's date is on or between the valid dates on the check.
- Have the customer fill in the total amount of the sale on a WIC check.
- For a fruit and vegetable (cash value) voucher, have the customer fill in an amount **up to the total of the value of the check**. The customer must pay the difference (if more than the check value) another way.
- Have the customer sign the lower, right hand corner of the front of the check in black or blue ink only.
- Compare the signature of the customer with the signatures on their WIC folder.
- Offer the customer their receipt.

Never:

- Give a refund for infant formula purchased with a WIC check. The customer must return infant formula to the WIC office.
- Charge bottle deposit or bag fees to WIC. The customer must pay these another way.
- Charge sales tax on a WIC transaction.
- Allow substitutions.
- Allow the WIC customer to purchase more product than is listed on their WIC check.
- Give rain checks.
- Treat a WIC customer differently than you would any other customer.

Help Us Prevent Fraud

Nationally, fraud costs the WIC Program and stores millions of dollars every year. If you suspect fraud, please contact us at 1-800-437-9300 or contact us on our website at www.wicforme.com. You can also report suspected fraud for both WIC and SNAP (Food Stamps) on the website of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) at <http://www.oig.dot.gov/Hotline>.

What is MARL?

The method by which we determine our **Maximum Allowable Reimbursement Level (MARL)** for food items authorized by WIC was updated as of October 1, 2014. We are currently in the process of making adjustments based on the new method. For each Vendor Peer Group (Peer A are larger chain stores and Peer C are smaller independent stores) we use your price surveys to determine the average price of WIC foods. The MARL for products is now the average price plus two standard deviations. We have begun mailing notices to vendors who have prices that exceed the new MARL. We will continue to conduct price surveys on a quarterly basis until eWIC is rolled out state wide at which time the MARL will be recalculated by the system on a weekly basis to allow us to react more quickly to changing market prices.

Vendor Stamp Care

Proper care of your WIC vendor stamp is important. Our bank's equipment must be able to read your vendor stamp number in order to process WIC checks you deposit. Be sure to:

- Re-ink your vendor stamp regularly.
- Wash the stamp with gentle soap and water if it looks dirty.
- Call us to order a new stamp if the stamp is broken.

Agreements Expiring

The Vendor agreements for corporately-owned Hannaford, Shaw's and Food City expire this year. Applications must be completed by the corporate offices this summer and will be due to return to us by September 30, 2015.

Vendor agreements for all other stores located in in Aroostook, Hancock, and Washington Counties also expire this year. In-person training and renewal applications must be completed by September 30, 2015.

Manufacturer Coupons

If your store accepts manufacturer coupons, you must accept a WIC customer's valid coupons.

If a WIC customer presents a coupon that gives cash back, that amount must be applied towards the WIC transaction. You may not give the customer the cash back.

WIC Sanction System

The WIC Program can sanction a vendor for various incidences or patterns of violations of Federal or State rules or policies. An incidence is one isolated event or any single occurrence of a violation. A pattern is two or more incidences of a violation unless otherwise specifically stated.

Violations of Federal rules have mandatory federally specified penalties. Class I Violations all are based on one incidence of violation, and require Vendor disqualification, either permanent or a specific time period, depending on the violation. For example, one incidence of violation of the Class I Violation of the sale of alcohol, alcoholic beverage or tobacco product in exchange for a WIC check or Cash Value Voucher (CVV) mandates disqualification from the WIC Program for three years. Class II Violations all require a pattern of violations and also mandate vendor disqualification. WIC is required to notify SNAP (Food Stamps) if we disqualify a vendor for a federal violation and the SNAP Program may, in turn, disqualify or sanction the vendor, too.

Class III violations (State violations) largely result in assessment of sanction points upon a vendor. Termination of the vendor from WIC shall occur if a vendor is assessed a total of 15 sanction points within one year. If the disqualification of the vendor would result in inadequate participant access, however, the WIC Program can impose a civil money penalty in lieu of disqualification.

A vendor may appeal a disqualification in many cases. The appeals process and forms and a complete listing of all the violations and penalties can be found on our website, www.wicforme.com or by contacting Ana Scovil by telephone at 287-5366 or by e-mail to Ana.Scovil@Maine.gov.

The WIC Program is mandated by federal regulation to disqualify a vendor that has been disqualified from the SNAP (Food Stamps) Program. This disqualification may begin at a later date than the SNAP disqualification and is not subject to appeal.

The federal regulations can also be found at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/wic/WICRegulations-7CFR246.pdf>. The complete WIC Vendor Sanction System can be found in our policies on our website, www.wicforme.com.

WIC Program Integrity

The WIC Program conducts covert compliance buys across the state to ensure vendors correctly complete WIC sales. Last year violations were found in most of the compliance buys conducted. The stores involved range from small mom-and-pop type stores to large chain stores.

One common type of violation that occurred was the Class II violation of wrong items allowed. This happens when the customer is allowed to:

- (1) purchase items that are not WIC-approved; or
- (2) purchase items that are not listed on their WIC check; or
- (3) purchase more of an item than was listed on the check.

