

# October 2014 WIC Messenger



Paul R. LePage, Governor Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner



Maine WIC Nutrition Program  
Department of Health & Human Services  
Center for Disease Control & Prevention  
286 Water Street  
Augusta, ME 04330  
287-3991 1-800-437-9300  
TTY: Maine Relay 711  
Website: [www.wicforme.com](http://www.wicforme.com)

This issue contains:

Mandatory Training Topics	Page 1	Test Your WIC Knowledge	Page 3
WIC Program Authorized Foods	Page 1	eWIC Update	Page 4
What is an Inventory Audit?	Page 2	Training Logs	Page 4
Claims Against Vendors	Page 2	Rejected Check Procedure	Page 5
Products by the Ounce—You Do The Math	Page 2	Price Surveys	Page 6
WIC Program Integrity	Page 3	Answers to Test	Page 6

## Mandatory Training Topics

The WIC Program is required by federal regulation to train *all authorized stores* annually on several topics. Starting in our April, 2014 edition, each of these topics were covered in our newsletters. The topics and the issue they appeared in are:

Purpose of the WIC Program—April;  
The foods authorized by WIC—October;  
Minimum stocking requirements—July;  
Authorized Distributor Requirement and List of Approved Distributors—April ;  
Transaction and Redemption Procedures—July;  
Vendor Sanction System—July and September Special Edition;  
Vendor Complaint Process—April;  
Vendor Claims Procedure—October;  
Policy on Incentive Items—April;  
Changes in Program Requirements since the last training—April and September Special Edition.

Each store is responsible for ensuring that all staff that deal with the WIC Program are trained in each of the topics and all other information provided in these newsletters and for tracking these on your store's WIC training logs.

If you missed any of the editions of our newsletter, you can find them on our website:

<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/health-equity/wic/vendors/newsncontracts.shtml> .

## WIC Program Authorized Foods

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

- Cow's milk, soy beverages, cheese, eggs and tofu;
- Peanut butter and dry or canned beans, peas or lentils;
- Whole grains: 100% whole wheat bread, wheat or soft corn tortillas, brown rice and oatmeal;
- Fresh, frozen or canned fruit and vegetables;
- 100% 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 a complete listing of the brands, sizes, and varieties of WIC- approved foods. The WIC check will identify the quantity of each product that is allowed. The cashier must verify that the all products the WIC customer has selected are both approved by the WIC Program *and listed on their WIC check*.



## What Is An Inventory Audit?

An Inventory Audit is a tool the WIC Program can use to help us ensure vendor compliance with federal and state regulations. In an inventory audit, the WIC Program will require the store being audited to provide all its receipts for infant formula, (or other products), it purchased during a specified time period. We will compare the receipts provided to the checks the store redeemed during that same time period and verify that the store: (1) purchased the infant formula sold to WIC participants from a WIC-approved distributor; and (2) purchased sufficient product to cover the payments it requested for the redeemed checks.

If we determine that the store cannot provide receipts showing it purchased sufficient product to cover what it claims it sold to WIC participants, the store will be disqualified from the Program and held responsible for reimbursing the WIC Program the difference between the redeemed checks and the inventory receipts. The SNAP Program will also be notified. Your store will also be sanctioned if it is determined that it purchased infant formula from an unauthorized Distributor.

WIC requires stores to keep its receipts on its store premises and available to us upon request.



## Claims Against Vendors

Federal regulations provide that if the WIC Program determines a vendor committed a violation that affects payment to the vendor, WIC may delay payment or establish a claim in the amount of the full purchase price of each check that contained the overcharge or error. We will provide the vendor with an opportunity to justify or correct the overcharge or error. The vendor must pay any claim assessed by WIC. In collecting the claim, we may offset the claim against current and subsequent amounts to be paid to the vendor. Additionally, WIC may sanction the vendor for overcharges or other errors in accordance with our sanction system.

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>.

A synopsis of the vendor sanctions can also be found in the July, 2014 edition of our newsletter and recent changes can be found in the September Special Edition of our newsletter. The entire Vendor sanction system can be found in the VM-6 Vendor policy on our website, <http://http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/health-equity/wic/vendors/requirements.shtml>

## Products by the Ounce—You Do The Math



Several products require the calculation of ounces. For example, a WIC check allows 36 ounces of breakfast cereal, and the customer can select any type or combination of types of WIC-approved breakfast cereals. The cashier must do the math and verify that the customer has selected approved cereals that do not exceed the 36 ounces allowed. We see many checks reject at the bank because too much of a product was allowed. Your store may not be paid the full value of the check if it rejects because of this error. Your store may also be charged bank fees for the rejected check and the WIC Program will not reimburse your store for the bank fees. Additionally, allowing the sale of excess foods on a WIC check is a violation of federal rules and your store can be disqualified from WIC.

