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For access to all documents found in this newsletter
visit www.VDHLiveWell.com/WICRetailers

Our New Look

Welcome to our initial edition of the new and improved Virginia WIC Retailer Bulletin. Instead of a bulletin that is designed to be printed, starting with this edition, our new “e-bulletin” is designed to be read electronically. Feel free to print off this e-bulletin, or forward it to others who didn't receive it. Requests to have email addresses added to or deleted from our distribution list should be sent to:

WIC_Retailer @ vdh.virginia.gov.

Annual Training Edition

This special edition of the Working with WIC Retailer Bulletin is the annual training issue. This resource provides WIC Program changes, highlights compliance and integrity issues, and provides useful tips on processing eWIC transactions.

Necessary Actions

For each store, a manager or representative is **required** to acknowledge that this training bulletin has been read. Individual stores and corporate contacts must submit the acknowledgement to the state WIC office. After reading this bulletin..... What's next?

- Acknowledge that you have completed your annual training:
 - For individual stores: [complete the survey at this link](#)
 - For Corporate Contacts who are acknowledging on the behalf of multiple stores 1) [download the spreadsheet at this link](#) 2) Complete ALL columns for each store that you are acknowledging 3) Email the completed spreadsheet to: **WIC_Retailer @ vdh.virginia.gov**
- Share this special edition with store personnel (i.e. cashiers, bookkeepers, and customer service managers)
- Complete your annual Conflict of Interest review (see "Conflict of Interest Reminder")
- Contact your assigned Vendor Liaison if you have questions about the topics covered

You may also want to print this email, post a copy of this e-bulletin in a central location, and include a copy in your Retailer Manual binder for future reference. This training bulletin may be used as a resource to conduct additional cashier and staff training.

All training is to be completed by Monday September 12, 2016 and all acknowledgements need to be received by the State WIC Office by Monday September 19, 2016.

Mike's Message

Summertime and the living is easy. I probably just dated myself but I love this song by Billy Stewart. If you haven't heard it, you should Google it. This song is right up there with *Surfin' Safari*, *Summer Nights*, and *Summer in the City*. I am sure you have your favorite summer songs and more importantly have had time to enjoy a summer vacation.

In this edition, I want to address three topics: food redemption, infant formula rebate, and of course Sheila.

First, redeeming food benefits - overall, our participants purchase 78 percent of the products prescribed for them. This is an excellent evaluation of the shopping experience that many of our participants are having. Not only do they value the foods that are prescribed at the WIC Clinic, but the atmosphere in your stores is also very positive and supportive. We have only begun to look at all the data that is now available since switching to EBT. The lowest redemption rates are for infant meats, breakfast cereals, and frozen juice. The highest rates are for infant formula (not surprising), eggs, and milk. I welcome any of your comments regarding the low rates for cereal and frozen juice.

The Thomas Jefferson Health District (the Charlottesville area) recently conducted a small survey with their participants. The survey found 98 percent of participants stated that they look for shelf labels when looking for WIC approved foods. However, only 53 percent stated that the labels are easy to see at the store. Not surprising, 99 percent said they wished all WIC approved foods were labeled.

Second, as many of you know, we had to cancel our intent to award a new infant formula contract. Therefore, the contract with Abbott Nutrition has been extended through October 31, 2016. Some technical issues remain to be resolved, but the invitation for bids should be released soon.

Finally, Sheila continues to make progress in her recovery but remains on medical leave. There is no anticipated return date. Until she returns, Alex Acharya will be the acting Vendor Team Manager. I believe many of you know Alex and I have full confidence that he will continue to provide you with support until Sheila returns. In the meantime, do not hesitate to contact your Vendor Liaison, Alex or myself if you need assistance.

Hopefully, you can find some time to enjoy a cold drink and sit back and listen to *Surfin' Safari* by the Beach

Boys, *Summer Nights* by Olivia Newton John and John Travolta, or *Summer in the City* by the Lovin' Spoonful. Enjoy these classics and your summer.

What is WIC?

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) stated mission for WIC is, "To safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age five who are at nutrition risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care." Food, nutrition counseling, and access to health services are provided to low-income women, infants, and children under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, popularly known as, WIC.

