

Vendor Information Publication

Welcome from the Vendor Management Branch Director

Dear Authorized WIC Vendors,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2016 Vendor Information Publication Training Edition. As you know, checking out a WIC participant requires a little more time and attention; therefore, training is a critical part in ensuring success. The Alabama WIC Program relies on authorized WIC vendors to help provide nutritious foods to eligible women, infants, and children in our state. Your partnership is vital in providing nutritious foods and improving the health outcomes for our participants.

We are here to support our vendors be it through providing free WIC training, training materials, or addressing your questions. I personally appreciate all you do for the Alabama WIC Program. Do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns.

Sincerely,
Stacey Neumann
Director, Vendor Management Branch



Amanda C. Martin, Alabama WIC Program Director, Had a Heart for WIC from an Early Start:

I was born in Coffee County in 1976 to a father that was an engineer and a mother that was a librarian. Their combined income the year I was born was \$10,000. In addition to me, they were covering school loans and had bought a family farm. Soon after I was born, Coffee County received a grant to provide nutrition education and nutritious foods to low income families. My mother still raves to this day about the nutrition guidance and breastfeeding support that she received. They went on to have a second child and even though they no longer income qualified, they still reaped the benefits of this Program.

Fast forward to 2013, and I proudly accepted the title of WIC Director for the State of Alabama. I did not learn until my appointment that I was a WIC baby. Looking back on my childhood, though, it all makes sense. I was 12 years old when I learned that you could buy vegetables (with added sodium) in a can at the grocery store. I was 16 years old before my mother allowed me to drink a Coke. It was actually Dr. Pepper, but in lower Alabama every soda was a Coke. This may make me sound sheltered, but what it did was break the cycle of obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease that runs in my family. My parents have raised two healthy children that are now passing their nutrition and physical activity values on to their children.

When people think of WIC, they automatically think of government assistance. When I think of WIC, I am reminded of how much my parents love me. It is with pleasure that I serve the WIC participants of Alabama.

eWIC is Coming...

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, Public Law 111-296, was signed into law on December 13, 2010. It mandates that State WIC Programs move from a paper-based benefit delivery system to an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) system by October 1, 2020. The Alabama WIC Program has spent several years in the planning phase and has chosen an on-line EBT card. The Alabama WIC Program will refer to EBT transactions and cards as e-WIC.

EBT has been around for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) users for about 10

years. Unlike SNAP, the process for the WIC Program is much more complicated because the WIC Program is based on specific food items rather than dollars. At the register the e-WIC card works similar to other magnetic card payment options. The card is swiped in the card reader and then the food item is checked against the participant's available food prescription balance.

The good news is that Alabama WIC is entering the implementation phase. There are many steps to implement e-WIC so stay tuned for updates. Alabama WIC will be providing more detailed information for vendors as e-WIC implementation progresses.

What will e-WIC do for you?

- Provide for a faster and smoother shopping experience – no more checking dates, signatures, or WIC ID folders!
- Provide for faster payment to the stores.
- Reduce confusion on which foods items are authorized for purchase.

Purpose of the WIC Program

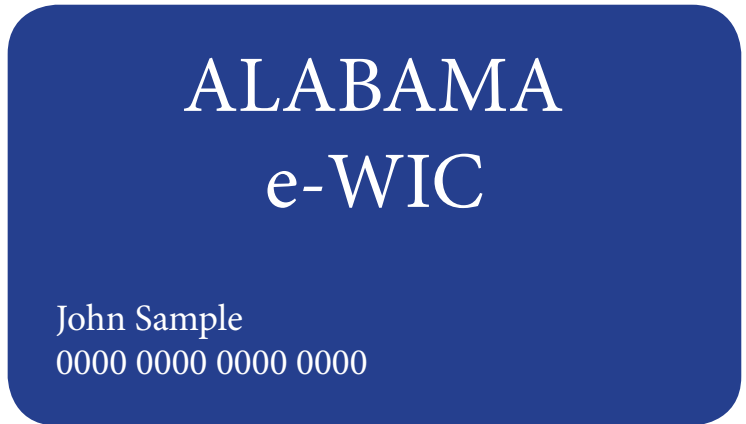
Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The mission of the WIC Program is to improve the health and nutritional status of women, infants and children during critical times of growth and development. Authorized WIC vendors provide participants access to WIC approved foods as prescribed by the health professional to promote good nutrition.

History - Look How Far We Have Come!