## WIC Program Integrity

Over the last few months, the WIC Program has been conducting covert buys across the state to ensure vendor compliance with WIC regulations. Violations were found in the majority of the compliance buys conducted. Some of the violations that were found were:

- Wrong foods or excessive amounts of foods were allowed;
- Expired products were found on the shelves;
- The customer was not offered their receipt;
- The WIC folder was not requested from the customer;
- The signature of the customer was not compared to the signatures on their WIC folder.

In cases where the store had scanners, many times the products the cashiers scanned were WIC-approved products, but were not listed on the check presented and the cashier did not verify that the item was listed on the check.

Several of these violations are violations of federal regulations, and the mandatory penalty for those violations is disqualification from the WIC Program. We are in the process of disqualifying several stores in Maine for a one-year period and the WIC Program is required to notify SNAP.

You must always verify that the items the customer has selected are both WIC-approved and listed on their check.

The WIC folder is the customer's identification. It is the only identification you can use. Always have the WIC customer sign their check on the lower, right corner of the front of the check in BLUE OR BLACK INK ONLY and always compare the signature of the WIC customer to the signatures on the WIC folder.

If the signature does not match either of the signatures on the folder or if the back of the customer's WIC folder is not filled out or if the customer does not have their WIC folder, you cannot allow the transaction. If the customer's signature does not match any of the signatures on their folder, call us immediately.



## True or False Test Your WIC Knowledge (answers on back page)

1. The WIC Program is required to train all stores in eleven specific topics each year.
2. Whole grains is one of the categories of foods provided by the WIC Program.
3. A store must deposit a WIC check for payment within 45 days of the first day to use printed on the check.
4. A WIC check will reject at the bank if it is not signed or is not signed in the proper place.
5. The cashier must verify that the amount of breakfast cereal selected is not more than 36 ounces.
6. The store can be assessed penalty points for failure to submit their price survey on time.
7. Your store must purchase infant formula only from a distributor that WIC has approved.
8. If you know the WIC customer, you do not have to ask for their WIC folder.
9. The WIC Program can sanction a store for overcharging.
10. If your store is charged bank fees for a rejected WIC check, WIC will reimburse your store for the fee.
11. Your store can be disqualified from WIC if you allow the wrong product to be sold on a WIC check.
12. If your store's WIC formula sales do not match the receipts of its formula purchases, your store may be required to reimburse WIC the difference.

## E-WIC Update



eWIC is moving along nicely.

This summer the primary focus of our efforts on this project have been on a centralized statewide UPC database for WIC approved items. Currently we have collected over 25,000 UPCs for food items.

In a couple of months we will be standing up a web portal to allow for new UPC submissions by vendors.

The State of Maine eWIC card Design has been finalized and approved.

We have also determined the order of the roll out of eWIC to the WIC local agencies and vendors. More details will be provided as we near the pilot-phase of the project which we plan to begin in June of 2015.

The state team is also very busy with updating policy and procedures to include the changes and enhancements eWIC will bring to the program. These documents will be covered during your Vendor Readiness certification as eWIC comes to your location.

Regards,  
Scott C Sloan, PMP  
eWIC Project Manager

## Training Logs

As of October 15th , all vendors are required to document the training of all staff who handle cash register transactions on the WIC process. What does this mean for you? It means that anytime you hire a new cashier you must document that you have trained them on handling WIC transactions using our training materials (found online) and have them sign the log saying they have received the training. Additionally, anytime you receive new information, including these newsletters, from WIC on food lists, procedures, or transactions you must train all of your staff who process WIC transactions and have them sign the log indicating that they have received the training.

We have created a sample training log that you can download from <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/health-equity/wic/vendors/training.shtml>. Keep copies of your logs and the materials you use to train from in a file or binder in your store and have it accessible for state WIC staff to view during monitoring or other store visits.



## What Do I Do If A WIC Check Rejects?



The WIC Program will make payment to the Vendor upon receipt of validly transacted and redeemed WIC checks for food costs incurred in providing WIC approved foods to WIC customers. We shall deny payment, either partially or fully, to a Vendor for improperly transacted or redeemed WIC checks; or may establish a claim for payments already made on improperly transacted WIC checks; or may offset future payments for the claim.

We have the right to demand refunds for charges of more than the Vendor's actual selling price and shall deny payment to the Vendor for more than the price limitations of the WIC check.

