

Message from Mike



One of the advantages of my office location is that I can watch the arrival of spring. Even though by all standards this was a very mild winter, I am ready for spring. And for all you who love to fish, by the number of boats on the James River, the shad migration is in full swing.

This past session the General Assembly (GA) passed two pieces of legislation that will hopefully increase the access to healthy food for Virginians. I thought a brief status update might be of interest.

Governor McAuliffe proposed in his budget to increase funding for schools to feed breakfast to their students. In FY 2015, his budget provided \$500,000 in grants to schools to expand capacity to serve breakfast. This amount did not meet all the requests that came forward as only about half of the need was met. For FY 2016 and 2017, his budget has increased the amount to \$1 million for each year. Both chambers approved this proposal and the budget sits on the Governor's desk for signature. This action will greatly assist in keeping the momentum going forward as we ensure no child arrives at school hungry. As Mrs. McAuliffe frequently states, it is hard to be hungry to learn when you are simply hungry.

The GA also passed a bill that contains a tax credit for farmers who donate foods to Food Banks. Farmers who donate produce (grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables) are given a tax credit worth 30 percent of fair market value and cannot exceed \$5,000 in one year. Again, this action is waiting the Governor's approval.

Virginia Community Capital (VCC) is a community development financial institution that offers innovative, flexible financial support for community development projects that increase jobs and encourage sustainable communities. VCC has been a very active participant on the Council to End the Nutritional Divide, a task force appointed by Governor McAuliffe to end hunger across the Commonwealth. They are hoping to receive funds soon to introduce a Healthy Food Financing Initiative to assist retailers overcome the high costs and risk associated with development in lower income communities. This uneven distribution of full scale supermarkets in Virginia leaves a disproportionate number of people without access to nutritious food. You can learn more at vacommunitycapital.org.

Lastly many of you have or will receive a letter asking again to support the Summer Food Service Program. By adding "Text FOOD to 877-877 for free meals" on your receipts will greatly assist. Several of you did this last year and Virginia saw the second largest increase in text message use in the country - second only to Texas. Please consider adding this message if you did not last year and thanks to those that did. In recognition, Food Lion, Farm Fresh, and Grant's Supermarket have been awarded USDA's Summer Champion Award. Congratulations!

Time to go catch a shad!

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A New VDH Social Media Branding

Earlier this year, the Virginia Department of Health's (VDH's) Office of Family Health Service (OFHS) launched its redesigned website, VDHLiveWell, as its flagship to help Virginia become the healthiest state in the nation. The VDHLiveWell brand spotlights the agency's vision for well-being for all Virginians. This site will provide information on programs that focus on strengthening the health of families and communities, plus risk avoidance tips and information on how certain issues affect public health.

OFHS also presents VDH's streamlined social media presence to complement the new site. All OFHS programs will use a unified social media account. Outreach will now strategically move between the various platforms. For example, the social media outreach will be searchable under @VDHLiveWell on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram, and supports easy access formatted specifically for computers, tablets, and smartphones.

The WIC Program's webpage has also changed its appearance. Separate participant and retailer webpages now exist. The WIC Retailer webpage has three sub-pages: Becoming a Retailer; Resources; and Guidelines and Regulations. The new design provides webpages that are easier to navigate, and makes information easier to locate.

Please see the websites listed under "**Important Links and Numbers**" on the last page of this bulletin to visit the new VDHLiveWell and WIC Retailer home pages today. The WIC Program hopes you will stay up-to-date on the latest health and WIC information available from the Virginia Department of Health.



Recent Minimum Stocking Requirement Changes

An updated version of the Minimum Stocking Requirement (MSR) was distributed with an effective date of 3/1/2016. While there are several other changes, the major changes are:

- Liquid Juice (64 oz.) -- Selective refrigerated juices have been added to this category. These approved juices count, along with the shelf stable juices, toward meeting the MSR.
- Similac Advance Concentrate (13 oz.) -- the MSR for this item has been removed.

It is important to review the updated MSR in its entirety and to share this updated MSR with those individuals that are responsible for stocking your shelves. If you did not receive a copy of the updated MSR sent out via email, please contact your assigned Vendor Liaison to receive a copy.

