FLORIDA

WIC

Vendor Handbook

August 1, 2016

www.FloridaWIC.org
1.800.342.3556

Table of Contents

What is WIC? 1

The WIC Vendor's Commitment 2

What Is A Competitive Price? 3

Applications for WIC Authorized Vendors 3

What Food May A WIC Customer Purchase? 5

WIC Approved Items for Purchase 5

Milk Products 6

Eggs 6

Cheese 7

Yogurt 7

Breakfast Cereal 7

Baby Cereal 8

Baby Fruits and Vegetables 8

Baby Meats 8

Fruit Juice 8

Whole Grains 10

Dry Beans and Canned Beans 10

Peanut Butter 11

Canned Fish 11

Fruits and Vegetables 11

Infant Formulas 13

Vendor Responsibility for Least Expensive Purchase Requirement 15

Assessment of Least Expensive Sales 15

Failure to Meet Least Expensive Targets 16

Manufacturer and Store Promotions and Specials....17
Authorized Promotions....17
Buy one, get one free....17
Buy one, get one at a reduced price....17
Free ounces added by the manufacturer....17
Manufacturer or store cents-off coupons....17
Store “savings” card or “customer reward” card....17
Unauthorized Promotions or Incentives....17
Offer raffles....17
Offer Free food or non-food items....17
Provide Grocery delivery, or....17
Provide customer transportation....18
Provide refunds for authorized foods obtained with WIC EBT....18
Permit exchange of food items unless such exchange is for an identical WIC-authorized food item which is defective, spoiled, or outdated....18
Accept telephone orders for WIC purchases....18
WIC Transaction Processing....19
WIC EBT Card and the “Shopping List”....19
Customer Purchase with WIC EBT and Printed Receipt....19
How WIC Authorized Representatives Create Their PINs....20
What The Vendor Should Know....20
Vendors May Report Program Abuse Anonymously....22
Payment of Redemptions....22
Competitive Price....22
Recovery above Maximum Allowable Reimbursement Level (MARL)....23
WIC Compliance Reviews....24
Vendor Monitoring....24
Sanctions for Non-Compliance....25

Use of WIC Service Mark 26
WIC Vendor Training and Education 27
Vendor Materials Available by Order 28
When to Call The State WIC Office or Local WIC Vendor Manager 28
Vendor Reporting Program Abuse or Fraud 29
Addressing Program Abuse or Fraud 29
Vendors Encourage Program Compliance As The Priority 29
Actions When Encouraging Compliance Fails 30
Evaluation and Response to Reports of Program Abuse 30
WIC Vendor Responsibilities and Rights 31

What is WIC?

WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) provides WIC funding to states in the form of an annual grant. The federal requirement for the grant award is that the funding be administered by a state health agency. In Florida, the state health agency is the Florida Department of Health. WIC services are provided throughout the state by the Florida Department of Health in county health departments and by other agencies.

WIC is available to pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants and children under 5 years of age. WIC is provided to participants during critical times of growth and development, in order to prevent the occurrence of health problems, and to improve the health of WIC eligible women and children. In order to participate in the Florida WIC Program, clients must be currently living in Florida, be income eligible, and at nutrition risk.

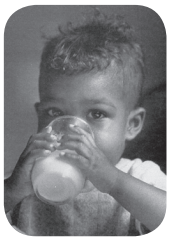
The WIC program provides participants with supplemental nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health and community services. WIC services help clients to achieve optimal growth and development and build a foundation for healthy eating patterns in the future. The goals of nutritional counseling and education provided in WIC are to:

- teach the relationship between proper nutrition and good health
- achieve a positive change in eating habits
- promote the optimal use of WIC supplemental foods and other nutritious foods

The counseling provided while the client is on WIC helps families learn healthy eating habits and how to make nutritious food choices that they can continue to practice when they are no longer eligible for WIC.

A licensed nutritionist (or other nutrition professional) in your local WIC office conducts a nutrition assessment, provides client centered counseling, and prescribes a specific food package to supplement the daily diet for each WIC customer. The prescribed food package is based on the needs of the participant, USDA regulations, and state WIC requirements. WIC foods provide nutrients that are often lacking or consumed in inadequate amounts by WIC customers. When consumed in the prescribed portions, these foods will help to ensure that the WIC customer has the needed nutrients for good health, growth, and development.

WIC promotes breastfeeding as the normal way of feeding and nurturing children. WIC provides expert assistance and support to mothers and infants who choose to breastfeed. Infants who are not breastfed or who are partially breastfed may receive infant formula to supplement the infant's dietary needs.



The WIC Vendor's Commitment

Those grocers selected to be WIC Vendors are designated members of the WIC Program Team. That team has two important responsibilities. First, the team is responsible to deliver only those prescribed WIC eligible food items to WIC customers. Second, the team must be constantly vigilant to ensure that these WIC food items are provided at the most competitive price on a consistent basis.

The WIC Program uses a selection process to identify those commercial grocers that are capable of providing the required WIC eligible food items in the necessary quantities and at the most competitive price in the market.

Those vendors that apply for participation in WIC must demonstrate that they meet WIC vendor and inventory requirements. They must also show that they are qualified and capable of sustained, high quality performance throughout the life of their contract with WIC. Further, these vendors must show that they are able and willing to ensure WIC only pays for those WIC eligible food items prescribed.

In regard to competitive price and cost, WIC functions exactly like any consumer in today's commercial grocery market. The federal grant regulations require that WIC find and pay only the most competitive market price for food items. WIC must find efficiencies and economies to make each grant dollar stretch, meeting the needs of as many Participants as possible.

Unlike other programs, the amount of funds for WIC is very limited. WIC must "watch its pennies" just like any Florida family. Consequently, WIC is required to identify which commercial grocery vendors consistently provide the most competitive price on prescribed food items. This is done by simply comparing each participating vendor's prices to prices in other stores in individual groups of stores that are located in specified regions of the state and process a similar volume in WIC redemptions. This comparative process is a fact based mathematical computation.

After a thorough screening and price analysis, the most competitive grocers are then selected to participate as a WIC Authorized Vendor. That selection includes certain responsibilities. The vendor is required to maintain specific inventory quantities on its shelves at all times. Equally as important, the vendor is required to charge a competitive price at all times. That price is determined by all WIC Vendors in the market when they report their charges for each transaction. WIC conducts daily analysis of these redemptions to ensure the most competitive price continues to be charged. As a result of this analysis, any charges WIC should receive from an authorized WIC vendor that are above its peer group competitive price limit may be reclaimed.

The WIC Vendor Agreement specifically requires vendors to charge a competitive price for all WIC eligible items throughout the term of the Agreement. The Program completes its competitive price assessment monthly and recovers any charges above the competitive price charged by all vendors in each peer group.

What Is A Competitive Price?

New WIC Vendors routinely ask "What is a competitive price?". The WIC Program does not set nor does it dictate food prices. Rather it relies upon the participating vendors to establish the competitive prices using the prices each charges daily for their redemptions for WIC eligible items. Only the most competitive priced WIC Vendors remain as suppliers to the WIC customers.

Therefore, the best answer to "What is a competitive price?" is ***your best price*** for the product. Your best price should include a reasonable profit as well. The WIC Program finds that healthy vendors mean healthy participants. The mutually shared responsibility is clear for WIC and its selected authorized vendors. Only those vendors that charge WIC the best most competitive price in the market compared to others stores of similar WIC volume will remain as WIC Authorized Vendors. This is absolutely essential to ensure that limited WIC grant funds are used as effectively as possible supporting WIC customers throughout Florida daily.

Applications for WIC Authorized Vendors

Application for participation as a WIC Authorized Vendor is considered on a competitive basis. Each three years, vendors are required to reapply for participation. The vendor agreement does not constitute a license or a property interest. If a vendor wishes to continue to be authorized beyond the period of its current agreement, the vendor must reapply for authorization.

If a vendor is disqualified, that is the WIC Program is prohibited from purchasing food items from that vendor, the State agency must terminate the vendor's agreement. A vendor in this category will be required to reapply in order to be considered for authorization only after the period of disqualification has expired. In all cases, the vendor's new application is subject to the State agency's vendor selection criteria and any vendor limiting criteria in effect at the time of application.

In order to be considered for participation as a WIC Authorized vendor, the vendor must meet vendor selection criteria; there must be a need for the additional vendor in order to serve the participant population within the area, and the vendor must demonstrate that it will charge competitive prices within its peer group. The vendor must continue to comply with the vendor selection criteria throughout the agreement period including any changes to the criteria.

The State agency is required to assess the vendor performance throughout the agreement period. The WIC Vendor Agreement must be terminated with any vendor if the vendor fails to meet the current vendor selection criteria. This selection analysis focuses consistently on competitive price analysis. Competitive price analysis is completed on a continuing basis. Vendors that fail to meet competitive price criteria will be notified. Additional factors are described in the remainder of this guide.

Vendor application periods are established from February 1 to March 31 of each year for the specific vendor region in the state. The application cycle is established on a three year increment. All vendors in the Northern, Central and Southern regions of the state will be notified approximately two weeks prior to the start of their application cycle and are required to complete their application and have it submitted no later than March 31st of the cycle year.

Applications will be evaluated for compliance with vendor selection criteria, competitive price and participant requirement in the vendor's region. Vendors will be notified December 1st of the cycle year of the result of their application.

Those vendors selected for the next three year cycle will be presented with a new WIC Vendor Agreement on or about December 1st that must be signed and returned and becomes effective July 1st of the cycle year.

What Food May A WIC Customer Purchase?

The Florida WIC Program approves a variety of nutritious foods that meet federal and state requirements and are appealing to WIC customers. The specific types and quantities of foods that may be purchased by WIC customers are incorporated in the WIC electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card.

Every EBT purchase is controlled by the use of the Universal Product Code (UPC) imprinted on each product that scans through your store check-out. The authorized UPC codes are identified in the Approved Product List (APL) and only those UPCs listed on the WIC EBT card and in the APL will be considered for WIC payment.

WIC customers are prescribed food items by type and quantity. Consequently, the WIC customer may not substitute other foods for those prescribed. Think of how your medical professional prescribes medication for you or your family. A pharmacy can not substitute another medication for the one prescribed. Similarly, in WIC any substitution of food is prohibited. In fact, if a vendor does substitute an item in place of the food prescribed on the WIC EBT card, that act will be grounds for removing the vendor from the list of WIC authorized providers.

The WIC EBT card contains the maximum amount that can be purchased with the WIC EBT card. WIC customers may choose to purchase all of the food listed or some of the food listed, but they may not purchase more than the quantity listed in their benefits balance. Additionally, WIC customers may choose to pay the difference in cash or other form of acceptable payment at check-out time if they do wish to obtain more items than listed in the WIC EBT transaction.

It is important to note that vendors may not require a WIC customer to purchase everything on the WIC EBT card if the person chooses to leave a food item out of their purchase transaction. Equally important, WIC customers may not receive rain checks or cash if an item is out of stock or if they choose not to buy an item. The WIC EBT card provides additional flexibility for today's WIC customer. Therefore, the only time a reduction in the amount on the WIC EBT card may be transacted is when the WIC customer actually receives the prescribed food item.

WIC Approved Items for Purchase

The WIC Program prescribes various quantities of a number of staple food items. These items include:

- Milk
- Eggs
- Cheese
- Yogurt
- Breakfast Cereal
- Baby Cereal
- Baby Fruits and Vegetables
- Baby Meats
- Fruit Juices
- Whole Grains
- Dry Beans and Canned Beans
- Peanut Butter
- Canned Fish
- Fruits and Vegetables

Milk Products

WIC customers must buy the least expensive brand of milk available. Each vendor must declare their least expensive brand of milk. Please refer to the section entitled “Vendor Responsibility for Least Expensive Purchasing Requirement” in this Handbook for important instructions regarding processing the least expensive requirements.

The WIC EBT card will control the type, size and kind of milk that may be purchased. It is important to remember that the WIC EBT requirements are specified in gallons, half gallons, quarts, or cans (for evaporated milk). The vendor must provide the proper container size specified on the WIC EBT card in order to receive appropriate reimbursement for the sale. For example, if the EBT card requires a gallon, then only a gallon may be sold. The vendor may not substitute two one-half gallon jugs in place of the gallon requirement. Additionally, the WIC Program will periodically evaluate a vendor’s redemptions by package size against their supplier invoices. If a vendor makes a substitution it may cost money to the vendor. Further, it is a program violation and may also result in being removed from the WIC authorized vendor list.

Refrigerated Milk. One-gallon size only, unless specified on the WIC EBT card. For example, when the WIC EBT card specifies the gallon size and the WIC customer can purchase two gallons, the WIC customer must select only one-gallon containers. It is important to note that quart and half-gallon sizes may only be purchased when specified on the WIC EBT card available balance.

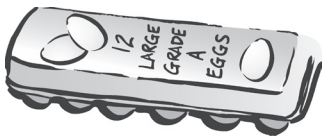
Evaporated Milk. Provided in 12 ounce cans and specified on the WIC EBT card in number of cans permitted.

Dry Milk. Non-fat dry milk may be purchased in the box or pouch. For purposes of measure, 3.2 ounce pouch = 1 quart or 0.25 gallon, 9.6 ounces = 3 quarts or 0.75 gallon; 16 ounces = 5 quarts or 1.25 gallons; 25.6 ounces = 8 quarts or 2 gallons; 32 ounces = 10 quarts or 2.5 gallons; and 64 ounces = 20 quarts or 5 gallons.

UHT Milk. UHT or Ultra-Heat Treatment milk is specially treated for a non-refrigerated shelf life of six to nine months – until opened. Some WIC customers prefer this product when storage or refrigeration is not readily available. This product is normally available in the quart size.

Special Circumstances. Under special circumstances 2% reduced fat milk; lactose free milk; soy milk; and UHT milk in 8 ounce boxes (3 pack) are allowed when provided on the WIC EBT card list.

Eggs



WIC customers must select the least expensive brand of white, chicken eggs available. Allowed sized are Large Dozen, Extra Large Dozen, or Jumbo Dozen, or Half-Dozen size. Please refer to the section entitled “Vendor Responsibility for Least Expensive Purchasing Requirement” in this Handbook for important instructions regarding processing the

least expensive requirements. No specialty or low cholesterol, organic, or brown eggs, and no “Eggland’s Best”. The WIC customer does not have to purchase the least expensive size available.

Cheese

WIC customers must select the least expensive cheese available. Please refer to the section entitled “Vendor Responsibility for Least Expensive Purchasing Requirement” in this Handbook for important instructions regarding processing the least expensive requirements.