Federal grants through USDA are provided to each state's WIC Program. These grants provide supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women and their infants and children who are at nutritional risk. Established as a pilot program in 1972 and made permanent in 1974, WIC is administered at the Federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the USDA. Formerly known as the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, WIC's name was changed under the Healthy Meals for Healthy Americans Act of 1994, in order to emphasize its role as a nutrition program.

WIC is effective in improving the health of pregnant women, new mothers, and their children. A 1990 study showed that women who participated in the program during their pregnancies had lower Medicaid costs for themselves and their babies versus women who did not participate. WIC participation was also linked with longer gestation periods, higher birth weights, and lower infant mortality.

What's New

The biggest change with WIC over the last few years has been the implementation of eWIC and new technology. The Virginia WIC Program is still at the forefront with technology throughout the nation. We continue to embrace technology and strive to be innovative to assist our WIC participants with the best shopping experience with our store partners. One of the largest impacts from last year was the revision of the food list. The food list gets revised every few years. This time the changes were not as extensive as in the past. In addition to the approved food changes, there were changes with other WIC policies like the minimum stock requirement and shelf label requirements.

The food list changes include adding soy beverages and removing tomato juice and breads with artificial sweeteners (e.g. Nature's Own Whole Wheat Sugar Free Bread). The link to the complete list of specific breads can be found on page 7 of the [January, 2016 edition of the Working With WIC Retailer Bulletin](#).

A significant change was made to legumes (beans, peas, and lentils). Any brand of legumes is still allowed, and the size requirements are unchanged. But now only ten varieties of legumes (dried and canned) are allowed. Please refer to the article below, "Use of mandatory WIC shelf labels" for the specific varieties allowed.

The [Minimum Stock Requirement \(MSR\)](#) has also changed. Refrigerated juices such as orange and grapefruit are now allowed to be counted toward meeting the liquid juice minimum stocking requirement. Also Similac Sensitive was removed as a required infant formula but Similac Advance power is still required. Baby food pouches are not included in the new food list.

With the new foods, the shelf label requirement has expanded to include refrigerated juices, all approved legumes and WIC eligible whole wheat breads. There is a very important emphasis on using shelf labels properly. Shelf labels are one of the key methods of communicating which WIC foods are approved. Proper

labels save time and confusion with WIC participants and the checkout process. All of these changes will help streamline healthy choices for our participants.

WIC Shelf Labels

With the new [WIC approved food list](#) (May 2016), all stores are required to use either State WIC Office supplied, “Wholesome Informed Choices” or approved custom shelf label for the following items:

- Breakfast cereals: whole grain and non-whole grain, all WIC-eligible brands and sizes
- Whole wheat breads: 16 oz. size, all WIC-eligible brands
- Cheeses: blocked and sliced, 16 oz. size, all WIC-eligible brands
- Juice: frozen, liquid and refrigerated, all WIC-eligible brands and sizes
- Milk: 1%, skim and fat free, gallon, half gallon and quart sizes, WIC-eligible best value brands
- Peanut butter: 16-18 oz. size, WIC-eligible best value brands
- Legumes: 16 oz. dried and 15-16 oz. canned, all brands of these varieties:

Black Beans	Lentils
Black-eyed Peas	Navy Beans
Butter Beans/Lima Beans	Pinto Beans
Chickpeas/Garbanzo Beans	Red Beans
Kidney Beans (dark and light)	Great Northern Beans

Stores have the option of broadening the use of WIC shelf labels on other WIC approved foods as long as the labels are used consistently on all WIC eligible brands within a food category, such as baby foods, formula, etc. eWIC cardholders are trained to look for **either** the standard “Wholesome Informed Choices” **or** a store’s **approved** custom shelf label when shopping. **All other WIC shelf labels should be removed from shelves.** If you need to order additional “Wholesome Informed Choices” shelf labels, please use a [Retailer Supply Request Form](#).

If you would like additional information on how to broaden your use of shelf labels, please contact your assigned Vendor Liaison.



State Supplied Shelf Label

[Retailer Supply Request Form](#)

[Instructions for the Retailer Supply Request Form](#)

Conflict of Interest Reminder

One definition of “Conflict of Interest” is when an individual or organization is involved in multiple interests, one of which could possibly corrupt the motivation for an act in the other. An example of a potential conflict of interest is when a WIC authorized store employee (or family members living in the same household) is also employed by a local or state WIC agency. It is important that WIC staff, in carrying out their duties, do not show favoritism toward retailers – including those where they have secondary employment.