The Vendor shall submit WIC checks for payment within two months (60 days) from the "FIRST DAY TO USE" printed on the check. We will not pay the Vendor for any WIC checks submitted outside the time frame. Prior to deposit, the Vendor must review all WIC checks for possible errors which will cause a check to be rejected by WIC's banking contractor. The Vendor may incur bank fees for rejected checks, which WIC Program will not reimburse. If a WIC check is returned to the store because the bank could not read the Vendor's stamp, the Vendor may re-stamp their number on the check and redeposit it.

If you believe a payment denial has been made incorrectly, or believe there is a justifiable reason why payment should be made, you can submit an appeal form to the State WIC office within three months (90 days) of the "FIRST DAY TO USE" printed on the check. You can find the appeal form on our website, [www.wicforme.com](http://www.wicforme.com). You must include on the form a brief explanation of the of the circumstances, the reason why payment should be reconsidered and what steps have been taken to prevent the problem in the future; (2) Vendor stamp number, date mailed, check number, complete store name and address, contact name and phone number; (3) the check image with the denial/rejection stamp and receipt copy of the original receipt or journal transaction; (4) A corrective action plan demonstrating to WIC how the problem will be prevented in the future. Incomplete appeal submissions will be denied. Remember to always keep a photocopy of all items being mailed, including the front and back of the check.

### Reasons a WIC Check Will Reject:

1. Unreadable or Missing Vendor Stamp—the vendor stamp is missing or unreadable by the bank's equipment;
2. Unauthorized Vendor Stamp—The stamp is no longer valid;
3. Missing Signature—The customer did not sign the check or did not sign in the appropriate place;
4. Early Cashing—The check was used before the "FIRST DAY TO USE";
5. Late Cashing—The check was used after the "LAST DAY TO USE";
6. Obvious Alteration—The check has been altered;
7. Unreasonable Dollar Amount—The amount requested is over the maximum value set for that check type;
8. Encoding Error—The bank has scanned the check for a different amount than written on the check. Please verify your bank statement—your bank may have encoded the check incorrectly.
9. 2 Present/Void Do Not Redeposit—The check has already been paid.

## Price Surveys



Price surveys are due November 21, 2014. We have added several additional products, including infant formulas, tofu, and 24 oz. bread. Please complete the surveys for each product listed that your store carries, being certain to include only WIC authorized products. Please indicate your highest price for each WIC-approved product category.

Please keep in mind that your store can be assessed 5 penalty points for failure to submit the completed survey.

## Answers to Test Your WIC Knowledge

1. False. There are 10 required topics.
2. True. Whole grains is one of the categories of foods WIC can provide.
3. False. Your store must deposit WIC checks within 60 days of the first day to use.
4. True. Unsigned checks or checks signed in the wrong place will be rejected at the bank.
5. True. The cashier must verify that the weight of the breakfast cereal selected is not more than 36 ounces .
6. True. Five (5) penalty points will be assessed for failure to submit a price survey.
7. True. WIC requires stores to purchase infant formula only from distributors authorized by WIC.
8. False. You must always request the customer's WIC folder, even if you know the customer. No other form of ID is allowed.
9. True. Overcharging the WIC Program can result in sanctions, including repayment to WIC and disqualification.
10. False. The WIC Program will not reimburse a store for bank fees charged for rejected WIC checks.
11. True. Your store can be disqualified if it allows wrong products to be sold two or more times.
12. True. Your store can be required to reimburse WIC if it cannot prove it purchased sufficient formula to cover the WIC checks for which it is requested payment.

### DHHS Non-Discrimination Notice

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, color, creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, or national origin, in admission to, access to, or operations of its programs, services, or activities, or its hiring or employment practices. This notice is provided as required by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Maine Human Rights Act and Executive Order Regarding State of Maine Contracts for Services. Questions, concerns, complaints or requests for additional information regarding the ADA may be forwarded to DHHS' ADA Compliance/EEO Coordinators, 11 State House Station – 221 State Street, Augusta, Maine 04333, 207-287-4289 (V), 207-287-3488 (V), TTY users call Maine relay 711. Individuals who need auxiliary aids for effective communication in program and services of DHHS are invited to make their needs and preferences known to the ADA Compliance/EEO Coordinators. This notice is available in alternate formats, upon request.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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

TTY: Maine Relay 711  
Ana.Scovil@maine.gov 287-5366  
Tina.Bernier@maine.gov 287-5367

Maine WIC Program: 1-800-437-9300

[www.wicforme.com](http://www.wicforme.com)



Paul R. LePage, Governor

Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner