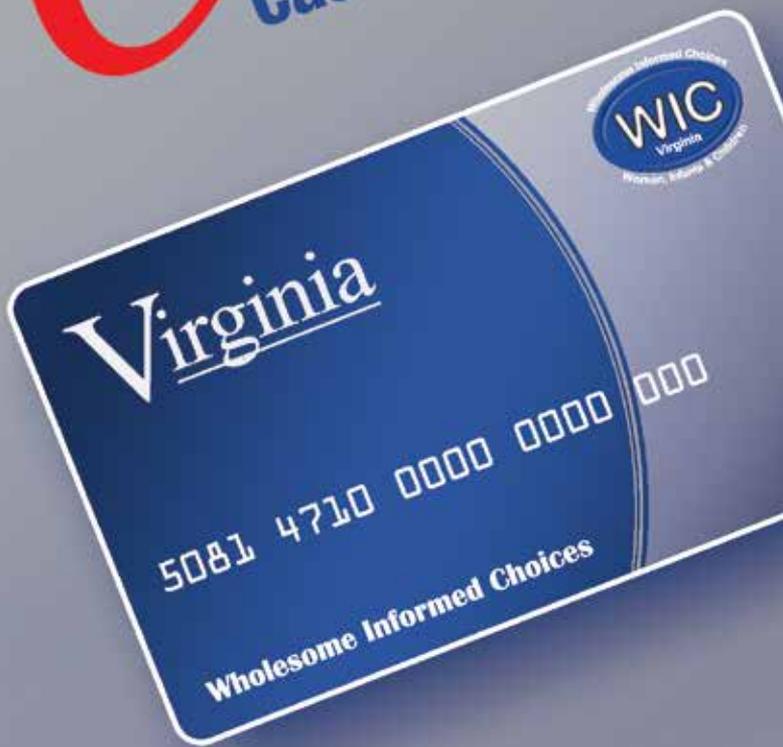


Virginia

# eWIC

Cashier Handbook



eWIC Smart Shopping Made Easy

Virginia

[www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov)

eWIC Cards

Accepted

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## Welcome to the Virginia WIC Team

As a cashier you have an important role in the store, whether it is a small store in a rural area or a large supercenter in the suburbs. The first responsibility is maintaining a cheerful attitude toward customers as they make purchases. When problems occur, it is very important to ask for management assistance without delay.

With advancing technology, payments are made in an increasing variety of ways, e.g. cash, SNAP EBT card, debit and credit cards, gift cards, and now the eWIC benefit card. Cashiers are required to have the ability to process all of these payment types, sometimes with several per transaction. They also need to know how to operate different equipment and understand multiple point-of-sale software applications.

Cashier duties are much more than taking payments and giving customers a receipt. They also include scanning groceries, weighing items properly, knowing special codes for fresh produce, bagging groceries correctly and answering customer questions. Other tasks such as taking care of register supplies, shopping bags, and balancing the drawer at the end of the shift are also important.

Stores rely on their cashiers to provide service in a way that makes customers want to come back again and again. We live in a busy world and sometimes the jobs most critical to the success of a business are undervalued. The Virginia WIC Program values the cashier's role as a frontline employee and understands it is extremely important in providing eWIC cardholders with the correct foods and formulas as well as a pleasant shopping experience.

Thank you for all that you do to support the WIC Program's service delivery and helping customers.

Virginia WIC Program  
Division of Community Nutrition  
Virginia Department of Health

## ***Identifying Store Brands***

Authorized retailers must not sell any national brands for the following food categories: cheese, hot/cold cereal, frozen/liquid juice, and peanut butter. For these food categories only store brand should be sold to eWIC cardholders. Stores are still required to post WIC shelf labels under all approved varieties of these specific food categories. Ask a manager for more guidance about store brands.

## ***Selected Brands***

Selected brands are also the WIC approved brands for products such as bread, tortillas, apple and/or grape juice (frozen/liquid). eWIC cardholders can only purchase the selected brands identified on the WIC Approved Food List and other inserts which are kept at the registers. Ask a manager for copies if needed.

## ***Milk (Whole or Reduced Fat)***

For milk products, some approved brands are regional and/or national brands. Ask a manager which milk brand is approved for eWIC purchases. Some stores may have one brand of milk for its quarts and another for half-gallons and gallons. eWIC Cardholders must buy the approved store brand of milk or least expensive brand available.

## ***Food Benefits versus Cash Value Benefits***

Food Benefits are selected based on nutritional needs. Families receive fixed quantities of bread, milk, cheese, cereal, formula and other food items. These foods are approved in specific package by size or weight; for example one pound, twelve ounces, or one gallon etc.

Cash Value Benefits (CVBs) are issued to cardholders to purchase fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables. Cardholders do not receive cash or change back from purchases.

CVBs are issued in specific dollar amounts and cardholders may purchase up to the maximum value. If the purchase is more than the maximum value, the cardholder can pay the difference or choose to put something back. Always follow the store's procedures for accepting multiple forms of payment.

### *Mixed Basket Items*

eWIC cardholders are encouraged to separate their purchases and tell the cashier they are using an eWIC benefit card before beginning the transaction. If the customer doesn't separate the food and formula items from the fruits and vegetables, it may be helpful to ring up the food and formula items first (because these items are tied to food benefits). Since Cash Value Benefits may involve entering special codes and more than one form of payment, ringing them up last can save time.

If the total sale is higher than the Cash Value Benefit amount, eWIC cardholders can pay the difference (with SNAP, cash or credit/debit card) or they can choose not to buy some items.

### *Product Look Up (PLU) Codes & Cash Value Benefits*

The Virginia WIC Program has opted to use a single PLU Code 4469; this code and the dollar amount of the purchase are entered into the point-of-sale equipment provided by Xerox. [This step does not apply to stores with integrated systems.] This special code allows matching the store's numerous PLU codes to one standard code. All fresh produce, (vegetables and fruits) will be electronically tied to this single PLU code.

It is still the cashier's responsibility to allow only fruits and vegetables that are WIC approved. Sometimes a particular food may not be found on the WIC Approved Food List. When this happens, notify a manager. The manager can follow-up with the State WIC Office to verify if the item should be added to the Approved Product List (APL). If the item is eligible, the cardholder will be able to buy it using their eWIC benefits in the future.

### *Coupons / Loyalty Cards / Promotions*

Customer loyalty cards and coupons are allowed for eWIC purchases and should be used according to the store's policy. Buy-one-get-one (BOGO) and other discounts, or promotions, are also allowed.

### ***Important Tip***

If your store uses an integrated POS system, the cardholder must be given the choice to have the reduce-priced item paid for using another form of tender, i.e., SNAP. If this option is selected by the cardholder, then the WIC benefit balance available should not be affected. See example below for additional information about handling this type of transaction.

Cents off coupons and other discounts should be entered after all the foods are scanned; but before ringing up fruits and vegetables that will be counted against the Cash Value Benefits. Ask a manager for details on how to apply this type of offer, as well as other types of discounts/promotions.

Always be sure to give the customer their eWIC shopping receipt at the end of the transaction. This is their record of the food, formula items purchased.

### ***Avoiding Errors***

Even with automated register functions, mistakes and problems do sometimes happen. This section will help cashiers correct errors when needed.

### ***eWIC Cardholder Account Numbers***

Personal Account Number (PAN) are assigned to eWIC benefit cards. When the card is swiped, the store's equipment reads the information from its magnetic strip. If the magnetic strip is damaged, the card may not work properly.

### ***Cashiers should never key in the PAN.***

Have the cardholder call the number on the back of the card for help. If further help is needed, ask for management assistance.

### ***Personal Identification Number***

(PIN) is a 4 digit code that only the eWIC cardholder knows and may enter. Cashiers should never key the PIN. This PIN is the eWIC cardholder's electronic signature (therefore, they do not have to sign the receipt). Unlike debit/credit card transactions cashiers do not have to verify the cardholder's identity or signature.

Note: After three failed attempts to enter the PIN, the account will automatically lock for 24 hours. Have the eWIC cardholder call the number on the back of the card to have the PIN reset, if needed ask for management assistance.

## ***Multiple Purchase Items - Restricted use of multiplier key***

**The multiplier key should never be used when processing eWIC transactions.**

Always scan each item one at a time. In the past, mistakes using multiplier keys have allowed eWIC cardholders to purchase the wrong items and charge the WIC Program for unsold food and formula.

The only way to be sure the correct items are purchased based upon the available eWIC balance is to scan each item. Remember, if the product is counted twice or the wrong product is allowed, there is no easy way to reverse the eWIC transaction. Selling the wrong foods or charging for unsold items can put your store at risk during compliance investigations.

### ***The example below explains how things can go wrong:***

Customer Connie comes to the register with four cans of formula. She has three cans of contract formula (which is correct), and one can of non-contract formula (which is incorrect). Her eWIC balance for formula is six cans.

To save time Cashier Caitlin scans one can of the contract formula and presses the multiplier key then the number four. The total number of cans subtracted from Connie's balance is a total of five!

Remember -- Connie only purchased four cans of formula and instead of having a balance of two cans she now has only one can of formula remaining! Also, since Caitlin did not scan each individual can, Connie now has a can of the wrong formula!

Note: See how using the multiplier key can lead to errors which put both customer and the store's WIC authorization at risk.

## ***Prohibited Use of Code Books for Scanning***

After an item is scanned, the Approved Product List (APL) system determines if the item is WIC approved. If it is, keep scanning. If the UPC does not work, never enter a memorized Universal Product Code (UPC) or a code from a book. When you enter a code from memory or a book you may allow the eWIC cardholder to buy a product that is not approved. Sometimes UPCs change or might not scan. When this occurs, call for a manager.

## ***Management Assistance***

Below is a short list of problems that may occur in eWIC processing. Always get a manager's assistance as quickly as possible when there is an issue. The exact steps for correcting problems may differ from what is outlined below, WIC authorized stores don't all use the same point of sale system or equipment. Some stores use an integrated system, while others use a stand-beside system and equipment provided by the Xerox Corporation. If you are unsure which point of sale system your store is using, ask a manager.

## ***Voiding eWIC Transactions***

- Cashiers using stand beside systems (with equipment provided by Xerox) should refer to the Virginia WIC Xerox eWIC Retailer Manual for specific instructions on how to void items.
- Cashiers using integrated systems should refer to a store manager for assistance.

## ***Troubleshooting (Products Won't Scan)***

- Cashiers using stand beside systems should refer to the Virginia WIC Xerox eWIC Retailer Manual in the event of equipment failure or error messages.
- If the UPC does not scan, you should refuse to sell the item. Explain the process to the cardholder and/or call a manager to the register if needed.
- Also ask the manager to follow-up with the WIC Program's UPC Gatekeeper to confirm if the item should be added to the Approved Product List (APL).
- If the UPC is inactive, this may mean the food is not approved. Do not use another active code to allow the sale.
- For problems scanning fresh produce, call for management assistance.
- If a product does not scan due to a problem with the cardholder's benefit balance, have them call the number on the back of the eWIC benefit card.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE DO'S & DON'TS**

Cashiers should be polite and treat eWIC cardholders with respect. Below are some tips for developing first-rate customer service skills.

### **DO**

- ✓ Greet your customers with a “Hello”, eye contact and a smile.
- ✓ Be aware of your tone of voice, body language, and attitude.
- ✓ Be respectful and patient with every customer no matter how they pay for their food.
- ✓ When a customer exceeds the Cash Value Benefit, ask politely if they prefer to pay the difference or not to purchase the item.
- ✓ Call for management assistance quickly when needed.
- ✓ Give customers the service you like to receive when shopping.
- ✓ Remain calm even when customers are in a hurry and don't want to wait.
- ✓ Be patient with each customer, as this helps to reduce conflict.
- ✓ Listen to customers as if you mean it; repeat their concerns when you can.
- ✓ Speak in a pleasant tone and tell customers what can be done. Example: “The brand of grape juice that is allowed is called \_\_\_\_\_”, instead of “this juice is not allowed”.

## DO'S & DON'TS

- ✓ Seek to exceed a customer's expectations.
- ✓ Be willing and ready to correct errors. We all make mistakes.
- ✓ Tell the customer the problem will be reported and the store hopes to have it corrected by their next shopping visit.
- ✓ Always thank customers for shopping at your store!

### ***DON'TS***

- ✓ Don't make rude faces or sounds when greeting customers.
- ✓ Don't talk loudly or use harsh language with customers (even if they do).
- ✓ Don't focus on what they cannot get, for example: "you can't get that brand of juice and peanut butter here."
- ✓ Don't say help needed with WIC, when calling for management assistance.
- ✓ Don't decide for the customer what items to put back if the purchase exceeds the benefit balance.
- ✓ Don't rush the customer or cut them off while talking.