It is important that employees maintain an awareness of all potential conflicts. **Therefore, at least annually, authorized retail store management must remind all employees involved with WIC about the WIC Program's "Conflict of Interest."** Additional information about these Conflict of Interest requirements can be found in your [Virginia Retailer Manual](#) (See Section C3).

The Virginia WIC Program has developed an easy to use [handout](#) that can help stores meet this annual reminder requirement. A copy of this handout can be downloaded from the WIC Program's website. However, this is only one of the options available for retail stores to use in meeting this annual requirement. Each organization must decide what technique (handout, workshop, or meeting) works best for them.

The Virginia WIC Office encourages authorized stores to contact their assigned Vendor Liaison to receive additional guidance on potential conflict of interest situations. By working together, we can ensure that the Virginia WIC Program maintains the highest level of integrity while serving eligible participants.

Vendor Sanctions

We have added a new violation to the [Virginia WIC Program Sanction Schedule](#). Through various investigations, we have noticed that cashiers are scanning WIC approved items under another food UPC when the WIC approved food does not scan properly. For example, suppose a WIC participant is trying to buy infant carrots and infant peas; the infant peas do not scan as approved, so the cashier scans the infant carrots for the infant peas. This is not allowed. Authorized retailers may only sell the authorized foods prescribed and charge the WIC Program only for approved food/formula items actually sold to the eWIC cardholder. If you have questions about this or any other compliance issue, please contact Alex Acharya (804-864-7811 or [alex.acharya @ vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:alex.acharya@vdh.virginia.gov)). Please share this update with your cashiers.

Customer Service

Attitude is **everything!** Difficult customers are just another part of doing business. The way we handle the situation can determine great rewards of retaining customers and have them return to your store.

According to the Fred Pryor Customer Service seminar, only **you** can make a difference. You don't control customer behavior, but you can control your behavior. About 85 percent of our behavior comes from what we think about ourselves. Only 15 percent comes from reacting to someone's words and actions.

Avoid	Instead
Attitudes that anger	Present a non-threatening, calming demeanor
Arguing, rationalizing, defending, blaming	Think of something positive in the situation
Complaining, reacting, emotionalizing	Listen and empathize
Promising, guaranteeing	Under promise and over deliver

UPC Requests

Corporate/independent retailers and food manufacturers/distributors are required to use the UPC Update Request form to submit new WIC items for review or changes to their existing WIC products.

All submissions must be WIC approved foods identified in the 2016 WIC Approved Food List and Infant Formula Flyer. A valid **12 digit UPC must be included** in the [UPC Update Request form](#).

Completed UPC forms and product images can be sent via one of the following methods:

- **Email** [brian.tun @ vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:brian.tun@vdh.virginia.gov) or WIC_Retailer @ vdh.virginia.gov
- **US Mail**

Brian Tun, WIC UPC Coordinator
 Division of Community Nutrition
 Virginia Department of Health
 109 Governor Street, 8th Floor
 Richmond, VA 23219

Once we receive the completed UPC Update Request form, WIC staff will review and determine if the UPC item submitted is approved and can be added to the Approved Product List (APL). Additional information may be requested if deemed necessary. Once the review is completed, you will be notified via email if an email address was provided.

[Instructions for the UPC Update Request Form](#)

