



# AUTHORIZED VENDOR MANUAL

This Manual specifies the policies and procedures for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) for authorized vendors to redeem WIC food benefits and provide foods to WIC participants.

In this Manual, the following documents are incorporated by reference: 42 United States Code (U.S.C.) §1786, as amended 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 15-15b and 246, as amended.

If the provisions of this Manual conflict with federal statutes and regulations, the federal statutes and regulations prevail.

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# FOREWORD

For over 50 years, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) has been an integral part of Maryland's public health system. Proper nutrition at the beginning of life helps prevent many serious health problems that can last a lifetime. WIC gives children a chance to grow up healthy. Healthy children do better in school and lead active, productive lives.

You, as an authorized WIC vendor, are part of an important effort to improve the health of Maryland citizens in your community. This Manual serves as a guide to help authorized vendors follow correct Program policies and procedures to serve WIC participants.

The Authorized Vendor Manual provides an overview of the WIC program and those we serve. It is important to understand and follow the authorization requirements in order for a vendor to retain authorization. If the requirements are not upheld, vendor authorization shall be terminated.

This Manual contains the Maryland WIC Program rules and regulations, which are compiled in the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR). COMAR is the official and enforceable law.

More information on becoming an authorized WIC vendor can be found in the vendor section of our website: [www.mdwic.org](http://www.mdwic.org).



# OVERVIEW - WHAT IS WIC?

The Maryland WIC Program is a supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children that provides extra food, tips on healthy eating, breastfeeding help, and referrals for other services.

## WHO CAN GET WIC?

Women:

- Pregnant and up to 6 months after pregnancy;
- Postpartum women up to 6 months after baby's birth;
- Breastfeeding moms up to baby's first birthday.

Infants: Up to their first birthday.

Children: Up to their fifth birthday.

## WHO CAN APPLY FOR WIC?

- They can have a job or not.
- They can be married, single or live with parents.
- Fathers, mothers, grandparents or guardians can apply for children under age 5.

## WHERE CAN THEY LIVE AND HOW MUCH MONEY OR INCOME CAN THEY MAKE TO GET WIC?

- They must live in the state of Maryland to be on the Maryland WIC Program.
- They must meet income eligibility guidelines.

## HOW CAN THEY FIND OUT IF THEY CAN GET WIC?

The best way is for them to call and make an appointment at a local WIC clinic or go to [mdwic.org](http://mdwic.org).

## CAN THEY GET WIC IF THEY ARE IN ANOTHER PROGRAM?

Some people are able to get WIC because they are in other programs like:

- Foster Care;
- Medical Assistance;
- SNAP or Food Stamps;
- TCA (Temporary Cash Assistance).

If they are in one of these programs, they should call their local WIC clinic to find out if they can get WIC.

## WIC HELPS WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN EAT BETTER TO HAVE A HEALTHIER FUTURE.

Women:

- Get prenatal care earlier
- Eat better while pregnant and right after having baby
- Gain the right amount of weight while pregnant
- Carry baby to full term

Infants:

- Grow better
- Are born the right size
- Fewer infant deaths

Children:

- Eat better
- Grow better
- Are ready to start school
- Get shots on time
- Have good blood levels of iron

## WIC IS MORE THAN FOOD.

WIC GIVES TIPS ON SHOPPING, COOKING, EATING WELL, AND CONNECTS PARTICIPANTS WITH OTHER HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES.

WIC IS FOR A HEALTHIER MARYLAND.



# THE EWIC CARD

Maryland WIC uses an electronic benefits issuance system, called eWIC to issue benefits to participants. Benefits are assigned to participants and loaded into a family benefit account. The eWIC card is used in authorized stores to access the account and obtain the supplemental foods issued by the Maryland WIC Program.

The front of the card displays the card number. Unlike other EBT or credit cards, the participant's name is not printed on the card. Participants are not required to sign their eWIC card.



If a participant's card won't scan, you may hand key the number only if the card is present.

## WIC AUTHORIZED FOODS

WIC customers may only purchase the foods specified in their benefit balance in the varieties and sizes authorized by the Maryland WIC Program. The WIC Authorized Foods List is the resource for identifying approved brands and varieties. Your store will always receive notification when there have been changes to the WIC Authorized Foods List. WIC customers should have a list with them when they shop. However, in the event they do not, stores should keep a supply handy for both the customers and store employees. Copies of the WIC Authorized Foods List may be obtained by emailing the WIC Program Vendor Unit or by submitting the Vendor Supply Request Form.

The most recent Authorized Foods List can be found under the Store Owners/Vendor section of our website.

## APPROVED PRODUCT LIST (APL)

The Maryland WIC Approved Product List, also called the APL, is a database that contains Universal Product Codes (UPCs), and Price Lookup Codes (PLUs), of all Maryland WIC approved foods. A WIC transaction cannot be completed unless the UPC or PLU of the item being purchased is in the APL. The APL is maintained by Maryland WIC staff.

Maryland's current APL contains thousands of UPCs and PLUs. The APL will always be a work in progress because manufacturers add or remove UPCs every day. New products come onto the market and package sizes change – which often creates a new UPC. We need the help of vendors to make sure the APL is as complete and up-to-date as possible.