Remember, in order to effectively meet customer demands, stores are encouraged to exceed the minimum stocking requirement at all times.

The Ins and Outs of Using WIC Shelf Labels



Using the same “WIC” shelf label design is an important way you can improve your customers’ shopping experience. Consistently using only one type of WIC shelf label will help avoid confusion by your WIC customers, thereby maximize your WIC sales. Page D4-1 of the Virginia WIC Program Retailer Manual, paragraph II.D, states “Authorized retailers must consistently use the same type of shelf label across all WIC-approved foods that have a labeling requirement.” If your store has a **WIC-approved** custom shelf label, that label should be the **only** WIC shelf label used in your store; otherwise, the “Wholesome Informed

Choices” State WIC Office-issued shelf label (see image Left) should be the **only** label used. Any other WIC shelf labels should be removed from your shelves.

Shortcuts Can Lead to Compliance Barriers!

The Virginia WIC Program updates our compliance policies and sanctions to address concerns detected from information gathered through various methods, including eWIC redemption data. One new area of compliance that has been identified through data analysis is the use of certain food items scanned in lieu of another item. This could be happening for various reasons -- to defraud the WIC Program by scanning an approved food item for a non-eligible item, or for convenience when there are technical issues at the register and an approved food item does not scan. **Retailers are required to scan only WIC items that are actually being bought**, regardless of what other issue they may encounter. The WIC Program has added this type of violation to our sanction schedule. This type of compliance error will be tested through our “undercover” compliance effort. If a Universal Product Code is ringing up as not being “WIC Approved” and you think it is an approved item, please contact Brian Tun, UPC Coordinator brian.tun@vdh.virginia.gov, 804-864-7849. Otherwise, if you have any questions about this or any type of compliance issue, please contact Alex Acharya, Prevention Specialist alex.acharya@vdh.virginia.gov, 804-864-7811.

WIC Approved Foods for 2016 - Informational Webinars



In February and March, the Vendor Compliance Team held several webinars to discuss the New WIC Approved Food Brochure and Formula Flyer. The one-hour broadcast was designed with the goal of bringing together retail corporate staff, trainers and private store owners to review and provide answers about the changes in WIC-eligible foods and formulas.

The first half of the webinar presentation was a review of WIC Approved Foods, including a discussion of new WIC shelf labelling requirements. The final segment allowed attendees the opportunity to exchange questions and answers real-time through either an open microphone or text message. One parking lot question posed was if red lentil (canned and dried) beans will be “WIC Approved.” The answer to this inquiry is “yes.”

Based on the feedback received from Webinar attendees, our first series of webinars were well-received, and was viewed as a cost-effective alternative to in-person meetings. Some other questions posed by the retailer attendees were:

WIC Approved Foods for 2016 - Informational Webinars

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Questions:	Response:
Do corporate retailers, with approved customized WIC shelf labels, need to make any changes to their shelf tags, or submit new samples for review?	No changes to approved customized WIC shelf labels are required.
Should all approved infant formulas be identified as WIC with tags even though they may not be issued to the eWIC benefit card?	No...there is no mandatory labeling requirement for approved infant formulas.
Are frozen vegetable and legume mixtures WIC eligible?	Yes...Frozen vegetables are eligible as part of the Cash Value Benefit.
Will we get notification before Approved Product List (APL) changes are sent down electronically?	No...Changes to the APL are communicated to Xerox, EBT Processor, daily. Check with your Third Party Processor, Value Added Reseller or corporate office to find out how often the updated APL file is transmitted to your Point of Sales system.
Will a list of the APL changes be provided to retailers?	Upon Request, contact Brian Tun, UPC Coordinator for this type of inquiry.
What is the Minimum Stocking Requirement (MSR) for liquid and frozen juices?	See the updated MSR for the answer to this question.
I am having problems with the lactose free milks going through. Can you clarify the approved milks for me?	To obtain a list of the approved lactose free/lactose reduced milk, contact Brian Tun, UPC Coordinator.
Where can I find a list of the whole wheat breads that are no longer WIC approved?	Contact Brian Tun, UPC Coordinator.
Just to clarify, does that mean pigeon peas are no longer allowed? We sell a ton. I'm not sure if maybe they had another name besides pigeon peas that I wasn't aware of?	With the new WIC Approved Food List – pigeon peas will no longer be WIC approved. Looking at redemption volume, this type of peas was not frequently redeemed statewide.
The whole wheat bread with honey has been an issue for us not allowing it to processed using the eWIC Benefit Card?	For a complete list of the approved whole wheat breads, see the January (2016) Working With WIC Retailer bulletin or contact Brian Tun, UPC Coordinator.
Will the updates to the food lists be provided to the WIC participants? So should we assume WIC customers will be informed?	Yes...once available, the new Food List will be distributed to WIC cardholders/participants. With any change, some cardholders will read the new WIC Approved Food Brochure and be informed, whereas others will not.
Are the nutritional drinks allowed in the produce fresh fruits and vegetables?	No...these types of products found in the fresh fruits and vegetables section are not eligible via WIC.
The Green "Wholesome Informed Choices" shelf labels, are these new?	No...these shelf labels have been used for the past 4-5 years.
Do all the brands, including Goya, Lafe, Essential Everyday, etc. have to be labeled with WIC shelf tags	All eligible flavors of beans, peas and lentils, regardless of their manufacturer, have to be labelled. See the WIC Approved Food List for the specific varieties of beans, peas or lentils this requirement applies to.