- WIC was established by Congress in 1972.
- Based on the 1975 Alabama Department of Public Health Annual Report, the annual caseload grew from 5,870 to 10,494.
- In 1976, only 15 counties had approval to administer WIC Program services.
- In 1977, the number of participants to whom food vouchers were issued increased from 17,066 to 24,254.
- In 1980, the WIC Program became operational statewide.
- In the early years of WIC, only 84 local grocery stores participated in the Program.
- Currently, we have almost 700 Alabama authorized WIC vendors serving 127,811 participants across the state.



Source: Alabama Department of Public Health Annual Reports various years.



- Unclear total on the Food Instrument or Cash Value Voucher – By reviewing the Food Instruments and Cash Value Vouchers prior to deposit, you can ensure that the total written is clear and correct.

Food Instruments and Cash Value Vouchers have been rejected at the bank because the cashier did not clearly enter the “Pay Exactly” amount.

Do you know why Food Instruments are returned? Know the following important payment processing information.

The following errors are fatal and cannot be re-deposited or appealed for payment.

- Redeemed Prior to the First Day to Use – Example: The Food Instrument has the following dates, April 1, 2016 to May 1, 2016.

UNPAID
DO NOT REDEPOSIT

The cashier accepted the Food Instrument on March 28, 2016.
The Food Instrument was accepted before the “First Day to Use” which is a fatal error.
This Food Instrument cannot be sent for appeal to the State WIC Office.

- Stale Dated – the Food Instrument was deposited in the bank more than 60 days after the “First Day to Use”. This is a fatal error and cannot be sent for appeal to the State WIC Office.
- Signature Missing – Cashier failed to get the Parent, Legal Guardian or Proxy’s signature upon completion of the WIC transaction (after total retail cost is entered in the “pay exactly” block). This is a fatal error.

If the cashier fails to obtain the signature at the time of the transaction, it is **FRAUD** to sign the Food Instrument or Cash Value Voucher and submit it for payment. This Food Instrument **cannot** be appealed to the State WIC Office for payment.

FRAUD

The following errors are non-fatal and can be re-deposited in your bank of first deposit. Do not submit these to the State WIC Office for payment:

- Vendor Stamp Missing – If a previously deposited Food Instrument is returned for Vendor Stamp Missing, stamp the Food Instrument with your WIC Vendor Stamp and redeposit within 60 days from the “First Day to Use” date.
- Illegible Vendor Stamp – If a previously deposited Food Instrument is returned for illegible vendor stamp, take a black pen and trace over the illegible information to ensure that the vendor stamp can be read prior to re-depositing. Then, redeposit the Food Instrument into your bank of first deposit.

For information on additional fatal errors or more details on payment processing, please refer to your Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook, pages 17-21.

What are the most common cashier mistakes leading to loss of revenue and bank fees? Read on to find out.....

The Food Instrument reads: "64 ounces - 2nd Stage Infant Fruit/Veg (16-4oz jars OR 8-4oz 2 packs)".

The cashier allows the WIC customer to purchase:

- Infant Meat - Infant meat is not specified on the Food Instrument
- Jars of infant meat along with infant fruits and vegetables – Food Instrument is only for infant fruits and vegetables
- 16-4oz 2 packs (instead of 8-4oz 2 packs)



Beech-Nut and Gerber Infant Fruits and Vegetables cannot be mixed in one transaction. The participant must purchase **EITHER** 16 Beechnut 4 oz jars or 8 Gerber 4 oz 2 Packs. To avoid loss of revenue, train all cashiers to carefully process all WIC transactions.

What to do when you have price increases between price surveys....

If your store increases a price more than 10 cents (excluding eggs), you must fill out the Price Increase Request Form and submit it to the State WIC Office. For timely processing, fill out all fields on the form. Fax it to the State WIC Office (334) 206-2914 and allow five days before increasing the price. Someone from the State WIC Office will contact you if your price is over the current maximum reimbursement level.

The Price Increase Request Form can be found on our website at <http://www.adph.org/WIC>. Select Vendor Management, then Authorized WIC Vendor Information, lastly select, Payment Processing Information or a form can be faxed to you by contacting the State WIC Office (334) 206-5673.

Price Surveys are Federally Required and Due Twice a Year - Read these very important price survey completion tips to ensure accurate reporting:

- Always enter the vendor information at the top of the first page. Without your store information, we do not know which vendor submitted the price survey.
- Price surveys cannot be faxed to the State WIC Office. These must be mailed to our office with an original signature.
- If your store is a cost plus store or has a surcharge, ALWAYS include the surcharge and additional percent for each item reported on your price survey.
- Only include prices for items you currently stock.

Note: Failure to submit a vendor price survey within the specified time frame is a Category II Sanction and could lead to a warning (1st offense), \$300 fine (2nd offense) or nine months disqualification (3rd or subsequent offenses).

What Do You Do When Your Store's Vendor Stamp is Lost or Damaged?

If your stamp is lost, damaged or badly worn, you can request a replacement stamp by submitting a Replacement Stamp Request Form to the State WIC Office via fax (334) 206-2914. The form may also be mailed to the State WIC Office. The form is available on our website at <http://www.adph.org/WIC>. Please allow a minimum of 14 days to receive your stamp.



Doing Some Vendor Stamp Maintenance May Keep You from Having to Order a Replacement Stamp.

Regular cleaning of the rubber element of your vendor stamp with alcohol and a cotton swab will provide a clearer stamp on the Food Instruments and Cash Value Vouchers. Water based ink to re-ink the ink pad can be purchased at a local office supply store.

The use of gel/invisible ink is **not** allowed. If gel/invisible ink is used, the Food Instrument /Cash Value Voucher will reject.

For more information on vendor stamps, please refer to page 18 of your Alabama WIC Vendor Procedure Handbook.



WIC Shelf Labels Can Provide a Smoother Shopping Experience When Used Correctly.

Be mindful when placing WIC shelf labels. Ensure the labels are placed under WIC approved foods ONLY.

Labels are provided to authorized WIC vendors at no cost through the State WIC Office. To order additional shelf labels contact us at (888) 942-4673.

In order to use your own shelf labels, you must have prior approval from the Alabama WIC Program Director. Refer to page 28 of the Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook for further guidance on obtaining approval.

Store personnel are responsible for monitoring the use of all posted shelf labels, regardless of the source, to ensure the labels accurately and consistently identify WIC approved foods.

Are You Improperly Using the WIC Logo? Avoid Possible Disqualification by Proper Use of the WIC Logo

Signs promoting the business, as well as advertisements and education materials aimed at customers, may not use the acronym "WIC" or the WIC logo.

W.I.C. letters on the building or outdoor signage is **prohibited**.

The Alabama WIC Program provides "We Are WIC Approved!" window clings to notify the general public that a retailer is an authorized WIC vendor. These are provided through the State WIC Office at no cost to you.

Window clings are provided to authorized WIC vendors at no cost through the State WIC Office. To order additional Window Clings contact us at (888) 942-4673.

Minimum Stock Requirements

All authorized Alabama WIC vendors are placed into a specific peer group based on store type and number of cash registers. The minimum stock required is based on your store type. You are required to maintain the minimum stock for your store type at all times. This allows for multiple participants to come into your store on the same day and purchase all items listed on their Food Instruments or Cash Value Vouchers without depleting your stock. A list of the peer groups and descriptions is below. For more information on peer groups and a detailed listing of the Alabama WIC Program minimum stock requirements, refer to the Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook pages 23-24 and 37-40.

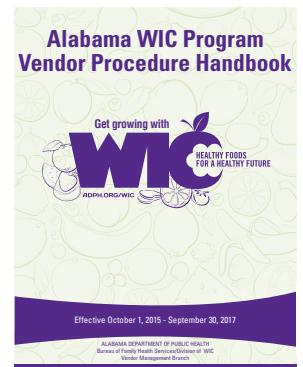
Peer Group	Description
1	Type 1: Chain store (has own wholesaler)
2	Type 2: Major Independent (5 or more cash registers)
3	Type 3: Minor Independent (3 to 4 cash registers)
4	Type 4: Small (1 to 2 cash registers)

Where Do You Purchase Your Infant Formula? Is It An Approved Source?

All authorized Alabama WIC vendors and those applying to become an Alabama WIC vendor **must** purchase infant formula from a list of approved sources maintained at the State WIC Office. To access the list electronically, please visit our website at <http://www.adph.org/WIC>. Select “Vendor Management” from the menu on the left, then “Authorized WIC Vendor Information” and the list is located under the heading “Alabama WIC Vendor Publications”.

Wonder What is Needed During a Routine Monitoring Site Visit? Wonder No More.....

As a currently authorized WIC vendor, you are subject to a routine monitoring visit at any time. A routine monitoring visit is an overt, onsite monitoring visit in which a program representative identifies himself/herself. In order to be prepared, please keep the information below in an easily accessible place. The following items will be requested during the monitoring visit. Failure to provide any of these will result in the applicable sanction.



- ✓ Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook
- ✓ Vendor Information Publication (VIP) Newsletter
- ✓ Documentation/Invoices showing you are receiving infant formula only from approved sources on the list provided by the State WIC Office
- ✓ Food Permit number(s) and expiration date(s)
- ✓ Training Acknowledgement Form (Employee training documentation)
- ✓ Food Instruments and Cash Value Vouchers not deposited as of the date of the monitoring visit

Most Common Deficiencies Identified During a Routine Monitoring Visit:

- Failure to maintain the minimum stock requirements. Most Common Minimum Stock Deficiencies are:

Advance Concentrate 13 oz.
 Similac Soy Isomil Concentrate 13 oz.
 Similac Advance Powder 12.4 oz.
 WIC Approved Bread

- Failure to have the Training Acknowledgement Form on file. To avoid contract violation and a fine, a copy of this document **MUST** be made available to State WIC Staff during a visit to the store.

Refer to page 27 of the Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook for additional information. You can obtain a copy of the Training Acknowledgement Form on our website <http://www.adph.org/WIC>. Select “Vendor Management” from the menu on the left, then “Authorized WIC Vendor Information”, then “Vendor Management Training”. The Training Acknowledgement Form is listed under “Administrative Responsibilities”.

[illegible]

What Are the Results of Our Compliance Investigations?



It is a federal requirement that the Alabama WIC Program conduct compliance investigations which consist of a series of undercover buys to detect noncompliance. During the compliance investigations conducted this year, the following violations have been found:

1. Failure to compare the signature on WIC ID Folder (Orange Card) to the signature on the Food Instrument/Cash Value Voucher after obtaining the participant's/proxy's/parent's signature.
2. Failure to ask for the WIC ID Folder (Orange Card) to compare Family Name and Family ID number to the one on the Food Instrument/Cash Value Voucher.
3. Failure to give or offer a cash register receipt after the transaction is complete.
4. Allowing the participant to purchase food that is not specifically listed on the Food Instrument.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
 NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
 NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL ON WOMEN, INFANTS & CHILDREN
 NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND INFANTS

Parent/Legal Guardian Identification

Print Family Name: _____

Signature: _____

Family ID Number: _____

The authorized witness signature is an affidavit and the provision of the only person to pick up WIC food instruments and funds.

Parents are required to bring ID for themselves.

Phone: _____

Email: _____



Vendor Sanction System

Program violations are separated into categories by the seriousness of the violation. For a full list of violations, please refer to the Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook pages 35-36 or your Alabama WIC Vendor Contract.

Providing Incentive Items is Strictly Prohibited

The Alabama WIC Program prohibits the use of incentives to entice WIC participants to shop in a particular store. Vendors who use advertisements to solicit the business of WIC participants, and/or offer incentives or delivery services will be subject to contract termination.

Incentives are defined as any item, service or gimmick used to solicit the patronage of a WIC participant. Incentives include free or complimentary gifts (such as but not limited to diapers), free deli meals, other services, etc. offered exclusively to WIC participants.



Need to Report WIC Program Fraud or Abuse?

If you suspect a WIC customer or another vendor is abusing the Alabama WIC Program, contact the State WIC Office at 1-888-942-4673. We are very concerned about program abuse and take all complaints seriously. Investigations are conducted on all complaints received.

Adhering to Policies and Procedures Can Eliminate Future Repayment.

The Alabama WIC Program reviews redeemed Food Instruments and Cash Value Vouchers for overcharges and other violations. If a violation is detected, the State WIC Office can delay payment or establish a claim against the vendor. Claims for reimbursement can be made to the vendor for any charges to the WIC Program for WIC approved foods which are above the prices submitted by the vendor on the semiannual price surveys. The vendor must pay any claim assessed by the State WIC Office by the due date specified in the notification or the vendor will be terminated for cause.

Reporting Vendor Status Changes Is a Requirement.

The State WIC Office must be notified in writing no less than 15 days prior to any changes in information to include, but not limited to, change in name of store, ownership, management, business structure or closing. The effective date must be specified in the letter. In addition, the State WIC Office must be notified 15 days prior to the store being sold. A vendor contract is not transferrable from one owner to another.



See page 25 of your Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook or your Alabama WIC Vendor Contract for additional information.

Got WIC Vendor Questions?

Reviewing the Materials Provided by the Alabama WIC Program Might Just Have Your Answers....

- Questions regarding the Alabama WIC Program? Refer to your Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook.
- Questions regarding Alabama WIC approved foods? Refer to your Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure and Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook.
- Questions regarding WIC Food Instrument and Cash Value Voucher transactions? Refer to your Cashier Training Guide and Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook.

