



WIC Messenger

Winter 2021

This newsletter provides required annual training for any staff who assist with WIC sales in your store. Please have all staff handling WIC transactions and WIC benefits read this newsletter and complete the training log. To get form click [here](#).

Fax or email the completed training log to us by **February 28, 2021** and keep a copy for your records. WIC staff will check your training logs during on-site visits.

Training Topics

Each year, The WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Nutrition Program is required to train WIC vendors and all their staff who handle WIC benefits or WIC transactions in several topics.

- ◇ The Purpose of the WIC Program
 - ◇ The foods authorized by WIC
- ◇ The minimum stocking requirements
- ◇ Authorized Infant Formula Supplier List
 - ◇ WIC transaction procedure
 - ◇ The vendor complaint procedure
 - ◇ The WIC vendor sanction system
 - ◇ Vendor claims
 - ◇ Incentive policy
 - ◇ What's New in WIC
 - ◇ Renewals and Trainings
 - ◇ Help Us Prevent Fraud
- ◇ Vendor quarterly calls Save the Date
 - ◇ Policies changes
- ◇

The Purpose of the WIC Program

The WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Nutrition Program is a federally-funded program established to provide supplemental healthy food to eligible Maine residents during critical times of growth and development. Pregnant, postpartum, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding women, and infants and children up to the age of five are eligible for the program if their income is at or below 185% of the federal poverty level and have a medical or nutritional risk. Program staff also provide WIC participants nutrition education, breastfeeding support and referrals to other health services.

Authorized Foods

WIC benefits may be used to purchase only foods authorized by the WIC Program. Those foods are listed in the [Cashier Guide & Approved Food List](#) and fall into these categories:

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

Minimum Stocking Requirements

WIC stocking requirements changed October 2020. Vendors are strongly encouraged to stock as many varieties of WIC approved foods as possible. Your store is in Peer Group (individual stores notified of peer group). View and print requirements [here](#).

Authorized Infant Formula Distributor Requirement and List of WIC-Authorized Distributors

The United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services requires WIC Vendors to only purchase infant formula from a manufacturer or distributor that has been approved by the WIC Program. The approved manufacturers and distributors for Maine WIC are:

Associated Grocers of New England (AGNE); BJ's Wholesale Club, Inc. locations; Bozzuto's Inc., ; C & S Wholesale Grocers; Capitol Candy Co. Inc. Wholesalers; Core-Mark; Garber Brothers, Inc.; Hannaford / Delhaize; HD Smith Wholesale Drug Co.; Market Basket, Inc. / DeMoulas; Mead Johnson; Pine State Trading Co.; Sam's Club locations; Save a Lot Distribution Center; Shaw's Wells Distribution Center; Wal-Mart and/or Distribution; Yell-O-Glow Corp; Abbott Laboratories; Mead Johnson; Nestle USA; Nutricia North America; PBM Nutritionals; Prolacta Bioscience

Purchasing infant formula from a manufacturer or distributor not authorized by the WIC Program can result in your store being terminated from the WIC Program. View and print [here](#).

WIC Transaction Procedures

The procedure for transacting WIC can be a little different depending on the register system at your store. Please review your store's procedures on processing a WIC transaction.

However, all stores must:

1. Give the WIC customer with the balance inquiry receipt.
2. Give the customer their mid-transaction receipt and have them verify the items that are approved.
Be sure the customer approves the transaction. If the card declines (times out), note the error code, wait about 20 seconds and then have the customer swipe the card again or manually enter the customer's card number.
3. Give the customer their final receipt.

If there are items that the customer believes are WIC-approved but do not ring through, ask the customer to check them on the WIC Shopper App or refer them to their WIC clinic.

Common issues causing rejection of transaction or item:

- Customer has more than the 50 item limit;
- Customer did not accept the mid-transaction in time;
- The fat content of milk or yogurt selected is not the fat content of the milk or yogurt on the participant's benefit;
- The customer selected items that are on the APL but are not on the participant's benefit.;
- Fresh Produce item is not properly mapped to the correct food category;
- Your store has an out-of-date or corrupted version of the APL. Please be sure that you have the most current version of the APL uploaded into your system. For mapping and APL issues, contact your store manager or IT Department.