If an item doesn't scan, but you believe it should be WIC approved, let someone in your store's management office know. Fruits and vegetables are seasonal items and are hard to keep up to date in the APL. Your corporate IT staff or POS provider can often correct problems with fruits and vegetables not scanning as WIC approved by mapping them to the appropriate PLU code in the APL.



# APPROVED PRODUCT LIST (APL) (continued)

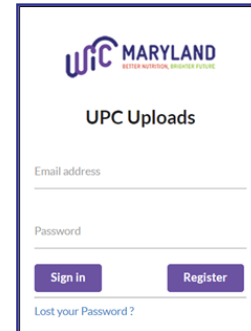
The easiest way to submit a UPC for consideration is electronically. Instructions on submitting a UPC can be found in the Store Owners/Vendor section of the Program's website.

To submit products not currently on the APL that you think may be WIC approved, please use one of the following methods:

- ➔ • The Maryland WIC Vendor APL Checker App
- Submit online
- Submit a manual form

Simply register for an account and enter all the information requested.

You may also fill out a paper form. If you click on "Submit a Manual Form," the following form will pop-up. Fill it out, print it and email to [wic.foodslist@maryland.gov](mailto:wic.foodslist@maryland.gov).



The screenshot shows a web form titled "wIC MARYLAND BETTER NUTRITION, BRIGHTER FUTURE" with the sub-heading "UPC Uploads". It includes input fields for "Email address" and "Password", and buttons for "Sign in" and "Register". A link for "Lost your Password?" is located at the bottom.

## SUBMITTING PRODUCTS TO THE WIC APL

To submit products not currently on the APL that you think may be WIC approved, please complete one of the following:

- ➔ • Submit online
- Submit a manual form

A nutritionist reviews the items submitted and determines if the item should be WIC approved. Approved items are then added to the APL. Newly approved UPCs may take up to 72 hours from the date of approval until downloaded to the store's APL file and available for purchase.

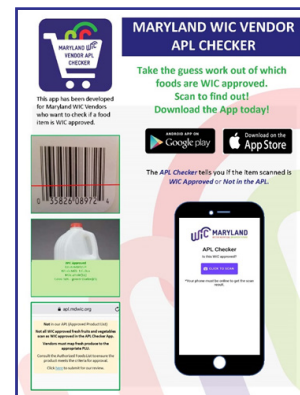
## THE APL CHECKER FOR VENDORS

An APL checker app is available to vendors who want to quickly check if a food item is WIC approved. This is especially helpful when a store receives new food items.

The Maryland WIC Vendor APL Checker App can be downloaded from the Apple store or the Google Play store.

Simply scan the UPC and you will receive a message telling you if the item is WIC approved or not.

If the item is not approved and you think it should be, you can submit it for the nutritionists to review through the app.



# PARTICIPANT EWIC PHONE APP

The Maryland WIC Program has also developed a Maryland WIC app that you may see participants using as they shop for their WIC benefits. The app can be downloaded from the Google Play store or Apple store and is available in English and Spanish. The app lets participants know what their current balance is and allows them to scan items as they shop to check if the item is WIC approved and in their benefit balance.

# MINIMUM REQUIRED STOCK

The Minimum Required Stock is defined as the specific types, sizes and quantities of WIC authorized foods that shall always be in a vendor's store during business hours. The stock must be in the store or on the premises. Expired foods do not count towards inventory.

Maryland WIC has a two-tiered Minimum Required Stock. Smaller stores that have three or less cash registers are typically small convenience stores that carry a limited variety of foods. Large stores have four or more registers and carry a greater selection of foods.

The most recent Minimum Required Stock for both small and large stores can be found in the vendor section of our website.

# INFANT FORMULA

Vendors must obtain infant formula only from manufacturers, distributors and wholesaler sources listed on the Authorized Infant Formula and Medical Foods Supplier Directory.

This list is subject to change. The most recent Authorized Infant Formula and Medical Foods Supplier Directory can be found in the vendor section of our website.

# SPECIAL FORMULAS AND MEDICAL FOODS

Pharmacy only stores are not subject to the Minimum Required Stock and are only authorized to sell infant formulas, special formulas and medical foods.

A pharmacy or food store/pharmacy combination vendor shall provide special formulas and medical foods within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays, when requested by a participant or the Program. **Be sure all pharmacy staff are aware of this requirement.**

The eWIC card cannot be charged until the participant receives their special order.





# PROCESSING WIC TRANSACTIONS

There are two different types of Point of Sale (POS) equipment that process eWIC transactions. Most large chain stores have integrated POS systems where eWIC is just another form of payment. Smaller stores usually have stand-beside POS machines. In these stores, WIC purchases must be separate from non-WIC purchases.

## INTEGRATED POS

An integrated POS allows both WIC and non-WIC items in the same transaction and does not require the WIC items to be separated. In most cases, you will not know it's a WIC transaction until the eWIC card is swiped.

- Cashiers ring up all items, scan any coupons and loyalty cards and totals the transaction.
- The customer slides their eWIC card, enters their PIN and a redemption review slip will print.
- The participant reviews the slip for accuracy. If everything is okay, they will press "yes" on the terminal and the sale will complete.
- If there is a balance due, it can be paid for with any type of payment the store accepts.
- If "no" is pressed, the eWIC payment is cancelled.
- Corrections to the WIC purchase can be made by the cashier.
- The customer will then slide their eWIC card again and enter their PIN to complete the sale.
- Give the customer all receipts.