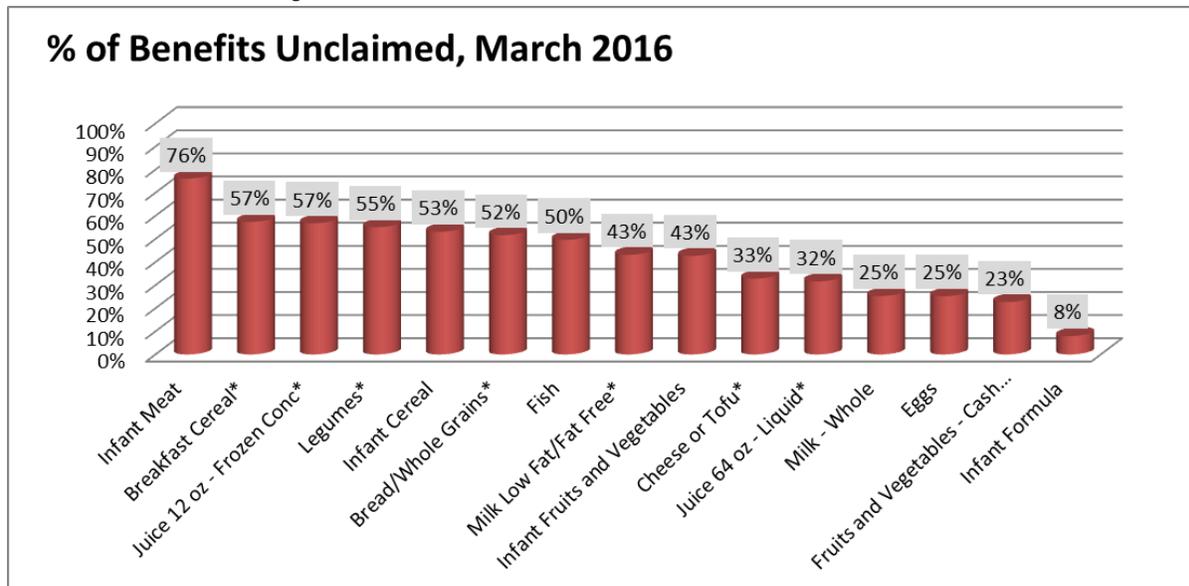
Unredeemed Benefits

What percent of WIC benefits goes unused each month? In March 2016, 22 percent of participant benefits went unclaimed. If you exclude the infant formula data, the unclaimed benefits rise to 48 percent! That's a significant amount of WIC funding that could be coming into your store.

What can you do to take advantage of these unredeemed benefits?

- Work with your Vendor Liaison to better understand opportunities in your area
- Maintain inventory levels
- Use WIC signage where appropriate
- Create interest by creative merchandising

There are additional efforts underway to better understand why benefits go unclaimed. From this, we will offer additional strategies and tactics to our Local Agencies and our Vendor partners to increase the redemptions for the underutilized food categories.



[Complaint Handling Procedures/Reporting Incidents](#)

Retailers are encouraged to report any complaints against cardholders or other retailers by completing the [Retailer Incident/Complaint form](#). Using this form, store personnel can report issues such as reimbursement concerns, agency monitoring issues, or even suspected cardholder fraud. The Retailer Incident/Complaint form should not be used to request the addition of new Universal Product Codes (UPCs) -- the UPC Update Request form should be used for this purpose. Either of these forms can be downloaded from the Retailer Resources web page.

For urgent issues or incidents of a more serious nature, the State WIC Office recommends authorized retailers call their assigned Vendor Liaison at (804) 864-7800. Once complaints have been received, WIC Office staff may contact the store to fully understand the incident, document the incident and if necessary, discuss any corrective action that is required to help prevent a reoccurrence of this incident. The WIC Program strives to ensure that complaints are resolved in a manner that improves the services provided to all cardholders.

Processing eWIC Benefits

For Stores Using Xerox Stand Beside Devices:

1. Separate WIC-approved items and process as outlined in the [Xerox eWIC Retailer Manual](#) (see pages 59-62).
2. Scan/weigh all Cash Value Benefit (CVB) items into the store's Point-of-Sale register and obtain the total dollar amount for all CVB items.
3. Enter the total dollar amount for all CVB items into the stand beside device under 44691/4469, the generic Product Look-Up (PLU) code. This generic PLU applies to CVB purchases only.
4. Non-CVB items selected by the eWIC cardholder must be scanned individually using the item's Universal Product Code (UPC). Depending on internal procedures, you may need to process eWIC purchases twice:
 - Once using the Xerox stand beside device to determine if the item is eligible against the specific cardholder's benefits (this is the step that alters their benefit balance); and
 - Again using your Point-of-Sales register to capture the actual sale amount

For Stores Using Integrated Systems:

Processing eWIC benefits with integrated systems varies. Operations and instructions depend upon the way your system has been programmed. Contact your corporate office or Value Added Reseller (VAR) for information on processing eWIC benefits with your integrated system.

Infant Formula

All WIC authorized retailers MUST purchase infant formula from an approved wholesaler/distributor. This assures the eWIC cardholders that they are receiving formula that contains the full nutritional value. Virginia WIC Program's list of approved infant formula wholesalers/distributors can be found here:

[Formula Suppliers](#)

Incentives

Federal WIC regulations prohibit offering incentives solely to eWIC cardholders in an effort to encourage them to redeem their benefits at your store. Some examples of incentives include offering free food or non-food items such as raffle tickets or lottery tickets. Section 246.12(h)(3)(iii) of the Federal WIC regulations requires retailers to offer WIC customers the same courtesies that are offered to non-WIC customers. The reverse is also true. WIC authorized stores may not treat eWIC cardholders differently by denying them incentive items

that are offered to non-WIC customers.