If you need more of the above referenced resources, please call the State WIC Office at (888) 942-4673 to request additional copies free of charge.



Alabama WIC Program Frequently Asked Questions

If a participant comes to your store with a Food Instrument for Pediasure that is not divisible by 6 and your store cannot break a six pack, what should you do?

You should ask the participant to return to the local WIC clinic to have a new Food Instrument issued that is divisible by 6. Pediasure comes in 6 packs; therefore, the number of bottles on the Food Instrument must be divisible by 6.

EXAMPLES:



A Food Instrument is for **60 Bottle(s) Pediasure (8 oz. Ready to Feed)**. The cashier should only allow the purchase of 10 – 6 packs. The cashier **should not** give the participant 60 – 6 packs. This will lead to loss of revenue for your store because the Food Instrument will reject for Amount Over Maximum and when appealed to the State WIC Office for payment, you will only be paid for 10 – 6 packs. An appeal would only be processed if the cashier sold the correct type of Pediasure listed on the Food Instrument.



The Food Instrument reads 30 Bottle(s) Pediasure (8 oz. Ready to Feed), but the cashier sold the participant 5 – 6 packs of Pediasure with Fiber, will the vendor get paid?

No, because the cashier allowed the purchase of the wrong type of Pediasure. The Food Instrument said Pediasure, not Pediasure with Fiber.

The participant brings a 16 oz jar of creamy name brand peanut butter to the cash register, is this WIC approved?

Yes, as of June 1, 2015, participants are allowed to get **any** brand 16-18oz. peanut butter as long as it is NOT whipped, spreads, reduced fat, omega-3, organic, combinations with jelly, honey, etc.

Does a Food Instrument have to specify lactose milk in order for the WIC participant/customer to purchase lactose milk?

No, lactose milk does not have to be specified on the Food Instrument for the participant to purchase lactose free milk. If the Food Instrument says whole milk, then the participant should get whole, lactose free milk; however, if your store only has 1% or fat free lactose free or lactose reduced milk available, then the store should allow the participant to get the 1% or fat free lactose free or lactose reduced milk.

Refer to page 2 of the Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook for more information.

A participant brings two 8oz. blocks of cheddar cheese to the cash register, is this WIC approved?

No, only 16 oz. blocks of cheese are WIC approved. Least expensive brand available at the time of purchase of any of the following: Cheddar, Colby, Monterey Jack, Mozzarella, Processed American and Swiss.

Can a participant get name brand 16 oz. block cheese?

Only if it is the cheapest brand of the type of cheese that the participant chooses at the time of purchase.



Refer to the Cashier Basics Section (Pages 7-15) of the Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook for additional information regarding the following Q&As.

If a Cash Value Voucher or Food Instrument has been signed prior to the cashier receiving it, should you accept it?

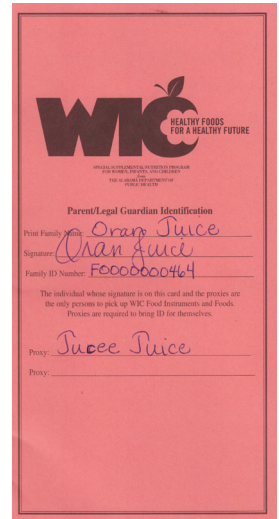
No, you should not accept the Food Instrument or Cash Value Voucher. You should kindly instruct the participant to return to their local WIC clinic.

The participant/proxy/parent doesn't have the WIC ID Folder in their possession, should the cashier go ahead and complete the transaction to save the participant/proxy/parent another trip to the store?

No, the cashier should not complete the WIC transaction without the WIC ID Folder.

Can a cashier accept a Food Instrument or Cash Value Voucher prior to the first date to use or past the last date to use?

No, accepting a Food Instrument or Cash Value Voucher prior to the first date to use or after the last date to use will result in lost revenue for your store. In addition, if the dates have been altered, do not accept the Food Instrument or Cash Value Voucher.



Can a participant/proxy/parent substitute another brand of Infant Formula or partially fill a Food Instrument for Infant Formula?

No, substitutions are not allowed. Allowing the purchase of a formula type or size that is not specifically listed on the Food Instrument will result in lost revenue for your store. Formula is prescribed based on the nutritional needs of the infant, allowing the incorrect formula could result in the nutritional needs of the infant not being met. If your store cannot completely fill a Food Instrument, do not attempt to fill the Food Instrument at all.



Contact Us

If you have questions or concerns that you cannot find an answer to in your Alabama WIC Program vendor resources, you may contact the State WIC Office by phone (888) 942-4673 or by fax (334) 206-2914.