If a customer thinks that the entire purchase should be approved for WIC, it is good customer service to help them determine which items are not in their benefits balance.

## SELF-CHECKOUT

Many large stores offer self-checkouts to their customers. WIC allows participants to use self-checkout in stores that have been certified. Check with your store's management team to see if your store is certified to allow WIC customers to use self-checkout.

## STAND-BESIDE

If your store has a stand-beside POS, WIC foods must be separated from non-WIC foods. After the foods are separated:

- The first step is to scan the customer's eWIC card,
- Ask the customer to enter their PIN. This accesses the participant's benefit balance.
- Scan the UPC on the first item. If the participant has the food item in their benefit balance and it is in the APL, the item's description will be displayed on the screen.
- Enter the price.
- Do this for all items in the WIC order.
- Press the total button and enter the amounts of any coupons.
- Press the total button again and complete the sale.
- All receipts are given to the customer.
- Reprint the receipt for your records.

If an item is not available to the customer, you will get a message explaining why the item is not approved.



# PROCESSING WIC TRANSACTIONS (continued)

Some examples are:

- The item is not in the APL.
- It's the wrong size.
- The benefit or quantity is not in their benefit balance.

## BALANCE INQUIRY

When WIC participants visit their WIC clinic, they are given a shopping list that shows the quantity and types of WIC foods that have been loaded to the family eWIC account. The shopping list is a great tool, but once a family makes a purchase, it is no longer valid as the benefit balance will have changed. For that reason, participants may ask the store to perform a balance inquiry, so they know their current benefit balance before they start shopping. The balance inquiry shows the items and quantities available for purchase and the date the benefits will expire.

## TRANSACTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

As an authorized vendor, you have agreed to comply with all applicable Required Vendor Practices in accordance with COMAR 10.54.03.15, which include but are not limited to the following:

### **A VENDOR SHALL:**

- Allow participants and proxies redeeming WIC benefits a choice of the WIC authorized foods prescribed to them.
- Scan the barcode or PLU affixed to the item being purchased.
- Accept the eWIC card only for authorized food brands, quantities, and types as prescribed in the participants' benefit balance.
- Accept cents-off coupons from an individual redeeming WIC benefits for prescribed authorized foods and deduct savings from the purchase price requested.
- Allow the use of bonus or club cards, buy one, get one free, and any other promotion offered to customers that does not involve cash back.
- Allow the purchase of the full amount or less than the full amount of the benefit balance.
- Allow the participant to pay the difference when a fruit and vegetable purchase exceeds the value of the cash value benefit.
- Provide authorized foods to an individual redeeming WIC benefits only upon receiving authorization from the point-of-sale.
- Accept the eWIC payment as payment in full for the WIC foods purchased.
- At the time of purchase, give the participant all receipts that print from the POS device.



# TRANSACTIONAL REQUIREMENTS (continued)

## A VENDOR SHALL NOT:

- Ask for identification from a WIC participant or proxy. The participant or proxy only needs their eWIC card and PIN number.
- Redeem WIC benefits for a non-WIC item or credit.
- Redeem WIC benefits for spoiled or out-of-date food.
- Issue a rain check, that is, allow an individual redeeming WIC benefits to get, at a later date, an item the vendor does not have at the time the eWIC card is presented.
- Give the participant change from a WIC transaction.
- Provide, solely to participants, incentive items or other free merchandise, including food.
- Permit the return of food purchased with WIC benefits in exchange for cash or another item.
- Collect sales tax on WIC purchases.
- Traffic in WIC benefits. Trafficking is buying or selling WIC benefits for cash.
- Sell alcohol, alcoholic beverages, or tobacco products in exchange for WIC benefits.
- Accept WIC benefits in exchange for:
  - Ammunition
  - A firearm
  - An explosive
  - A controlled substance as defined by 21 U.S.C. §802

A vendor who violates these provisions is subject to sanctions as stated in COMAR 10.54.03.16.

## RETENTION OF AUTHORIZATION

A vendor retains its authorization until the:

- Vendor is disqualified for Program violations.
- State agency terminates the vendor in accordance with the vendor agreement.
- Vendor notifies the State agency it no longer wishes to be a WIC vendor.
- Authorization period has expired.
- Vendor is determined to derive more than 50% of its eligible food sales from the redemption of WIC food benefits.

The Program shall immediately terminate a vendor's authorization if it determines at any time during the authorization period that the vendor provided false information to the Program.

The Program may reassess the vendor at any time during the authorization period using the current vendor selection criteria. The Program shall terminate the vendor's authorization if the vendor fails to meet the current vendor selection criteria.



# PRICE DETERMINATIONS

The WIC Program calculates average prices according to the geographic region and peer group averages as determined by the Program. A peer group is a breakdown of stores by size within regions. The peer group average is the average of prices requested by vendors within a peer group for WIC food items. The WIC Program may implement price determinations that are applicable statewide, or to specific peer groups, provided that vendors receive 30 calendar days' notice of the intended determination.