The WIC EBT card and UPC codes specified on the benefits balance will control what may be purchased. The following types of cheese may be purchased by WIC customers with the WIC EBT card. They may purchase:

- Deluxe American slices, 16 ounce package. However no “singles” or individually wrapped slices are permitted. No 2% reduced fat American cheese is permitted.
- Mild or medium cheddar, 8 or 16 ounce slices, or shredded, or block. No 2% reduced fat, fat free, or white Cheddar is permitted.
- Part Skim Mozzarella, 8 or 16 ounce slices, shredded, block, or round cheese is permitted. No whole milk or fat-free Mozzarella is permitted.

Additionally the following are not permitted. Fat-free and reduced–fat cheeses are not permitted. No cheese product or cheese food. No cheese mixtures such as Cheddarella. No spreads, snack, cubed, shaped, string, crumbles, cracker cuts, strips, or cheese from the delicatessen. No cheese with added ingredients, imported or waxed cheeses. No organic products are allowed.

Yogurt

Yogurt is allowed in a 32 ounce (2 lb) tub size, or 4-packs of 4 oz cups (16 oz package), or 8 packs of 4 oz cups (32 oz). Customers may choose any brand and any flavor of Nonfat or Lowfat yogurt that contains 0 – 2% fat with no more than 40 grams of sugar per 8 ounce serving or 20 grams per 4 oz serving. “Greek” yogurt is allowed. No yogurt with artificial sweeteners or stevia are authorized. Many of these yogurts are called “LIGHT” yogurt.

Breakfast Cereal

The breakfast cereal requirements with WIC EBT are listed in total ounces authorized for purchase. Breakfast cereal containers must be 11 to 36 ounces. The WIC EBT card benefits will permit purchase of a number of different cereal types. No organic products are authorized and may not be substituted. Please refer to the Florida WIC Foods pamphlet or www.FloridaWIC.org for the current list of allowed brands, types, container sizes, and any restrictions on cereals.

Baby Cereal

Baby cereals are allowed in an 8 ounce or 16 ounce box or plastic container. The WIC EBT card benefits will permit purchase of a number of different baby cereals. Participants are not allowed baby cereal in cans or jars. No baby cereal with fruit, formula, yogurt, or DHA is permitted. No organic products are allowed.

Baby Fruits and Vegetables

The baby fruits and vegetables are listed in total ounces authorized for WIC EBT purchases. Any brand of baby fruits and vegetables are allowed in 4 ounce jars, or 8 ounce packages. Regular and Organic are allowed. WIC customers are not allowed to purchase baby fruits and vegetables with the WIC EBT card that have added DHA, sugars, starches, salt, sodium, meat, poultry, cereal, noodles, rice, yogurt, raisins, or granola. They may not purchase any desserts, dinners or casseroles. No toddler foods are permitted. No fruit or vegetable juices may be provided.

Baby Meats

Baby meats with gravy or broth are allowed in 2.5 ounce jars. Baby meats are not permitted for purchase with the WIC EBT card if they contain added sugars, salt, or sodium. No meat sticks, no baby meat combinations such as meat and vegetables or dinners such as spaghetti and meatballs are allowed. No organic products are allowed.

Please refer to the WIC Foods pamphlet or the Florida WIC website at www.FloridaWIC.org for the current list of allowed brands, types, container sizes, and any restrictions on baby fruits and vegetables, baby cereals, and baby food meats.

Fruit Juice

The WIC EBT card benefits will identify UPCs for those fruit juices authorized for purchase with WIC EBT. Fruit juices must contain 100% juice with no added sugar or syrup. In addition, only specific single flavor juices are allowed. No organic juices are allowed. Please refer to the section entitled “Vendor Responsibility for Least Expensive Purchase Declaration and Requirement” in this Handbook for important instructions regarding processing the least expensive requirements for the refrigerated and frozen fruit juices in this section.

Juice in Refrigerated Plastic Jugs or Cartons WIC customers are required to buy the least expensive available of the size and flavor of refrigerated orange or grapefruit juice selected.

The WIC EBT card available benefits will control what may be purchased. The below sizes and flavors may be purchased with the WIC EBT card. The customer may purchase:

- Gallon (128 ounces) of Orange Juice
- Half Gallon (64 ounces) of Orange Juice
- Half Gallon (64 ounces) of Grapefruit Juice (Pink, Ruby Red, or White)

Juice in Non-Frozen Plastic Bottles or Jugs

WIC customers are not limited to the least expensive brand in this category. Container sizes of 48 oz, 64 oz, 96 oz, and 128 oz are authorized in this category. Flavors of allowed juices are: Apple, Grape (purple), Pineapple, Orange, White Grape, and White Grapefruit. The WIC EBT card and UPC specified on the card will control what may be purchased. The primary source for determining what is authorized for purchase is the vendor's current approved product list (APL).

However, if additional information is required, please refer to the Florida WIC Food pamphlet or our website at www.FloridaWIC.org for information on the current list of allowed brands, types, container sizes, and any restrictions on refrigerated plastic jugs or cartons, frozen concentrate juices, non-frozen concentrate, and plastic bottles or jugs of juice.

Frozen Concentrate Juice

WIC customers must buy the least expensive available of the size and flavor of frozen juice selected. They are permitted to buy juice that has added calcium, vitamin D, and pulp as long as it is the least expensive of the size and flavor.

The WIC EBT card and UPC specified on the card will control what may be purchased. The sizes and flavors below may be purchased with the WIC EBT card. They may purchase:

- Size standards: 11.5 ounces, 12 ounces and 16 ounces.
- Flavors of 100% juice: Apple, Grape (purple), Pineapple, Orange, White Grape; and White Grapefruit.

Note: The 11.5 and 12 oz. sizes are considered to be the same size when comparing prices.

Non-Frozen Concentrate

The 11.5 ounce size is the only size permitted. They may purchase:

- Welch's Grape Juice

Whole Grains

100% Whole Wheat Bread – Specified brands of 16 ounces (1 pound) loaf are authorized for purchase. Customers are not permitted to purchase breads with added ingredients such as raisins, other dried fruits, or nuts. No organic products are allowed in this category.

100% Whole Wheat Pasta – 16 ounce size is the only size authorized. Customers may choose any brand, or any shape pasta. "Whole wheat flour" and/or "whole durum wheat flour" must be the only flours listed in the ingredient list.

Brown Rice – Any brand of regular, instant, or boil-in-bag 14-16 oz. bag or box is authorized for purchase. The customer is not allowed to purchase white rice or wild rice. Products may not contain added ingredients such as seasonings. No rice may be purchased in jars nor may it be frozen. Additionally, no organic products are allowed.

Corn Tortillas – 16 ounce bag is the only size authorized. Customers may not purchase flour tortillas, taco shells, or tortilla chips. No organic products are allowed.

100% Whole Wheat Tortillas – 16 ounce bag is the only size authorized. Customers may choose any brand. "Whole wheat flour" must be the only flour listed in the ingredient list.

Dry Beans and Canned Beans

Some examples of beans include but are not limited to: black beans, black-eyed peas, cannellini beans, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), great northern beans, kidney beans, lentils, lima beans, navy beans, pink beans, pinto beans, pigeon peas, red beans, soybeans, split peas, and white beans.

Dry beans, dry peas, or dry lentils – 16 ounce (1 pound) bag is the only size permitted. Any brand of dry beans, peas, or lentils are allowed.

Customers are not permitted to purchase flavored, seasoned, gourmet, or soup mix varieties. No organic products are permitted.