If you missed the Retailer webinars or want more information about possible future webinars, contact your assigned Vendor Liaison.

Looking to Upgrade Your Point of Sales System?

Retailers are reminded to notify the State WIC Office if your store is planning to switch from Xerox- issued “Stand Beside” equipment to an integrated Point of Sale (POS) system or when there are significant upgrades or changes to your existing integrated POS system’s hardware or software to process eWIC transactions. Your new integrated POS system must be eWIC-certified in accordance with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Operating Rules for handling eWIC transactions.

The POS certification process requires State WIC Office staff to perform a level III “live buy” test using an actual eWIC Benefit Card at the store being tested. This certification process must be completed prior to your integrated POS system going live, to insure that your store’s eWIC transactions and eWIC reimbursements are being processed correctly. The “live-buy” test may also help reduce transaction failures in the future and assist cashiers in handling eWIC transactions.

To scheduling a certification test, please send your request by email to Brian Tun (UPC Coordinator), Brian.Tun@vdh.virginia.gov. Please include your store’s name, WIC ID, name of POS Contractor, email address, telephone number, and proposed system changeover date.

You can also contact Brian Tun by phone at 804-864-7849 for further information on how to schedule a “eWIC live buy” test.



POS Certification

<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/livewell/programs/wic/content/retailers/documents/eWICcertification.pdf>

Monthly Average Reimbursement

The WIC Program uses redemption data from the prior month in order to identify a baseline for determining what a “reasonable” reimbursement level is for the current month. See the table on the next page, which breaks down the average redemption cost, plus 15 percent, for each of the major food categories and subcategories. Redemption data is used in several different ways by the State WIC Office, including

- Evaluate the Not-to-Exceed (NTE) reimbursement levels against historical redemption levels for the major peer groups;
- Evaluate the “pricing levels” of stores identified as “noncompetitive” when compared with other stores assigned to their peer groups/food category; and
- Evaluate the “pricing level” of new store applicants when compared with authorized stores assigned to their peer groups/food category.

Please note the **Average Monthly Redemption Plus 15 percent by Peer Group** table is not the “NTE” for a category/subcategory. The NTE reimbursement level is calculated at the Universal Product Code (UPC) level. Generally speaking, the UPC’s NTE reimbursement levels are calculated every seven (7) days and are based upon actual redemptions paid by the State WIC Office. The average monthly redemption level plus 15 percent can be used by stores in order to determine if the prices being charged to the WIC Program are reasonable when compared to other authorized stores that are assigned to the same peer group.

Monthly Average Reimbursement

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To better understand the **Average Monthly Redemption Plus 15 percent by Peer Group** table, there are several categories to highlight. Most categories/subcategories depict a package price. For example, one pound of block cheese is \$5.66; however for breakfast cereals, the average redemption level, plus 15 percent, shows an amount per ounce (i.e., \$ 0.20, \$ 0.17 etc.). Some categories consist of a single product/UPC, i.e., \$2.07 for canned tuna fish, whereas some subcategories consist of multiple UPCs. Lastly, some food categories/subcategories did not have any transactions paid under that peer group, i.e., canned Alaska or pink salmon (7.5 ounces) for the two peer groups 1-4 registers and 5-9 registers.