# MAXIMUM REIMBURSEMENT TO VENDORS

The State agency establishes a maximum price payable for each WIC food item limited to an amount not to exceed (NTE) as determined by the Program. The State agency shall determine every month the peer group average for each food item based on the WIC Management Information System calculation.

# MILITARY COMMISSARIES

The maximum price payable by the State agency for a WIC food item redeemed by a military commissary is the price charged by the military commissary.

# ABOVE 50% VENDORS

The Maryland WIC Program does not allow above 50% vendors. An above 50% vendor is a vendor that derives more than 50% of the vendor's annual food sales revenue from WIC transactions. "Food sales" is defined as all SNAP eligible foods intended for home preparation and consumption.

The Program uses the methodology provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service to ascertain whether or not the vendor derives more than 50% of the vendor's eligible food sales revenue from the redemption of WIC benefits.

A vendor identified as being an above 50% vendor, shall only be paid the statewide average of all other non-above 50% vendors for WIC food items. The vendor will be given the opportunity to demonstrate they are not an above 50% vendor. If the vendor is determined to derive more than 50% of its eligible food sales from WIC transactions, their authorization shall be terminated.



# RECOVERY OF EXCESS CHARGES

The Program, through post payment edit reviews, shall ensure that excess charges do not occur.

- Vendors shall not charge WIC participants a higher price for food than other customers.
- Vendors shall only charge the State agency for WIC food items received by a participant.
- Vendors shall reimburse the Program for losses sustained by the Program due to theft, fraud, or improper handling of WIC benefits by the vendor.
- The Program may not pay bank fees.

If the State agency determines that excess charges have occurred as a result of software, bank, or other error, the State agency reserves the right to bill a vendor for excess charges.

# VENDOR VIOLATIONS AND SANCTIONS

A violation is an incident or incidents involving failure to comply with the required vendor practices outlined in the WIC Vendor Agreement and state, and federal regulations. Vendors are responsible for violations committed by owners, officers, managers, agents, and employees.

A sanction is the penalty for violating Maryland WIC Program rules and or federal regulations, policies and/or procedures.

Sanctions may result in the disqualification of a vendor's WIC authorization.

In accordance with the Vendor Agreement, and by reciprocal agreement, all WIC vendor disqualifications are reported to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In accordance with 7 CFR § 278.6 (e)(8) of the SNAP Regulations, disqualification from the WIC program could result in the disqualification of the vendor from participation in the SNAP Program. Such a disqualification is not subject to SNAP administrative or judicial review.

**In addition to the State agency sanctions set forth in COMAR10.54.03.16, and pursuant to 7 CFR §§246.12(f)(xiv) and 246.23(d), a vendor that commits fraud and abuse of the Program may be liable to prosecution under federal, state, and local laws.**

For the most current COMAR regulations, visit the Vendor section of our website. You can find the link to the regulations in the Vendor Resource Library.



# VENDOR MONITORING AND INVESTIGATIONS

The Program, including contractors and representatives from local WIC offices, may conduct monitoring of a vendor to determine compliance with applicable federal and state policies and regulations, the WIC Vendor Manual, and the WIC State Plan of Operations. Monitoring activities may include, but are not limited to, random monitoring, educational buys, inventory audits and covert compliance buys which are conducted without the knowledge of the vendor.

Sometimes a vendor comes to the attention of the State Vendor Compliance Unit and is determined to be a vendor at high risk for violating WIC regulations. A vendor can be designated as high risk for many reasons including, but not limited to:

- A suspicious pattern of redemptions;
- A pattern of violations;
- A recent WIC or SNAP disqualification; or
- Designated by SNAP as high risk.

## ROUTINE MONITORING

A routine monitoring of a store means assessing a vendor's compliance with Program requirements. A routine monitoring will include, but is not limited to the following:

- Compliance with the terms of the WIC Vendor Agreement.
- Reassessing the vendor for compliance with current selection criteria.
- Ensuring the minimum quantities of the authorized food items are stocked as specified in the Minimum Required Stock guidelines and checklist.
- Making sure the prices of WIC foods are displayed at, on or near the WIC food items.
- Confirming that only Maryland WIC approved foods are labeled with Maryland WIC approved shelf tags.
- Inspecting the store premises and records.
- Providing an opportunity for the vendor to receive training, discuss problems and ask questions.

If a problem is discovered during a routine monitoring visit, it will be documented on the Retail Vendor Monitoring Report. A copy of the report and any applicable warning letters will be emailed to the vendor. A follow-up visit will be conducted 2-3 weeks following the violation notice to ensure corrective action has been taken.

**If the problems are not corrected, the vendor is subject to sanctions or disqualification set forth in COMAR 10.54.03.16.**



# COMPLIANCE INVESTIGATIONS

Compliance Buys are covert, on-site investigations in which a representative of the Program poses as a participant, parent, guardian, or designee and uses an eWIC card to make a purchase. The identity of the WIC representative is not revealed during these visits. The undercover WIC representatives are directed to look for violations such as, but not limited to, substitution of non-WIC items, overcharges, charging for food not received and trafficking of WIC food benefits.