Canned Beans – 15 to 16 ounce can is the only size permitted. Any brand of canned beans is allowed. These products may be with salt or reduced sodium. There may also be added sugar, syrup or dextrose. However, customers may not purchase products with added meat, fat, oils or artificial sweeteners. No soups may be purchased. No chili beans, seasoned beans, refried beans, or baked beans. No organic products are allowed. No canned green peas, green beans, wax beans or snap beans are permitted. (These types of peas and beans are allowed to be purchased in the Fruits and Vegetables category only.)

Peanut Butter

WIC customers may purchase 16 to 18 ounce jars only. The product may be creamy, crunchy, extra crunchy, chunky, super chunk, or natural peanut butter only. Customers are not permitted to purchase products with added jelly, marshmallow, honey, chocolate, or artificial sweeteners. No spreads, whipped, fortified, plus, or reduced fat products may be purchased. No organic products are allowed.

The WIC EBT card and UPC specified on the card will control what may be purchased. The primary source for determining what is authorized for purchase is the vendor's current approved product list (APL).

However, if additional information is required, please refer to the Florida WIC Food pamphlet or our website at www.FloridaWIC.org for information on the current list of allowed brands, types, container sizes, and any restrictions on peanut butter.

Canned Fish

WIC customers are permitted to purchase 5 ounce can or larger of canned light tuna and/or pink salmon. Any brand packed in water, spring water, or oil is allowed. No white or albacore tuna, sockeye or red salmon is permitted. Customers may not purchase pouches or products that have olive oil, lemon, flavored, gourmet, smoked, grilled, blackened, or added ingredients. No low or less sodium nor organic products are allowed.

The WIC EBT card and UPC specified on the card will control what may be purchased. The primary source for determining what is authorized for purchase is the vendor's current approved product list (APL).

However, if additional information is required, please refer to the WIC Food Pamphlet or our website at www.FloridaWIC.org for information on the current list of allowed brands, types, container sizes, and any restrictions on canned fish.

Fruits and Vegetables

One of the primary purposes of WIC nutrition counseling is to encourage greater use of fruits and vegetables. Vendors are required to have a good assortment of fresh fruits and vegetables available for purchase with the WIC EBT card.

WIC customers are allowed to purchase organic fruits and vegetables under their Fruits and Vegetables allowance. They are not allowed to purchase such items that have added sugar or syrup. This limitation includes no added sugar, sucrose, corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup,

maltose, dextrose, honey, and maple syrup. Artificial sweeteners are not allowed which include Splenda®, NutraSweet®, Equal®, aspartame, saccharin, sucralose, and acesulfame-k.

Additionally, dried fruits and vegetables of any type are not allowed. This includes but is not limited to: raisins, prunes, fruit roll-ups, fruit leathers, dried potatoes, potato chips, corn chips, popcorn, dry beans, dry peas and dry lentils. Dry beans, peas, and lentils may only be purchased when dry or canned beans are on the WIC EBT card.

Allowed

Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

- Any brand, variety, size or mixture of fresh fruits and vegetables with no added sugar, syrup, artificial sweeteners, fat or oil.
- These items may be whole or cut up.
- They may be presented as loose or packed item(s) in bags or plastic containers.
- Fresh garlic, onions, scallions, cassava, and yucca are allowed.

Canned Fruits and Vegetables (including plastic or glass containers)

- Any brand, variety, size, or mixture of canned fruits and vegetables with no added sugar, syrup, artificial sweeteners, fat, oil, or meat.
- Canned fruit must be packed in water or fruit juice and may not have added salt.
- Canned vegetables may be with or without salt and may have added seasonings or spices.
- Applesauce with no sugar added and applesauce/fruit blends with no sugar added.
- Tomato sauce, tomato paste, whole tomatoes, crushed tomatoes, diced tomatoes, and salsa with no added sugar, syrup, artificial sweeteners, fat, oil or meat.
- Canned beans and peas such as green peas, green beans, wax beans, snap beans, and snap peas are allowed. Please note that canned green peas and whole kernel corn may have added sugar.

Frozen Fruits and Vegetables

- Any brand, variety, size or mixture of frozen fruits and vegetables with no added sugar, syrup, artificial sweeteners, fat, oil, meat, pasta, rice, or sauce. Frozen vegetables may be with or without salt.
- Any frozen beans or peas such as lima beans and blackeye peas are allowed.

Not Allowed

In summary form, the following information applies to all fruit and vegetable purchases. The following categories and items are not allowed for purchase with WIC EBT Cash Value Benefits:

- No items from the salad bar, party trays, or fruit baskets.
- No decorative fruits or vegetables, painted pumpkins, or gourds.
- No herbs and spices. No minced garlic in jars. No ginger root.
- No edible blossoms, flowers, or plants.
- No dried or dehydrated fruits or vegetables.
- No baby and toddler fruits & vegetables,
- No pouches of fruit purees or fruit pulps. No frozen fruit bars.
- No beverage such as fruit juice, tomato juice, and vegetable juice.
- No nuts, coconuts, or fruit-nut mixtures.
- No ketchup, relishes, pickles, olives, sauerkraut, or mustard.
- No jelly, jams, fruit preserves, or apple butter.
- No dry or canned beans/peas that are only allowed in the WIC EBT for “Beans” category.

Infant Formulas

Inventory & Source

The WIC Program actively promotes breastfeeding, yet there are a variety of reasons why a mother may choose to partially or fully feed their babies infant formula. WIC infants who are not fully breastfed may receive the brand of infant formula authorized in the APL and designated in the UPC on the WIC EBT card. The WIC Program offers standard milk-based and soy-based formulas to most infants who are not fully breastfed. At any given time, the Florida WIC Program has a contract with one or two infant formula manufacturers. The contract(s) provide(s) the State of Florida with rebate money when the contract formulas are bought with WIC EBT card. These rebate funds are used to purchase foods for additional WIC clients. The WIC Program must ensure that the correct infant formula is sold for the WIC rebate contract and to ensure the infant is receiving the appropriately prescribed formula. This is all controlled by the UPC assigned to each product. Simply stated, if the UPC does not “scan” as approved for WIC purchase, it is not to be paid for by the Florida WIC Program.

At the request of a health care provider, WIC will also grant special formula products for those infants who have medical problems. We do not ask vendors to stock all special formula products, but we do encourage some vendors to stock special formula products that are

regularly used by WIC clients. Your local WIC vendor manager and WIC office can provide more specific information about the special formula products used in your area.

Florida WIC vendors and all stores competitively applying for the limited number of WIC authorized vendor positions must purchase infant formulas from a list of approved sources maintained by the state WIC office. The list will be updated to show the addition or removal of approved infant formula sources. Vendors must check the list to ensure that infant formulas are purchased only from the approved sources. The list is available at the Florida WIC Program website: www.FloridaWIC.org in the Food Vendors Section, click on "WIC Authorized Food and Formula Supply Sources."

This approved list is also the standard against which all inventory audits are compared. Periodically, the WIC office will conduct inventory audits of a vendor account. The results of the audit are compared to the total redemptions for a specific item and the total number of items the vendor purchased from their suppliers. *The only invoices for which the WIC authorized vendor will receive credit are invoices from WIC State Office approved infant formula sources listed on the above website*. Simply put, the vendor will not receive credit for any formula invoice unless that invoice is verified as being issued by state approved source. In such a situation the vendor will be required to repay the charges for unsupported inventory. Additionally, the WIC Program may be prohibited from purchasing food from that vendor.