Monthly, the WIC Program will review this type of reimbursement data in order to identify average reimbursement level trends or patterns. If you have any questions about how this data is used by the WIC Program, please contact Sheila Brewer, Vendor Compliance Manager (sheila.brewer@vdh.virginia.gov, 804-864-7810).

Average Redemption Table - See sample below

Category Code	Food Category	Subcategory Code	Subcategory	UOM	1-4 REGISTERS	5-9 REGISTERS <100K	5-9 REGISTERS >100K	10+ REGISTERS
02	Cheese or Tofu	001	Block Cheese in 16 oz Packages	1-POUND	\$5.66	\$5.46	\$5.46	\$5.58
02	Cheese or Tofu	002	Sliced Cheese in 16 oz Packages	1-POUND	\$4.72	\$5.51	\$5.58	\$5.29
03	Eggs	001	Eggs	1-DOZEN	\$2.54	\$2.84	\$2.81	\$2.87
05	Breakfast Cereal	001	Cereal- Whole Grain	OUNCE	\$0.20	\$0.17	\$0.17	\$0.16
05	Breakfast Cereal	002	Cereal- Non Whole Grain	OUNCE	\$0.20	\$0.19	\$0.19	\$0.19
06	Legumes	001	Peanut Butter- 18 OZ Jar	1-CONTNR	\$2.60	\$2.44	\$2.44	\$2.52
06	Legumes	002	Dry legumes or Dry Peas	1-CONTNR	\$2.08	\$1.96	\$1.95	\$1.89
06	Legumes	003	Canned Beans	0.25-CONTNR	\$1.17	\$1.12	\$1.14	\$1.04
08	Fish	001	Canned Chunk Light Tuna in water, 5oz	5-OUNCE	\$1.35	\$1.03	\$1.03	\$1.08
08	Fish	001	Canned Chunk Light Tuna in water, 6oz	6-OUNCE		\$0.94	\$0.91	\$2.07
08	Fish	002	Canned Alaska or Pink Salmon 14.5oz	14.75-OUNCE	\$3.49	\$3.37	\$3.38	\$3.44
08	Fish	002	Canned Alaska or Pink Salmon 7.5oz	7.5-OUNCE				
	Infant Cereal	001	Infant Cereal					



Average Redemption Table

http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/livewell/programs/wic/documents/QR/average_plus15percent.pdf

Introducing the Healthy Corner Store Initiative

The State WIC Office recently partnered with the Richmond City Health Department as part of their Healthy Corner Store Initiative grant, to reach out to retailers who may want to become WIC authorized stores. The Outreach collaboration effort included staff going on-site to a local grocery distribution center (frequented by independent store owners). Interested store personnel received a brief overview of the program and were given handouts on WIC Program requirements, the application process, and approved foods. Also, interested stores were able to register for an Open House presentation held at the local WIC office, which offered guidance on the on-line application process and preparing for the enrollment stocking visit. During the Open House, store owners were able to interact with State and Local Agency staff and ask questions prior to submitting their application. Additionally, resources from this outreach were distributed statewide to WIC Coordinators for use in their respective health districts, in an effort to recruit additional stores to apply for WIC authorization.

Hail & Farewell

The Vendor Compliance Team has recently added three new team members and has said goodbye to two Vendor Liaisons:---



Jennifer Trower – Jennifer joins our team as a Vendor Liaison, assuming administrative and technical responsibilities for supporting stores and health districts located in the Tidewater/Eastern Shore areas. Jennifer has extensive experience working in sales in the healthcare community. Her experience has been educating and promoting preventive health among the senior population with JenCare Neighborhood Medical Center. Jennifer also volunteers in various community endeavors such as JDRF Walk One (to help find a cure for Type 1 Diabetes) and has extensive experience working in a data analyst role at TRAKAmerica. She also has real estate license with certification Short Sales and Foreclosures as a Realtor with Long & Foster. Jennifer completed her Bachelor of Science at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State

University in Housing, Interior Design and Resource Management.