WIC cannot pay for bottle deposits or bag fees. Please collect these from the WIC customer.

Remember, WIC customers are not required to buy all the items on their benefit nor are all the items on the WIC APL



WIC-Customer Complaints

We would like to know about any problems or concerns you have with WIC customers or processing WIC transactions. The problem may be a misunderstanding. Some customers may be new to WIC or do not understand the Approved Foods List or transaction procedures.

Sometimes a WIC customer, or any customer, can be challenging. Please assist them, in a discreet manner, to resolve the conflict. Feel free to report WIC customer issues [here](#).

If customer issues arise, our office will work with the local agency that serves the customer to resolve the problem. It is important that you give us as much information as possible so that we may better assist you.

If you or your staff are threatened in any way, do not hesitate to call the proper authorities and notify us immediately.



Vendor Claims

Per state and federal regulations:

1. When a vendor has intentionally or unintentionally charged the WIC Program more for authorized supplemental food than is permitted under the vendor agreement, or has committed another error or violation that has resulted in an unjustified payment by the WIC Program to the vendor, the State Agency shall establish a claim.
2. The vendor claim shall be for the full purchase price of each eWIC transaction that contains the vendor overcharge or other overpayment error.
3. The State Agency shall provide the vendor with an opportunity to justify or correct a vendor overcharge/overpayment error.
4. If the vendor cannot correct or justify the full amount of the vendor claim, the State Agency shall issue a final claim to the vendor.
5. The vendor shall pay any final vendor claim assessed within 30 days of receipt of the final claim. In some cases the State Agency may allow the vendor to create an alternate plan for repayment of the claim.
6. Payment of a claim does not alleviate any other sanctions the State Agency may impose on the vendor due to the vendor overcharges.
7. Failure to repay a claim shall result in disqualification from the WIC Program and denial of an application for reauthorization.

For more detail, refer to the WIC Program VM-14: Vendor Claims Policy [here](#).

Incentive Policy

You cannot offer a WIC customer incentives that you do not offer to all your other customers. You can offer buy-one-get-one and other types of promotions to WIC customers, and you must accept valid manufacturer coupons from WIC customers if you allow these for your other customers. You must always treat a WIC customer the same as you would any other customer.

What's New In WIC?

- ◇ **eWIC card** Beginning in June, 2020, the Maine WIC Program began issuing WIC benefits on the eWIC card rather than on paper checks (food instruments/ FIs).
- ◇ **WICShopper App** is now available for WIC clients to view their benefit balance, and their allowed food per their benefit type. Stores can also use the app to re-view approved WIC foods and report a food not approved for ME. If a product is not approved, use the app.
- ◇ **New Approved Foods List** ([Effective April 13, 2020](#)) Foods were added to the Approved Product List (APL). Summary of [food changes](#).
- ◇ **WICVendor@maine.gov** The Vendor Team implemented a new vendor e-mail address. Send vendor-related email to WICVendor@maine.gov
- ◇ **Food Item Waivers** extend until 30 days after the end of the nationally-declared public health emergency. WIC customers will be able to temporarily substitute eligible product. WIC customers can choose:
 - **Cheese** - one 12 ounce package
 - Eggs - two 6-count or one 18-count egg carton
 - Whole Wheat/Whole Grain Bread - an authorized whole grain in package sizes up to 24 ounces:
 - ◆ Great Value Whole Wheat Bread 20 Oz
 - ◆ Nature's Own 100% Whole Grain Bread 20 Oz
 - ◆ Nature's Own 100% Whole Wheat Bread 20 Oz
 - ◆ Pepperidge Farm whole Grain Soft Sprouted Bread 22 Oz
 - ◆ Sara Lee 100% Whole Wheat Bread 20 Oz
 - ◆ Signature Select 100% Whole Wheat Bread 22 Oz
 - ◆ Wonder 100% Whole Wheat Bread 20 Oz

If you have other food products that would fit this criteria let us know SubmitUPCWIC@maine.gov.