No Exchanges, Returns or Substitutions

After a WIC customer purchases formula with WIC EBT, the customer may not exchange the formula for another formula or for cash. If the WIC customer requires a different formula, they must return to their local WIC office and a licensed nutritionist will assist them in determining what changes may be required. Under no circumstances can the WIC customer require the WIC vendor to either change the kind of formula or exchange the formula for another kind or type.

Additionally, WIC customers may not substitute different sizes of formula. For example, if the authorized UPC on the WIC EBT transaction calls for a 13 ounce can of concentrated liquid formula, the customer cannot substitute that item for a 13 ounce can of powdered formula. The only person authorized to change the type of formula is the nutritionist at the WIC clinic. If a customer attempts to make such a substitution, the WIC vendor is required to deny that substitution and may ask the WIC customer to return to the local WIC office if they need to make a change in formula.

Similarly, under no circumstances may a WIC customer purchase a formula other than the brand, can size or type of formula specified by the WIC EBT UPC record. WIC customers that attempt to do so and who persist in these attempts after being instructed to return to their local WIC office should be reported to the WIC vendor manager at the local WIC office.

Vendor Responsibility for Least Expensive Purchase Requirement

Each WIC vendor has agreed to the terms of and signed a WIC Vendor Agreement. One of the key requirements in that agreement is that vendors must control and manage their inventory to ensure that WIC customers purchase only the least expensive of designated food items. This is one of the primary means of controlling WIC Program food expenses. This is a very important aspect of the WIC Program. This is because controlling these key prices enables WIC, just like any Florida family, to stretch its food dollars. This in turn enables WIC and you as WIC vendors to serve more eligible mothers and young children.

The Florida WIC Program requires the WIC authorized vendors to sell and the WIC customers to purchase only the least expensive of designated WIC foods. The customer's WIC EBT card contains UPCs for products they are authorized to purchase. The WIC customer is required to buy the least expensive type and size of some WIC foods.

The least expensive food items are updated on the state WIC web site. The current items include milk, eggs, cheese, refrigerated juice, and frozen concentrate juice. Other items will be added to this list as costs and budgets change.

Vendors must manage their inventories to ensure that at least 85% of all their sales are for their least expensive brand or for any other similar item that is priced at, equal to, or less than the cost of the least expensive item. The vendor may have an item that is less expensive than the least expensive because of a short-term "sale" or "special" offer at or below the least expensive price. The application of a "cents off" or "product coupon" to the price of an item that results in the sale price equal to or less than the least expensive price items would also enable credit as part of the 85% requirement. The vendor may also have obtained another product line that is priced equal to or less than the price of the least expensive brand.

Assessment of Least Expensive Sales

The WIC Program and the vendor will remain in frequent contact regarding the least expensive brand performance. The objective of this interaction is to assess how well the WIC Program manages its limited budget to serve the maximum number of WIC women, infants, and children. As a WIC vendor, you are a key participant in controlling costs as well.

Periodically the WIC Program will assess vendor redemptions. First, the vendor's redemptions of their least expensive brands will be compared to other least expensive brands redemptions by other vendors in the state for general cost management. If the cost of a particular vendor's least expensive brand is out-of-line with the cost of other vendors' least expensive brands, the WIC Program will contact the vendor and request the vendor reevaluate its food offering in the particular category. Simply stated, WIC must ensure it obtains the least expensive price in the market for the product categories listed. This requires that vendors offer a least expensive brand to the WIC customers in order to remain a WIC vendor.

Second, the vendor's redemptions will be evaluated periodically. The total number of redemptions during a period will be compared. At least 85% of all redemptions must be for the UPC least expensive brand or another brand that is sold for the same or lower price during that

period. The vendor may receive notice when its redemptions appear to have fallen short of the 85% goal in an effort to assist in controlling costs and bringing redemptions into line with WIC requirements and the vendor's least expensive product.

Manufacturer and Store Promotions and Specials

Part of the WIC Program's objectives is to expose families to different ways of stretching their family food dollar. When a WIC customer enters your facility they should have exactly the same objective. Every dollar that we can save in cost for a current WIC customer is a dollar we may use to serve other qualified mothers and children under the age of 5 years. The WIC vendor plays a very important part in this experience by reinforcing the education WIC customer receive at the clinic during their nutritional counseling. The WIC Program strongly encourages WIC vendors to make every possible special and promotion possible to WIC customers. We hope that vendors, through their own presentations, will reinforce and encourage the use of economic and thrifty shopping practices in their store. Manufacture promotions and specials are an ideal means of making this point. Encouraging the WIC customer to purchase these items can reinforce the value and quality of these promotions. There are a number of promotions available. However, only a select type may be used with WIC customers.

Authorized Promotions

The objective of the promotion must be to reduce price to all shoppers in the vendor facility. The only promotions for which WIC customers may take advantage of are:

- Buy one, get one free
- Buy one, get one at a reduced price
- Free ounces added by the manufacturer
- Manufacturer or store cents-off coupons
- Store "savings" card or "customer reward" card

The additional food items and product amounts obtained from promotions and specials do not count toward the number of food items or the ounce limits specified in a WIC EBT card account or the dollar amount specified on a fruit and vegetable allowance in WIC EBT.

Unauthorized Promotions or Incentives

There are a number of incentives that are more generally targeted at a customer or group of customers. The WIC Program and the WIC Vendor Agreement outline those promotions and activities that are not authorized. Stores for example are not allowed to offer incentives or promotional items or services specifically for WIC customers or encourage WIC customers to shop in a particular store. WIC vendors must consult their WIC Vendor Agreement for a complete list of known unauthorized promotional activities. In general the following are examples of prohibited incentives. The WIC vendor may not:

- Offer raffles
- Offer Free food or non-food items
- Provide Grocery delivery, or

- Provide customer transportation
- Provide refunds for authorized foods obtained with WIC EBT
- Permit exchange of food items unless such exchange is for an identical WIC-authorized food item which is defective, spoiled, or outdated
- Accept telephone orders for WIC purchases

The best test for WIC vendors to ensure they do not engage in unauthorized promotions is to determine the focus of the promotion. Who benefits? If all customers benefit, the promotion is probably acceptable.

WIC Transaction Processing

WIC EBT Card and the "Shopping List"

The local WIC office provides each WIC customer with a WIC EBT shopping list. This is a list of all the items prescribed for the WIC customer. All the items are listed in a unit of measure (ounces, pounds, dozen) or container (jar, bag, can, or bottle). Many of these items are abbreviated on the shopping list. For example: btl= bottle; lb = pound; oz = ounce; doz = dozen; hgl = half gallon; qt = quart; gal = gallon; and pkg = package. In all cases the items listed are also identified in a unit of measure (16 oz. size cheese). The WIC customer should keep the shopping list where it can be located while shopping.

When the Participant does not have or forgets the shopping list the WIC vendor has the ability to complete a WIC EBT "balance inquiry" on the WIC EBT account, and a printed list can be created.

Customer Purchase with WIC EBT and Printed Receipt

The WIC vendor is required to provide a printed receipt to each WIC customer at the end of each sale transaction. The WIC EBT printed receipt varies in format and content at each store.

The WIC customer presents the products that they wish to purchase at the vendor's check-out counter. The Participant, depending on the redemption system used, presents the WIC EBT card which is swiped in the system. The WIC customer may enter the personal identification number to authorize redemptions. The vendor at this point will have already scanned the products or then scans the UPCs on each of the products presented. Those products that are prescribed for the members of the WIC participant's family participating in WIC on the WIC EBT card will be authorized for redemption.