## EDUCATIONAL BUYS

An Educational Buy is the same procedure as the Compliance Buy with one exception. Once the WIC transaction is completed, the WIC representative will identify his/herself and the results of the buy will be reviewed with the appropriate store personnel. If a problem is discovered, it will be documented on the Retail Vendor Monitoring Report and no sanctions will result. A follow-up buy may happen to ensure any issues have been resolved.

## INVENTORY AUDITS

An inventory audit is an audit conducted over a specific period of time in order to determine whether a vendor's claimed reimbursement for the sale of an amount of a specific food item exceeds the vendor's documented inventory of that item.

During an audit, State Agency representatives visit the store on two separate occasions, over a specific period of time, and count the particular WIC authorized food items under audit on the store's premises that are available for resale. The data collected is analyzed to compare the amount of foods for resale on the store's premises and invoices for foods purchased by the store for resale, to the amount of foods purchased by WIC participants.

It is required that all infant formula be purchased from a source on the Maryland WIC Authorized Infant Formula & Medical Foods Supplier Directory. Invoices for infant formula from other sources shall not be accepted.

If it is determined that improper redemption procedures have occurred, the Program shall claim reimbursement for any overcharges in accordance with the Vendor Agreement and COMAR 10.54.03.15(D)(2)(c). The store shall also be disqualified from the WIC Program.



# RECORD RETENTION

Vendors are required to maintain accounting records that are relevant to the vendor's performance under the vendor agreement for three years, for review at reasonable times by State agency representatives or other authorized State or Federal officials.

Accounting records are legible records that show actual numbers of eligible food sales from the vendor and not an estimated number or percentage of eligible food sales, and actual WIC sales for each individual day. Records shall include but are not limited to sales and use tax returns, U.S. individual/business tax returns, daily sales journals or daily ledgers, sales receipts or register tapes, inventory invoices, all of which include a breakdown of sales between the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligible food sales and non-eligible food sales.

Inventory records or invoices shall include the following:

1. Name and address of the supplier;
2. Date of the purchase;
3. Description of the exact items purchased, including, size, stock number, and UPC code (if available);
4. Unit price of the items;
5. Total quantity purchased.

The following criteria shall also be met regarding the acceptability of inventory records or invoices for WIC review purposes:

1. Receipts, which do not completely describe the actual item, shall have computer codes, which can be verified by contacting the store at which the merchandise was purchased.
2. All receipts from purchases at retail establishments shall be machine dated by the establishment. Hand dated retail store receipts are not acceptable.
3. Affidavits, Statements of Fact and oral statements shall not be accepted as evidence of inventory. Only purchase invoices or retail receipts as described in this section shall be accepted and constitute evidence of inventory.
4. Inventory invoices for infant formula shall only be accepted from those wholesalers, distributors and manufacturers listed on Maryland's Authorized Infant Formula & Medical Foods Supplier Directory.

# APPEALS

An Appeal is a written request made through the State WIC Office to the Office of Administrative Hearings for review of a Program action.





# REQUEST FOR HEARING

A vendor or vendor applicant shall preserve the right to a hearing, if a hearing is desired, by mailing a written request for a hearing to the Director of the Program within 10 calendar days of the receipt of the notice of the proposed disqualification or denial. A request for an appeal should briefly state the grounds for the request and include a copy of the Notice of Disqualification or denial letter. If a hearing is requested, the agency has the authority to hold the hearing pursuant to Md. Code Ann., State Government Title 10, Subtitle 2, and COMAR 10.54.03.18. The hearing will be scheduled and conducted by the Office of Administrative Hearings, in accordance with the hearing regulations in COMAR 10.01.03 and 28.02.01.

The Program shall consider a request for a hearing filed on the earlier of the dates it is:

1. Received by the Program; or
2. Postmarked by the United States Postal Service.

A vendor may not appeal the following actions:

1. Disqualification from WIC resulting from a violation of Regulation 10.54.03.15B(1)(m);
2. The State agency's decision as to whether a participant hardship exists;
3. The expiration of a vendor agreement;
4. The State agency's determination to include or exclude an infant formula manufacturer, wholesaler, distributor, or retailer from the required list of infant formula suppliers;
5. The validity or appropriateness of the State agency's prohibition of incentive items and the State agency's denial of an above 50% vendor's request to provide an incentive item;
6. The State agency's determination whether to notify a vendor in writing when an investigation reveals an initial violation for which a pattern of violations must be established in order to impose a sanction;
7. The validity or appropriateness of the State agency's vendor peer group criteria and the criteria used to identify vendors that are above 50% vendors or comparable to above 50% vendors.
8. The State agency's determination whether a vendor had an effective policy and program in effect to prevent trafficking and that the ownership of the vendor was not aware of, did not approve of, and was not involved in the conduct of the violation;
9. Disputes regarding food instrument payments and vendor claims, not including the opportunity to justify or correct a vendor overcharge or other error; or
10. The validity or appropriateness of the State agency's vendor selection criteria.



# VENDOR TRAINING

General Requirements for WIC authorized vendors include accepting training from the WIC Program as required by the Program. Vendors shall have a representative attend and participate in at least one State or local agency interactive training session each calendar year if the State agency gives the vendor 14 days' notice of a scheduled training session and holds the training session in the vendor's region.