Your Benefits

Available WIC Benefits
Oct 05 2020 - Nov 04 2020

Updated on Oct 27 @ 9:58:49 AM

These are your remaining benefits as of 10/26 at 3:30 AM
More recent purchases may not be reflected here!

VIEW FUTURE BENEFITS

-  **0 LB**
Pound(s) WIC Approve... **X**
Recipes
-  **2 DOZ**
All Dozen WIC Approv... **→**
Recipes
-  **8 OZ**
All Ounces WIC Appro... **→**
Recipes **Calculator**
-  **0 CTR**
All Jar PB or # Dry ... **X**
Recipes

Renewals and Trainings

WIC agreements for all stores located in Aroostook, Washington and Hancock counties expire in 2021. We will be contacting these stores to schedule mandatory vendor training in the **spring**.

Help Us Prevent Fraud

Nationally, fraud costs the WIC Program and stores millions of dollars every year. To report allegations of fraud, or attempted fraud, involving funds administered by Maine DHHS contact us:

Option 1: Complete the [Online Reporting Form](#)

Option 2: Email fraud.dhhs@maine.gov

Option 3: Call the Fraud Hotline 1-866-348-1129 or TTY: (207) 287-6948

You can also report suspected fraud to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) [click here](#).

Policies changes

◇ Effective October 1, 2020, WIC changed several policies and appendices to accommodate the new eWIC system. You can view all our policies [here](#).

Policy	Document Name/Type	Section	Page/Subsection
VM-1-D	Vendor Agreement	Requirements	Multiple pages and sections
VM-1	Vendor Selection and Authorization Policy		5.,6.2.1., 6.16.,10
VM-1	Vendor Selection and Authorization Procedures		1.1.,3.3.,7
VM-2	Vendor Training Authority	Policy	1.3.,3
VM-2	Vendor Training Authority	Procedures	2.,
VM-3	High Risk Vendor Identification	Policy	1.1
VM-3	High Risk Vendor Identification	Procedures	2.2
VM-4	Routine Monitoring	Procedures	1.2., 1.4.,1.6
VM-5	Compliance Investigations Authori-	Policy	4.2., 5.4
VM-5	Compliance Investigations Authori-	Procedures	2
VM-6	Vendor Sanction System	Policy	1.,3.,3.4.,6
VM-6	Vendor Sanction System	Policy - State Violations	3.4. & 3.12.,3.15-3.26
VM-6	Vendor Sanction System	Policy – Other Violations	7.-16
VM-7	Administrative Review of State Agency Actions	Policy	1.4.,2.9
VM-7	Administrative Review of State Agency Actions	Procedures	4
VM-9	Staff Training on Vendor Management	Policy	1.14
VM-11	Vendor Price Lists	Procedures	3.5.
VM-12	Vendor Operations	Policy	1.10.,1.10.1.,1.21& 1.25-1.27., 1.11-1.28
VM-12	Vendor Operations	Procedures	1.1-1.7.,

Save the Date

Save the dates for Maine WIC Vendor quarter call occurring the 2nd Tuesday of every quarter at 11:00 ET lasting 1 hour:

January 12, 2021
April 13, 2021
July 13, 2021
October 12, 2021



Maine Department of Health and Human Services Non-Discrimination Statement

The Department of Health and Human Services complies with applicable Federal and State civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, color, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, national origin, religious or political belief, ancestry, familial or marital status, genetic information, association, previous assertion of a claim or right, or whistleblower activity, in admission or access to, or the operation of its policies, programs, services, or activities, or in hiring or employment practices.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Complaint form, (AD-3027) found online at: How to File a Complaint, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. mail: US Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-9410
2. fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Maine WIC Nutrition Program
Department of Health & Human Services
Center for Disease Control & Prevention
286 Water Street
Augusta, ME 04330
Voice: 287-3991 In State 1-800-437-9300
TTY: Maine Relay 711
Website: www.maine.gov/wic
Email: WICVendor@Maine.gov