On a personal side, Jennifer enjoys scrapbooking, college sports, reading, decorating and volunteering in community. Jennifer can be reached at jennifer.trower@vdh.virginia.gov or 804-864-7278



Bob Altermatt – Bob joins the Vendor Compliance Team as the new Compliance Liaison. Bob will work on various projects that involve WIC Program data analysis and program compliance. Bob has a diverse background in operations, analytics, reporting, sales, process improvement, project management, and system development/implementation. He gained his experience while working in financial services, telecommunications, and consumer electronics. His experience has been in corporate America and he is excited to have an opportunity to work for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Bob has degree in Marketing from Western Michigan University. Outside of work he volunteers with his son's Boy Scout troop, coaches basketball, and shuttles his children around central Virginia for their activities that include Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, travel soccer, cross country, basketball, gymnastics, swimming, and cheer. He is a member of the Richmond Volleyball club and has played competitively for almost 20 years. He also enjoys watching football, hockey, soccer, and college basketball

Bob can be reached at robert.altermatt@vdh.virginia.gov or 804-864-7855



Amy Romero – Amy is our newest Vendor Liaison, and supports stores in the middle of Virginia. She also will assume responsibility for the data analysis and reimbursement associated with the Not-To-Exceed pricing (NTE).

Amy grew up in Tappahannock and Richmond, graduating from Monacan High School in Chesterfield County. She joined the Air Force and served four years in South Dakota where she was a Data Analyst. She completed her degree in Psychology and then went to work for Luck Companies in Richmond, where she spent the last nine years gaining experience in program management, process improvement, project management, and sustainability.

Amy and her husband spend their free time enjoying the local Richmond eateries and culture, hiking, reading, and traveling. She cares deeply about the environment and human and animal welfare and has volunteered over the years with the James River Advisory Council, James River Association, and Richmond Animal League.

Amy can be reached at amy.romero@vdh.virginia.gov or 804-864-7835.

Lindsey Nichol – Lindsey left VDH last fall to accept a full-time position with Anthem in Norfolk.

Jessica Owen Day – Jessica left VDH in January to accept a position with the U.S. Department of Agriculture working with WIC EBT Policy area at the national WIC office located in Alexandria.

New WIC Media Campaign



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Scan to view online edition

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a preventive public health nutrition program that provides nutrition and breast feeding education, nutritious foods, and improved access to regular health care and social services to low and moderate income pregnant, post-partum, breast-feeding women, infants and children up to five years of age with or at risk of developing nutrition related health problems.

Local WIC clinics issue food benefits containing supplemental foods with essential nutrients found to be deficient or lacking in eligible participants' diets. Using an electronic benefit card, eligible participants/cardholders are able to purchase these foods at approved retail stores.

The Virginia WIC Program is excited to announce the launch of a state-wide outreach media campaign. This media campaign is being used to combat barriers that have prevented growing enrollment and retention of WIC participants. This media campaign, includes radio and TV spots, reinforces WIC as a supplemental nutrition program. Using positive media images help to clear up misconceptions about WIC and its eligibility requirements. The campaign highlights the eWIC card and its ease of use.

Through a partnership with the Virginia Association of Broadcasters which consists of 35 TV stations and 215 radio stations, these WIC friendly promotional messages will be frequently seen and heard by anyone who watched TV or listens to the radio. The campaign will run through December 2016.

The WIC Program is excited about this media campaign and the positive attention it will bring to the program. The goal of this media campaign is to both increase awareness of the WIC Program among the general public and encourage former participants to revisit their relationship with the program.

For additional information, please contact Lisa Armstrong (lisa.armstrong@vdh.virginia.gov, or 804-864-7840).



Working With WIC Retailer Bulletin

DIVISION OF COMMUNITY NUTRITION

April 2016

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Important Links and Numbers

New "LiveWell" Homepage



<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/livewell>

WIC Homepage



<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/livewell/programs/wic/>

WIC Retailers Homepage



<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/livewell/programs/wic/retailers.html>

Xerox Retailer Help Desk:

877-436-6057

Vendor Liaison:

804-864-7800 and ask to speak to a Vendor Liaison