Once all the products are scanned, the vendor is able to complete the sale. At the end of each sale transaction a printed receipt must be printed and provided to the WIC customer. These receipts are a record of what was purchased at the vendor site. Additionally, these receipts, depending on the facility, will provide the beginning and ending balance of items on the WIC EBT card. In addition to the listed benefits, the date of expiration of those benefits is also printed. The vendor and WIC customer should be mindful of this date in order to ensure that the WIC customer receives the full amount of the prescribed foods prior to that expiration date.

The receipt also provides the date and time of the transaction and in some facilities also notes the vendor employee that provided the service.

How WIC Authorized Representatives Create Their PINs

This section deals with how WIC authorized representatives create their personal identification number (PIN) for WIC EBT cards. The WIC Authorized Representative receives the WIC EBT card during the visit to the local WIC office. The foods authorized in the WIC EBT card are prescribed specifically for the WIC participants and are to be consumed by that participant during the designated time period.

In order to control the use and access to the WIC EBT card a personal identification number (PIN) is required to activate each use of the card. The WIC Authorized Representative must key in their PIN after the WIC EBT card is swiped in order for the vendor to access the participant's WIC EBT account for redemption confirmation and payment.

What The Vendor Should Know

The creation and use of the PIN may sometimes be unusual for the newer users of WIC EBT. This section of the guide provides the vendor a general broad overview of what is involved in obtaining and using the WIC PIN in EBT transactions.

The WIC Authorized Representative is required to choose a number they can easily remember for their PIN. It should not be all the same number such as "1111" nor should it be in a common sequence such as "1234". Other than that the PIN may be any meaningful four digit number the authorized representative will easily recall.

Some local Florida WIC offices are equipped with equipment that the Authorized Representative may enter the PIN and record it in the card. The equipment, a PIN pad device, enables the first set up of the WIC EBT account and its activation. However, there are a number of reasons why a PIN may need to be reset or changed. The Authorized Representative may be able to return to the local WIC office to do this process. But it is more likely that the Authorized Representative needs the PIN changed immediately. To support that need, the WIC Program provides two additional ways to activate a PIN or change the PIN on the WIC EBT card.

There are two primary means of setting the PIN on the WIC EBT card outside of the local WIC office. The WIC Authorized Representative may either:

1. Call a customer service line at 1-866-629-1095 and follow a recorded message; or
2. Access the WIC EBT website at www.FloridaWIC.org

In both cases the Authorized Representative must also have in their possession:

1. The WIC EBT card number listed on the face of the card;
2. The Authorized Representative's date of birth; and
3. The Authorized Representative's zip code for their home

First, if the Authorized Representative calls the WIC Customer Service at 1-866-629-1095 the following will occur:

- The Authorized Representative will hear a recording in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole. That recording will instruct the Authorized Representative in one of these languages to take specific steps to activate or change the WIC EBT PIN.
- The instructions will ask the Authorized Representative to press 1 to change the PIN.
- The Authorized Representative's date of birth is entered using two digits for the month, two digits for the day and four digits for the year. For example, if the Authorized Representative date of birth was August 21, 1985 they would enter 08 21 1985.
- Next the Authorized Representative enters their 5-digit zip code. This zip code has to be the code provided to the WIC clinic staff during their appointment.
- The Authorized Representative is then asked to enter a new 4-digit PIN; and
- The Authorized Representative then verifies the PIN by reentering the new 4-digit PIN. Once that is done successfully, the new PIN is activated.

Second, if the Authorized Representative chooses to use the Internet and access the WIC EBT website at www.FloridaWIC.org the following will occur:

- The Authorized Representative will access the page on www.FloridaWIC.org and locate the link there entitled WIC EBT website.
- Once the Authorized Representative is redirected to the web page, they are asked to enter their WIC EBT card number (this is a 16 digit number on the face of the WIC EBT card).
- Then they press "log in".
- They next enter the Authorized Representative's Date of Birth using the format mm/dd/yyyy.
- Next, the Authorized Representative enters their 5-digit zip code.
- Then the Authorized Representative enters their new 4-digit PIN.
- The Authorized Representative verifies the PIN by re-entering the new 4-digit PIN. Once that is done successfully, the new PIN is activated by pressing "Update".

If the vendor or vendor's employees are asked about the PIN on the card, they may help the Authorized Representative understand the process. The PIN should never be shared with other people and the Authorized Representative must not write or label the PIN number on the face or back of the card. The PIN is an important security procedure that helps protect the vendor from user abuse and the Authorized Representative from losing prescribed foods through theft or misappropriation. The WIC Authorized Vendor may help the Authorized Representative by ensuring that only those in possession of the PIN are allowed to use the WIC EBT card.

Vendors May Report Program Abuse Anonymously

If a vendor suspects that a WIC EBT card PIN has been compromised and that card is being used by an unauthorized person, the vendor is always encouraged to contact the Florida WIC Fraud toll-free hotline anytime at 1-855-283-5135. Callers may report suspected program abuse anonymously if they choose. Such calls are taken very seriously. The Program will investigate the issues discretely and without compromising the source of the information during the investigation.

Payment of Redemptions

Vendors receive payment at the time of check-out for the products authorized and approved for WIC. Vendors are responsible for all arrangements with their payment processor, their financial institution and the State of Florida WIC EBT contract provider.

In order to be an authorized WIC vendor, a grocer must meet all program requirements. The grocer must be in possession of these capabilities prior to authorization. The vendor must execute an independent contract with a chosen third-party-provider that will manage redemption processing, settlements and reconciliations for the facility. The vendor must also execute an independent contract with the State of Florida WIC EBT contract provider if any additional equipment such as a point-of-sale device (i.e. a VX520) is required for each of the vendor's check-out lanes.

Those vendors that charge the most competitive prices and are required for service of the local WIC customer population will be considered for participation as a WIC vendor. If the WIC Vendor Agreement is approved, the State WIC Office will arrange to have a unique identifying number, an "X9", issued. That identifying number corresponds to a number of other linking records with the State of Florida WIC EBT contractor and the selected third-party-provider for the vendor. It is the vendor's responsibility to ensure all of the appropriate contracts and links are in place in order to be able to process WIC redemptions and receive payments.

Competitive Price

Vendors are required to charge WIC a competitive price for all redemptions throughout their participation as a WIC vendor. All WIC vendor redemptions are accumulated and evaluated. The vendor's competitive price is defined as the vendor's best price. That price is the result of many factors over which only the vendor has control.

However, vendors frequently find that when they are experiencing issues with competitive price there are several things that can be done. The vendor may wish to discuss pricing with their wholesaler or distributor. Some vendors have found it useful to explain that the vendor is a WIC authorized vendor and is under competitive cost requirements. Other vendors have found it necessary to seek other sources of supply to obtain a better price on WIC items in order to remain competitive.

The WIC vendor is part of the WIC delivery team fulfilling the prescription of supplemental food prescribed by the WIC licensed nutritionist. The WIC Program enters the consumable food market exactly the same way each Florida family obtains its foods. The Program is

seeking, along with the authorized WIC vendors, the most competitive price for the WIC foods prescribed.