Every authorized vendor is required to appoint at least one person, to serve as the designated trainer. The designated trainer shall train all cashiers, including pharmacy cashiers and other staff involved with WIC transactions on Program requirements. The vendor or its designated trainer will promptly inform employees of changes in the WIC Program, including changes to the Authorized Foods List.

## ANNUAL VENDOR TRAINING

Annual Vendor Training is conducted in August. All WIC authorized vendors are required to participate in annual training to maintain their WIC authorization.

## CASHIER TRAINING

Cashier training is offered to all WIC authorized vendors. This training is not required, but vendors are encouraged to attend. Vendors will be notified of the training dates, which are scheduled virtually throughout the year.

The WIC Program may mandate cashier training for a vendor with a high rate of errors, or participant complaints. A vendor that fails to attend training mandated by the WIC Program may have its WIC authorization terminated.

Vendors may request in-store or virtual Cashier Training by contacting the Vendor Training Specialist.

## REAUTHORIZATION TRAINING

Reauthorization Training is for high-risk vendors, vendors with a high rate of errors or participant complaints, and vendors that have been sanctioned for violating WIC policies and procedures. If applicable, this training is required as part of the re-authorization process but may be mandated at any time deemed necessary by the WIC Program.

All trainings require registration. Contact the Vendor Training Specialist at to register for or schedule a class.

Training materials are available for order, see Vendor Supply Request Form.



# STORE SIGNAGE

Post the State agency's WIC sign at the front of the store or in a conspicuous place on the store premises and use other materials provided or approved by the WIC program.



# LANE SIGNAGE

The USDA does not allow “WIC Only” lanes. This means that you cannot have lanes where only WIC transactions are accepted. If all lanes in a store are capable of processing eWIC transactions (such as stores with integrated POS systems) lane signage is not required. Stores with state provided stand-beside POS system equipment may not be equipped to offer WIC services in all lanes. Stores that do not accept eWIC in every lane are required to indicate which lanes accept eWIC. WIC participants are instructed to look for the “Maryland WIC Accepted Here” signs in the register lanes. Signs will be provided to stores that require them. The number of signs provided will be based on the number of lanes with stand-beside eWIC POS terminals.

The following guidance applies to lane signage:

- Vendors shall post the Program-provided signs that read “Maryland WIC Accepted Here.” The signs must be posted in a conspicuous place within the lane where it is visible to the participants such as on the back of the register, on the end of the belt, or hung from the ceiling above the register or lane.
- The signs are available in two sizes: 4x4 and 8x8.

# SHELF PRICES

Vendors shall display the shelf price of all WIC approved foods at, on, or near the item. If the WIC foods are located behind a service window with no participant access, a price list must be posted in a conspicuous location.

# SHELF TAGS

Shelf tags are made available to WIC vendors at no charge. The use of shelf tags is optional; however, vendors are encouraged to use them as they help your customers find the WIC authorized products in your store. If you use shelf tags, you are also cautioned to make sure they are properly placed. If your stockers move items on your shelves, make sure the tags are not in the wrong location. Remember that it is a violation of federal and state WIC regulations to place stickers or labels on WIC food items. Vendors may develop their own shelf tags, but they must be approved by the State agency prior to use. You are also reminded that the WIC acronym (W.I.C.) and the WIC logo are copyrighted and may not be used without obtaining permission from the State WIC Agency.



# STORE CLOSURES AND CHANGE OF OWNERSHIP

The vendor shall give 30 days' notice to the State agency of a store's closing, relocation, change in ownership, or desire to withdraw from the Program. The vendor must notify the Program immediately when a store cannot operate due to fire or other natural disaster. Should the vendor temporarily close the store for any reason and the store is able to reopen within 30 days, the vendor shall retain WIC authorization. However, if more than 30 days are needed to reopen, the Program shall terminate the agreement, and the vendor must reapply for authorization and be approved as an authorized WIC vendor. The vendor shall notify the Program of any temporary closures at least five days in advance of the closure.

WIC authorization is not transferable. Any change in ownership or rights of ownership, cessation of operation, or relocation of a store terminates the WIC Vendor Agreement and the vendor's authorization to operate as a WIC vendor is ended. Termination of an agreement due to change in ownership or relocation of a store may not be appealed.

The relocation of a WIC store also terminates a vendor's authorization, and the vendor must reapply for a new period of authorization and be authorized as a WIC vendor by the WIC Program before it may operate as a WIC vendor at the new location.

## VENDOR COMPLAINTS

WIC participants are not permitted to cause a disturbance in your store, abuse your employees, or violate the procedures for redeeming benefits. If you have a complaint against a WIC participant, complete the Complaint Form and email it to the Vendor Unit. The Complaint Form is available online in the vendor section of our website. You should provide as much detail as you can pertaining to the complaint (who, what, when, where, etc.) It is helpful to attach a duplicate receipt of the transaction so that we can identify the participant. If you have additional details about the incident and wish to attach additional pages to the form, please feel free to do so.

Please be sure to identify your store in the spot designated for the Vendor ID Number. The incident will be investigated, and the appropriate action taken. For reasons of confidentiality, we may not disclose actions taken against WIC participants. All properly filed complaints are acknowledged in writing by the Maryland WIC Program.