[Vendor Claims](#)

A Vendor Claim assessment is a requirement for a retailer to repay the Virginia WIC Program for an erroneous or unauthorized reimbursement. For example, any foods, formulas or medical foods that were ineligible to be purchased using the eWIC benefit card may result in a Vendor Claim assessment. An example of when a Vendor Claim may be assessed is when a generic Product Look-Up (PLU - 44691) code is improperly used when processing an eWIC transaction. If this type of violation is documented during a compliance investigation then this type of error can lead to a Vendor Claim being assessed, as well as the store's WIC Program authorization being at risk for disqualification.

Vendor Claim and a Compliance Investigation – A store must reimburse the WIC Program for the amount paid on ineligible products purchased during a compliance investigation. If repayment is required, then the WIC Program will send a written request to affected stores identifying when a Vendor Claim is due.

Vendor Claim Dispute – To dispute a Vendor Claim, the store must send a written request to the Virginia WIC Program explaining the reasons for disputing the claim. Stores are required to send in their Vendor Claim payment within 20 calendar days after receiving notice of the payment obligation.

[WIC Eligible Foods](#)

All WIC eligible foods are listed in the [2016 WIC Approved Food List](#). Please contact your assigned Vendor Liaison if you have any questions.

[Minimum Stocking Requirement](#)

Below is the link to the current Minimum Stocking Requirement (MSR). Stores are required to have these minimum stocking levels available for purchase in their store at all times the store is open for business. Please contact your assigned Vendor Liaison if you have any questions.

[Minimum Stocking Requirement](#)

[Who to Contact](#)

For stores using “integrated” eWIC equipment, technical issues related to your Point of Sale (POS) system should be directed to your corporate Information Technology department or Value Added Reseller. For stores using the Xerox “stand-beside” eWIC equipment, technical issues should be directed to the Xerox Retailer Help Desk at 877-436-6057

Many other questions can be answered by referencing the [Xerox eWIC Retailer Manual](#) and the [Virginia WIC Program's Retailer Manual](#). If your question is not addressed in any of these resources, contact your store's Vendor Liaison listed in the [Vendor Team Directory](#).

Below is a quick reference guide that identifies who to contact for specific issues:

[Call the Xerox Retailer Help Desk at 877-436-6057 to:](#)

- Report a found eWIC benefit card
- Request information on reimbursement and settlement related issues

- Request services on Xerox supplied stand-beside devices or report equipment failure
- Seek assistance with system error messages
- Purchase additional Xerox stand-beside devices (for stores with stand-beside equipment)
- Arrange to return stand-beside equipment before closing a store or ceasing eWIC participation
- Address technical issues related to the Xerox stand-beside equipment

Call the Virginia WIC UPC Coordinator at 804-864-7849 to:

- Ask questions regarding the status of specific food items on the Virginia APL file. (Be prepared to provide UPC information)
- Seek assistance on how to submit a UPC request for foods ringing up as, "Not Approved"
- Follow-up on the status of a UPC Update Request form that was submitted to the WIC program
- Ask questions about the PLU mapping process for Cash Value Benefit (CVB) redemptions
- Ask questions about the FTP site for daily downloading of the Virginia APL file
- Ask questions about the eWIC certification process for installing a new Electronic Cash Register (ECR) System

Call your Virginia WIC Program's Vendor Liaison at 804-864-7800 to:

- Report customer service issues related to WIC participants and the eWIC card (for example, rude behavior, attempting to purchase non-approved items, etc.)
- Report improper use or possible abuse of the eWIC benefit card
- Obtain additional copies of resources distributed by the WIC program (for example, Approved Food Lists, Formula Flyers, WIC shelf labels, "eWIC Cards Accepted here" window decals, etc.)
- Ask questions about the NTE (Not to Exceed) reimbursement level for WIC approved foods
- Seek assistance related to minimum stocking requirements

Key Web Resources

[Virginia WIC](#) | [WIC Retailers](#) | [WIC Retailer Resources](#)



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Our mailing address is:

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