The best service at the lowest possible price benefits the WIC Program, WIC customers and the authorized WIC vendors. WIC vendors are only required as long as the WIC Program is properly funded. That requires WIC be as economical as any Florida family in purchasing its food requirements. This is absolutely essential to ensure that limited WIC grant funds are used as effectively as possible supporting WIC customers throughout Florida daily.

Recovery above Maximum Allowable Reimbursement Level (MARL)

All vendor redemptions are evaluated on a recurring basis. Each vendor is assigned to a peer group based on its location and the monthly value of its WIC redemptions. Those vendors new to the program are assigned to their peer group based on their estimated redemptions and that assignment is then adjusted after the first thirty days of redemptions if reassignment is required.

The WIC vendor agrees as part of its WIC Vendor Agreement that it will charge a competitive price at all times while a WIC vendor. When the analysis of vendor redemptions for a month identify a vendor's redemptions are above the maximum allowable reimbursement level (MARL), WIC will recover the excess payment against redemptions the vendor submits the following month. Vendors will receive notification of the UPC items that were redeemed over the peer group MARL normally by email to assist in managing their redemptions.

WIC Compliance Reviews

Vendor Monitoring

Authorized WIC vendors execute a WIC Vendor Agreement with the State WIC Program. That agreement engages the vendor, the WIC Program and WIC customer in a team effort to effectively manage WIC prescriptions and funds. The WIC vendor is the most important part of the prescription fulfillment responsibilities of the Program. Consequently, the WIC Program works closely with its vendors to improve efficiencies and stay abreast of developments in the Florida commercial food markets. The State WIC Program is responsible for maintaining a consistent and productive relationship with each of its WIC vendors.

The WIC Program addresses that responsibility in several ways. First, the Program has 43 vendor managers throughout Florida assigned to a specified number of WIC vendors. These vendor managers provide day-to-day contact, training and technical assistance in the immediate local area. Vendors are encouraged to actively maintain a professional relationship with their assigned WIC vendor manager and contact them for immediate assistance or answers to their questions.

Second, Florida WIC is required to complete at least one compliance review of each of its vendor facilities each year. These compliance reviews are a no-notice review of mandatory minimum inventory availability, processing procedures and training. If deficiencies are identified a return review is required to verify that corrective action is identified and acted upon by the vendor.

Third, WIC vendor redemptions are reviewed daily and non-competitive trends are identified and addressed with individual vendors. Additionally, vendor declared least expensive brand designations are evaluated and charges evaluated to ensure the vendor remains within the requirement for 85% to be at or below the charge for the declared least expensive brand.

Fourth, a vendor's records and redemptions may be audited for comparison of the quantities of food purchased from suppliers with the quantities represented in the WIC EBT redemptions. All vendors in signing their WIC Vendor Agreement have agreed to retain all invoice records for a period of three years. This process is used to validate that the vendor is obtaining their food from wholesalers and distributors listed on the State WIC web site and that the vendor has purchased sufficient quantities of items to support the redemption claims submitted.

Fifth, the Program is required to periodically conduct covert, no-notice compliance buys in which a Program representative poses as a WIC customer and purchases food items from a selected vendor. The purpose of the compliance buy is to validate that the vendor is meeting all Program requirements and providing only prescribed foods as identified on the WIC EBT account for that Participant.

There are multiple and frequent opportunities for contact with vendors and the WIC Program. Vendors are actively encouraged to engage in discussions and inquiries with the Program to inform themselves of compliance trends and improve the quality of the entire Program in Florida.

Obtaining compliance involves persistent, frequent and useful communication with WIC vendors; an analysis of vendor transaction activity; and assessment of improvements a vendor should complete in order to remain a WIC vendor. It is to the mutual benefit of the WIC Program, and the WIC vendor to make compliance work and eliminate the need for sanctions and penalties.

Sanctions for Non-Compliance

The WIC Program's focus is on delivering the right quantity of prescribed supplemental foods at the most competitive price possible through the Florida's network of WIC vendor team members. Therefore, the Program intentionally invests a great deal of its resources in obtaining compliance rather than sanctioning a vendor for non-compliance.

Nonetheless, when WIC Program violations are identified, and it is clear the vendor either cannot or will not correct its performance to meet Program requirements, the State WIC Program must act. The WIC Program may be prevented from purchasing food from a vendor that does not comply with Program requirements. The period of prohibition is based on the nature of violation. A schedule of sanctions for violations is listed in the WIC Vendor Agreement.

Before taking action the WIC Program provides the vendor 30 day's notice and an opportunity to explain the violation or request a formal or informal hearing. At a hearing, the vendor will be allowed to appeal the decision before an impartial official who will either uphold or reverse the decision after reviewing the evidence.

It is important to note that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is required to reciprocate in sanction actions too. Therefore, the WIC Program and SNAP may both be prohibited from purchasing food from the vendor's facility for a concurrent period of time. These times and implications are outlined in the WIC Vendor Agreement in more detail.

Use of WIC Service Mark

The term WIC is a service mark owned and controlled by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). Authorized WIC Vendors are required to observe limitations on the use of that service mark as a condition of continued participation in WIC and as a term in their WIC Vendor Agreement.

WIC Vendors may not use the WIC service mark in advertising or promotional materials that may likely imply the WIC Program or USDA endorses either the vendor or its products. The vendor may not use the service mark in a way that is likely to cause confusion, mistake, or deception as to the affiliation or connection of the Vendor to WIC. WIC authorized vendors are required to comply with the terms of their WIC Vendor Agreement and laws applicable to service marks.

The best available means of remaining in compliance with this requirement is to verify proposed uses with the State WIC Program. The vendor must submit a proposal as required in the WIC Vendor Agreement. The WIC Program is required to provide its response within 30 days. In those instances where the use is approved, the vendor should retain a copy of the approval on file for future reference.

All displays that are approved must have or make reference to a properly identified disclaimer statement specified in the WIC Vendor Agreement.

WIC Vendor Training and Education

Training for vendors is required prior to authorization and annually thereafter. Vendors receive notice from the local WIC vendor manager when training is available by scheduled dates. Additionally training is provided when vendors request additional training or instruction. Training may also be required as part of the vendor corrective action plan addressing deficiencies identified during compliance or other monitoring activity.

WIC training and education materials, including the documents listed below, are produced for WIC vendors. These materials may be viewed or downloaded as needed at the Florida WIC Internet website: www.FloridaWIC.org. The following materials are available.

- **Florida WIC Vendor Handbook**. This handbook contains additional information about the policies and procedures of the Florida WIC Program. It may be used in conjunction with the terms of the WIC Vendor Agreement, WIC training materials and assistance WIC vendor manager provides.

- **Florida WIC Foods Pamphlet**. This is a pamphlet that includes descriptions and photographs about the eligible WIC foods. While the WIC EBT UPC information provides the redemption standards, this pamphlet may provide more descriptive details and explanation of what items are authorized for WIC EBT reimbursement.

- **WIC Authorized Sources of Supply**. This is a list of those wholesale and distributors that Florida WIC recognizes as authorized sources of supply for WIC approved foods. This list includes those sources authorized to supply baby formula and WIC approved food items. Vendors are subject to inventory and invoice audits. These vendors will not receive credit for any food items purchased from a source not listed as an authorized source of supply.

- **Mandatory Minimum Inventory**. This is a list of the mandatory minimum WIC inventory that all vendors must have on their sales shelves available to the public at all times. The Florida WIC Program may be prohibited from purchasing foods from a vendor that fails to maintain this inventory at all times.