Email the completed form to: [mdh.wicvendor@maryland.gov](mailto:mdh.wicvendor@maryland.gov)



# REPORT SUSPECTED FRAUD & ABUSE

If you think someone is abusing or committing fraud against the Maryland WIC Program, you can let WIC know. Some examples of fraud and abuse include:

Participants who:

- Sell or give away WIC benefits.
- Sell or give away formula or foods purchased with WIC benefits.
- Lie about income or family size when applying for WIC.
- Buy non-WIC food with WIC benefits.
- Trade WIC benefits for other items or cash.

Vendors who:

- Buy WIC benefits for cash.
- Accept WIC benefits for non-WIC food.
- Accept WIC benefits for payment for past purchases.
- Accept WIC benefits for credit.
- Accept WIC benefits for a non-WIC authorized store.
- Overcharge for WIC food.

You can tell WIC about someone you know or suspect of Program abuse by:

- Calling the State Vendor Compliance Unit at 443-690-9854. You do not have to give your name.
- Printing the Maryland WIC Program Fraud and Abuse form at [www.mdwic.org](http://www.mdwic.org) and:
  - a. Mailing it to the State WIC office as indicated on the form;
  - b. Faxing it to 410-333-5683; or
  - c. Emailing it to [mdh.wic@maryland.gov](mailto:mdh.wic@maryland.gov).

Remember, you do not have to give us your name.

Thank you for helping us to identify fraud and abuse in the Maryland WIC Program!

## IN-STORE CUSTOMER SERVICE

If the customer is having difficulty finding WIC approved foods, it is good customer service to offer to help them.

For all questions regarding the participant's benefit balance, please refer the customer to their WIC clinic.

When customers are happy with the service they receive in a store, they are sure to come back. The Maryland WIC Program appreciates all the hard work of the many dedicated store personnel who work tirelessly to serve all of their customers.



# VENDOR UNIT CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Vendor Unit is here to support all WIC authorized vendors be successful. If you need assistance from the WIC Program Vendor Unit, please call in advance to schedule an appointment. Visitors must report to the building security desk and be announced before proceeding to the WIC Program administrative offices. If you have any questions, or to schedule an appointment, please email [mdh.wicvendor@maryland.gov](mailto:mdh.wicvendor@maryland.gov).

Remember to treat all Program staff and contractors with respect and courtesy. The vendor shall not verbally abuse, threaten, retain or hold, against their will, any Program staff or contractors. Abuse of any kind will result in the termination of the vendor's agreement.

## QUICK TIPS

- Have the "WIC Accepted Here" sign posted.
- Minimum Stock is always required when the store is open.
- Keep a copy of the Authorized Foods List at each register.
- All WIC approved foods must have the price displayed at, on, or near the item.
- Never allow unauthorized foods or substitutions.
- Only scan the UPC affixed to the item being purchased. Scan books or sheets are not allowed.
- Do not predetermine an item's eligibility, it is the POS's job to determine what is allowed for purchase.
- Store generated UPC's must be mapped to a UPC in the APL. Example: A UPC created for cut up fruits and vegetables.
- Always provide all receipts to the participant.
- Report UPC's that don't scan that you think should be approved.
- If something doesn't scan as approved, help the participant figure out why it didn't go through.
- Always run a balance inquiry if requested or if there are transaction issues.
- Participants are allowed the same perks given to any customer and are encouraged to use their store loyalty cards.
- If your store does not accept WIC in every checkout lane, you must post a sign where WIC is accepted.
- WIC orders are not allowed to have more than 50 single items in a transaction. Larger orders must be split into two orders.
- If experiencing problems with your stand-beside machine, check your internet connection.



# CONTACT INFORMATION

Vendor Unit contact information can be found on our website at [www.mdwic.org](http://www.mdwic.org).

**Fraud & Abuse**  
[mdh.wic@maryland.gov](mailto:mdh.wic@maryland.gov)

**Solutran eWIC Services and Helpdesk**  
866-730-7746  
[ebtservices@solutran.com](mailto:ebtservices@solutran.com)

**General Vendor Unit WIC Email**  
[mdh.wicvendor@maryland.gov](mailto:mdh.wicvendor@maryland.gov)

The State WIC Office administers the WIC Program in Maryland. In general, you should call the State agency with questions concerning vendor matters. WIC local agencies primarily handle clinical and administrative duties having to do with WIC participants. At the local clinics, participants are certified, have the WIC rules and regulations explained to them, and receive their benefits.

Each local agency has a vendor liaison that will be happy to help you. The following page lists each local WIC agency in Maryland, their phone numbers, and the counties they serve. You may call your local agency concerning WIC participants and general questions you have about WIC.



# LOCAL WIC AGENCIES

Call 1-800-242-4942 or call the WIC agency near you:

Allegany County	(301) 759-5020	<a href="mailto:achd.nutrition@maryland.gov">achd.nutrition@maryland.gov</a>
Anne Arundel County	(410) 222-6797	<a href="mailto:annearundelwic@aaacounty.org">annearundelwic@aaacounty.org</a>
Anne Arundel Spanish	(410) 222-0139	
Baltimore City (Health Department)	(410) 396-9427	<a href="mailto:WIC@baltimorecity.gov">WIC@baltimorecity.gov</a>
Baltimore City (Johns Hopkins)	(410) 614-4848	<a href="mailto:johnshopkinswic@gmail.com">johnshopkinswic@gmail.com</a>
Baltimore County	(410) 887-6000	<a href="mailto:WICProgram@baltimorecountymd.gov">WICProgram@baltimorecountymd.gov</a>
Calvert County	1-877-631-6182	<a href="mailto:charlescounty.wic@maryland.gov">charlescounty.wic@maryland.gov</a>
Caroline County	(410) 479-8060	<a href="mailto:midshore.wic@maryland.gov">midshore.wic@maryland.gov</a>
Carroll County	(410) 876-4898	<a href="mailto:carroll.wic@maryland.gov">carroll.wic@maryland.gov</a>
Cecil County	(410) 996-5255	<a href="mailto:cchd.wic@maryland.gov">cchd.wic@maryland.gov</a>
Charles County	(301) 609-6857	<a href="mailto:charlescounty.wic@maryland.gov">charlescounty.wic@maryland.gov</a>
Dorchester County	(410) 479-8060	<a href="mailto:midshore.wic@maryland.gov">midshore.wic@maryland.gov</a>
Frederick County	(301) 600-2507	<a href="mailto:wicprogram@frederickcountymd.gov">wicprogram@frederickcountymd.gov</a>
Garrett County	(301) 334-7710	<a href="mailto:mdh.garrettcountywic@maryland.gov">mdh.garrettcountywic@maryland.gov</a>
Grantsville Residents	(301) 895-3111	
Harford County	(410) 939-6680	<a href="mailto:hchd.wic@maryland.gov">hchd.wic@maryland.gov</a>
Howard County	(410) 313-7510	<a href="mailto:howardwic@howardcountymd.gov">howardwic@howardcountymd.gov</a>
Kent County	(443) 262-4423	<a href="mailto:uppershore.wic@maryland.gov">uppershore.wic@maryland.gov</a>
Montgomery County (CCI)	(301) 762-9426	<a href="mailto:wic-info@cciweb.org">wic-info@cciweb.org</a>
Prince George's County (Health Department)	(301) 856-9600	<a href="mailto:WIC_PrinceGeorges@co.pg.md.us">WIC_PrinceGeorges@co.pg.md.us</a>
Cheverly		
Clinton		
Hyattsville		
Landover		
Laurel		
Prince George's County (Greenbelt Area)	(301) 762-9426	<a href="mailto:wic-info@cciweb.org">wic-info@cciweb.org</a>
Prince George's County (Greater Baden )	(301) 324-1873	<a href="mailto:wic@gbms.org">wic@gbms.org</a>
Queen Anne's County	(443) 262-4423	<a href="mailto:uppershore.wic@maryland.gov">uppershore.wic@maryland.gov</a>
Somerset County	(410) 749-2488	<a href="mailto:lowershore.wic@maryland.gov">lowershore.wic@maryland.gov</a>
St. Mary's County	1-877-631-6182	<a href="mailto:charlescounty.wic@maryland.gov">charlescounty.wic@maryland.gov</a>
Talbot County	(410) 479-8060	<a href="mailto:midshore.wic@maryland.gov">midshore.wic@maryland.gov</a>
Washington County	(240) 313-3335	<a href="mailto:wchd.wic@maryland.gov">wchd.wic@maryland.gov</a>
Wicomico County	(410) 749-2488	<a href="mailto:lowershore.wic@maryland.gov">lowershore.wic@maryland.gov</a>
Worcester County	(410) 749-2488	<a href="mailto:lowershore.wic@maryland.gov">lowershore.wic@maryland.gov</a>
State WIC Hotline	1-800-242-4WIC	





# COMAR

## 10.54.03.15 - REQUIRED VENDOR PRACTICES AND 10.54.03.16 - VENDOR SANCTIONS

The WIC Program uses sanctions to enforce program regulations and contract provisions. Vendors who fail to follow the required practices receive sanctions that include warning letters, disqualification of authorization and termination of the vendor agreement. In rare instances, a monetary penalty may be imposed in lieu of disqualification. The sanction imposed depends on the seriousness of the violation.

The WIC Program detects violations through monitoring, educational buys, compliance investigations, inventory audits and data analysis. Vendors who commit fraud and abuse may be prosecuted under federal, state and local laws and may be fined or imprisoned in addition to program sanctions (see federal regulations at §7CFR 246.12 (h)(3)(xxv)). Also, if a vendor is disqualified from the WIC Program, its SNAP authorization may also be terminated. Likewise, a vendor that becomes disqualified from or is given a monetary penalty by the SNAP Program shall be disqualified or fined by the Maryland WIC Program.

- The WIC Program is not liable for monetary losses due to the imposition of sanctions.
- Sanctions may be revised from time to time when deemed necessary by the Maryland WIC Program or as required by federal regulations.

Required vendor practices, sanctions, and appeals are prescribed by COMAR 10.54.03.15 and 10.54.03.16 and 10.54.03.18

For the most current COMAR regulations, visit the Vendor section of our website. You can find the link to the regulations in the Vendor Resource Library.



In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.