A WIC customer can **never** buy more of an item than is listed on their WIC check and can **never** buy an item that is not listed on their check, even if it is WIC-approved.

Claims Against Vendors

If the WIC Program detects overcharges by an authorized vendor, it will establish a claim against the vendor. The Program will provide the vendor with an opportunity to justify or correct the overcharges. If satisfied with the justification or correction, the WIC Program will adjust the proposed claim accordingly. If following the justification or correction a claim against the vendor still remains, the WIC Program will issue a final claim. The final claim must be paid within 30 days of issuance or the vendor agreement will be terminated. Final claims against vendors are not subject to administrative appeal.

You can find all of the federal regulations on the USDA FNS website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/WICRegulations-7CFR246.pdf>.

What's New In WIC

Since last year, several important changes have occurred in WIC requirements and policies. Those changes are:

Previous

Skim, one (1) percent and two (2) percent milk
"low-fat or reduced-fat " milk

Eight (8) gallons and four (4) half-gallons of milk
required to satisfy minimum stocking

Four (4) loaves of 16 ounce bread are required to
satisfy minimum stocking

Checks identified the brand of soy beverage

Enfamil Reguline Infant formula was not approved

White potatoes not approved

Save a Lot/Shaw's used the same distribution center

New

Skim and one (1) percent milk are "low fat" milk
Two (2) percent and whole milk allowed only if listed
on check

Eight (8) gallons and four (4) half-gallons and two (2)
quarts of milk required to satisfy minimum stocking

Four (4) whole grain items two (2) of which must be
16 ounce bread required to satisfy minimum stocking

Checks no longer identify the brand of soy beverage

Enfamil Reguline Infant formula is approved

White potatoes are approved

Save a Lot and Shaw's have separate distribution
centers; both are authorized by WIC.

Other significant changes to WIC vendor policies:

- All vendors must be willing to participate in and transition to the eWIC process as it becomes instituted;
- All vendors are required to maintain a training log to document the training of all cashiers on WIC procedures including updates provided through newsletters and special notices;
- Additional reasons a vendor can be disqualified, terminated and assessed state sanction points were added.

All of these topics were covered in the 2014 or January, 2015 newsletters. The newsletters and our policies can all be found on our website, www.wic.forme.com. The USDA FNS federal regulations can be found on their website, [at http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/wic/WICRegulations-7CFR246.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/wic/WICRegulations-7CFR246.pdf).

Take the Quiz—Answer true or false to the following questions. (Answers on back page)

1. You can require WIC customers to use a special register.
2. Your store is required to keep a training log for all the WIC trainings given to your staff.
3. Your store can provide a cash refund to customers returning infant formula they purchased using a WIC check.
4. The WIC Program will pay an unsigned WIC check.
5. WIC will notify the SNAP (Food Stamps) Program if WIC disqualifies a vendor.
6. A WIC customer can purchase three (3) boxes of 14 ounce WIC-approved cereal on one WIC check.
7. The customer can purchase only the items listed on their WIC check.
8. You cannot offer incentives to a WIC customer that you do not offer to all other customers.
9. Your store can buy infant formula to sell to WIC customers from any source or distributor.
10. If your store charges fees for grocery bags, you must have the WIC customer pay those fees by another means.

Store Status Changes:

Now Accepting WIC Checks:

Save-A-Lot in Presque Isle
Wal-Mart Supercenter in Waterville
Tobey's Grocery in China
La Bodega Latina Grocery in Portland

Under New Ownership:

Tradewinds Variety IV in Clinton
Poirier's Market in Lewiston
Hannaford's Supermarkets in Houlton and Caribou

Coming Soon:

Hannaford's Supermarket in North Berwick

New Location:

Boston Connection in Biddeford

Store Closed:

Shaw's Supermarket in Biddeford

No Longer Accepting WIC Checks:

Webb's Market in Lewiston
Lyon's Variety in Lubec (Effective July 30th)

We're Here To Help You

There's a lot to know when handling a WIC transaction. Your store can be penalized or even disqualified if your cashiers do the wrong thing. If you feel your store needs more help, call us and we'll schedule you for more training. These trainings are for any store that wishes more training. We also strongly encourage stores that have received notice of assessment of sanction point to schedule training.

We've set up a schedule of in-person trainings in Augusta for the last Thursday of the month.

Call us at least five (5) weekdays in advance to schedule your store.

Answers to WIC Quiz

1. False—You cannot single out or treat a WIC customer any differently than you would any other customer.
2. True.
3. False—Infant formula must be returned to the WIC Office.
4. False—WIC will not pay an unsigned check. The cashier is required to compare the signature on the check to the signatures on the WIC folder.
5. True.
6. False—Three boxes of 14 ounce cereal totals 42 ounces; the most a participant can purchase on one check is 36 ounces.
7. True.
8. True.
9. False. Infant formula sold to WIC participants can only be purchased from a distributor authorized by WIC.
10. True.

DHHS

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USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Questions? Need supplies? Contact Us.
Ana Scovil, Vendor & Data Specialist
Tina Bernier, Vendor & Data Manager

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