Vendor Materials Available by Order

WIC authorized vendors may contact their local WIC vendor manager to order the following vendor materials:

- WIC Window Decal. A window decal identifying WIC stores.
- WIC Shelf Strips. Shelf strips are used to identify eligible WIC foods in the store. It is recommended that vendors use shelf strips to identify WIC foods. The WIC logo is most helpful in areas where language barriers exist.

When to Call The State WIC Office or Local WIC Vendor Manager

When to call the state WIC Office

The state WIC office vendor management unit can assist vendors when questions or problems arise. If you wish to contact the state WIC office in Tallahassee, please call (850) 245-4202 or call the toll-free number (Florida only): 1-800-342-3556.

The state WIC office should be contacted when a vendor needs assistance or information regarding the following situations:

- Questions about eligible food items
- Vendor processing of transactions
- Compliance issues or WIC service mark uses
- To report program abuse or fraud (anonymously or as a vendor)

When to call the local WIC Vendor Manager

Your local WIC vendor manager should be contacted when a vendor needs assistance or information regarding the following situations:

- How to receive WIC program training for current or newly assigned/hired store personnel.
- WIC shelf strips
- Problems with a WIC customer who attempts to purchase foods not authorized in the WIC EBT card or has created issues regarding WIC EBT processing.
- To report program abuse or fraud (anonymously or as a vendor)

You may contact the local WIC vendor manager by telephone after you receive your initial WIC site survey or you may contact the state WIC office for the proper telephone number.

Vendor Reporting Program Abuse or Fraud

The state WIC office has established a Toll-Free Fraud Hot Line dedicated to WIC. The Hot Line telephone number is (1-855-283-5135).

WIC Vendors are encouraged to call the WIC Fraud Hot Line if they or their employees observe or are aware of conduct regarding the WIC Program, Participants or the use of WIC prescribed food items or the use or misuse of the WIC EBT card or account. These calls are accepted during normal business hours. After normal business hours the caller may leave a message on the WIC Fraud Hot Line answering. The calls will be reviewed during the next business day.

Any interested person may contact the WIC Fraud Hot Line. The state WIC office will accept all calls and treat each with the same priority. Consequently, a vendor or a vendor's employee may make an anonymous report if they so choose. Those calls from anonymous sources are listed with the subject's name such as a participant or entity identified as a possible violator of WIC policy or procedure.

Addressing Program Abuse or Fraud

The WIC Program is operated on a strict grant funded budget. Consequently, any program abuse or fraudulent activity that dissipates WIC Program resources harms all those associated with WIC. WIC customers are obviously harmed in that every dollar lost through program abuse is one less dollar for prescriptive food items for eligible mothers and children up to the age of 5 years.

The WIC Authorized vendors observing Program requirements are similarly harmed by program abuse. Funds and assets lost in abuse or fraud are not replaced. Therefore, left unchecked conduct that abuses or fraudulently wastes Program funds reduces the amount of money available to meet the prescriptive needs of Florida WIC customers. These losses mean that fewer WIC customers can be served in the Program.

The fewer Participants served results in lower levels of funding for Florida WIC. That lower level of funding directly impacts the WIC Authorized Vendor's bottom line. Higher levels of abuse and fraud limit or actually reduce the amount of money that may be used for legitimate purchases of prescribed food items.

The objective of the WIC Program extends far beyond the period of program service. The purpose of WIC is to change family conduct and encourage new food consumption habits and healthy family eating patterns. These new healthy consumption and eating patterns mean those WIC Authorized vendors that provide WIC authorized foods to their customers will enjoy repeat business from families that have benefitted from their participation on WIC.

Vendors Encourage Program Compliance As The Priority

The WIC Program does not tolerate the waste and misuse of its prescriptive foods or services. Nonetheless, the Program continues to encourage and foster compliance with WIC requirements through repeated reinforcement of the value and benefits of WIC. The WIC Authorized Vendor is a very important part of this overall effort. The WIC Vendor sees each of

the WIC customers when they are locating and buying WIC prescribed food items and fresh fruits and vegetables.

The vigilant WIC vendor and WIC vendor employees enjoy the unique opportunity to perpetually reinforce the healthful eating objectives of WIC. The vendor can encourage the purchase of the most healthful, economical and useful WIC authorized foods. The vendor can encourage WIC customers to aggressively learn new and different methods of food preparation for their family.

Finally, the WIC Vendor can offer the personal, knowing word of encouragement to the WIC customer as they pass through the check-out line. They can make a point of commending the Participant for keeping track of their prescriptions and making sure their family gained the healthy benefits WIC provides to their local community.

Actions When Encouraging Compliance Fails

When the WIC Program has made every effort to obtain compliance from all those engaged in WIC Program activity, then appropriate administrative action is required. In extreme instances more permanent action may be take as well.

For those vendors identified either by Participants or fellow vendors, federal regulations will require that the Florida WIC Program cease purchasing foods from those vendors found to be violating Program requirements. This is an important consideration because the Program limits the number of vendors to only those needed to serve the WIC population. These vendors are important to the effective distribution of prescribed foods.

Similarly, for those Participants who either cannot or will not comply with WIC Program requirements, they too may be excluded from WIC participation for a period of time.

These are not the outcome of choice; however, in those instances where administrative or more aggressive action is required, federal regulation requires action and the Program will take that action if it is not possible to achieve compliance in any other fashion.

Evaluation and Response to Reports of Program Abuse

In those instances where a caller has chosen to identify themselves and leave a return number, the state WIC office will respond to the report with a return courtesy call responding to the initial report. The aspirational objective for making such a call is within two business days of the initial notice.

The initial call is evaluated for possible action. In those instances dealing with a WIC customer's violations, initial research is completed at the State WIC office. An initial determination is made as to whether the reported participant is actually on the WIC Program. If it is determined the individual is on WIC, that information along with a brief summary of the allegations is forwarded to the appropriate local agency for follow-up and resolution. The local agency is to inform the State WIC office of its findings and any action(s) taken.

In those instances of calls regarding WIC Vendors, the state WIC office shall review the call and make a determination of action. The state WIC office will arrange covert compliance buys;

compliance visit or inventory audit if such is determined to be appropriate. The record of the call shall reflect that the call was closed out by stating what action was taken such as referral to law enforcement, or the local agency or further investigation or warning letter. The state WIC office shall retain a record for the disposition of any fraud inquiry regarding a vendor.

WIC Vendor Responsibilities and Rights

The responsibilities and rights of the WIC vendor are listed in the WIC Vendor Agreement. The agreement is a legally binding document that should be read carefully prior to signing. These responsibilities and rights listed here are not exhaustive and you should consult your WIC Vendor Agreement for additional information.

The Responsibility to:

- Provide allowed foods at competitive prices in a sanitary environment;
- Offer WIC customers the same courtesies as other customers;
- Accept annual training in WIC Program procedures;
- Inform and train all store personnel of WIC Program requirements and changes;
- Inform the WIC office of any intent to close or change ownership;
- Report WIC Program customer abuse as well as vendor abuse; and
- Prevent overcharges and the sale of ineligible food.

The Right to:

- Technical assistance and training by WIC personnel;
- Voluntary withdrawal from the WIC Program prior to an administrative action being instituted against the vendor;
- Receive advance notice of any adverse action being taken by the Program;
- Appeal certain adverse actions; and
- Refuse service to disruptive or abusive customers.

Local WIC office:

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

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

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Florida Department of Health
WIC Program
1.800.342.3556

DH 150-560, 8/16