## Confidentiality

All information about eWIC cardholders and transactions is confidential. Retailers may not give out information such as card numbers, purchase amounts, or benefit balances to anyone not associated with the administration of eWIC benefits. The confidentiality sections in the Virginia WIC and Xerox eWIC Retailer agreements states this as a requirement of authorization.

If an investigator, auditor, or police official requests eWIC information about a cardholder, never volunteer any information. Always refer the individual making the request to management.

Management should request official identification and contact either the Xerox eWIC Retailer Help Desk or the State WIC Office for further instructions. The State WIC Office will determine if information is to be released.

## Program Integrity

### What Does Program Integrity Mean To You?

Program integrity is an important cashier role. What does “program integrity” mean? Below is some information from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

- Any form of fraud and abuse, such as using WIC benefits in any way other than the method or purpose which they were intended, violates Federal and State WIC Program regulations and constitutes a program violation.

- Making a verbal offer of sale to another individual or posting WIC food items, or eWIC benefit cards for sale in print or online, as well as allowing someone else to do so, is evidence of program abuse.

Program fraud and abuse can occur in various ways, including but not limited to:

- Cashiers charging the WIC Program for food items not given to an individual qualified to receive these benefits;
- Cashiers allowing the purchase of ineligible or “not approved” items;
- Cashiers not following correct procedures in handling eWIC transactions;
- Cashiers allowing an eWIC cardholder to receive cash or credit instead of the food benefits selected;
- Store managers not providing adequate supervision and/or training of cashiers and other staff.

It is important to discuss these and other issues with management. Consequences of non-compliance in handling eWIC transactions are equally as important to know and discuss with management.

The WIC Program is required by USDA to ensure program integrity. One testing method to determine the level of program integrity is secret shopper buys. During these buys, the secret shopper reports their findings to the WIC Program. Cashiers that do everything “correctly” may receive a special **Ask Me About My WIC Star** award/button. If program integrity issues were identified in the course of any secret shopper buy, then management will receive a letter identifying specific violations that occurred.

Another way that program integrity affects cashiers is daily observations. If a cashier suspects an eWIC cardholder is not using their benefits correctly, tell a manager. When a manager alerts the WIC Program of these issues, abuse and fraud can be investigated. Retailer’s help in alerting the WIC Program about a potential misuse of benefits is an important contribution.

### ***Reporting Incidents/Complaints***

The Virginia WIC Program Retailer Manual provides guidelines on reporting fraud, abuse, and other types of complaints regarding eWIC cardholders. Your manager should complete the required paperwork for submission or call the State WIC office at 804-864-7800 if the matter is urgent.

## **When is sales tax charged to eWIC cardholders?**

- Sales tax is charged when a customer exceeds the Cash Value Benefit amount and uses cash to pay the difference.
- Sales tax is charged when the customer is receiving a free item that is not included on the food benefit shopping list. If the 'free item' is taxable, the eWIC cardholder pays the tax.
- Sales tax is never charged on food items paid for by WIC Program benefits.
- Sales tax is never charged if the difference is paid using SNAP benefits.

## **What if a WIC customer attempts to exchange formula?**

- See the Virginia WIC Program Retailer Manual for guidelines on when exchanges are allowed.

## **Are rain checks or substitutions allowed if an item is out of stock?**

- No, rain checks are not allowed if the product is out of stock; the sale must be refused.

See the Virginia WIC Program Retailer Manual section Exchanges, and Refunds for additional guidance.

**Can another brand be substituted if the store brand is out of stock?**

- Only whole and reduced fat milk products may be substituted for the least expensive brand available if the store brand is not available.
- No, substitutions are not allowed if the product is out of stock. You must decline the sale.

***Can any brand of apple or grape juice be purchased?***

- No, only the brands that are identified in the Approved Product List database or on the approved food list and/or inserts.

**What if the eWIC cardholder attempts to purchase the wrong food or formula?**

- Politely assist them in selecting the correct foods and formula items whenever possible.
- Report the incident when necessary to a manager who can report the issue using the Retailer Complaint/Incident form. Blank forms are available on our website located in the Virginia WIC Program Retailer Manual.

**Will all WIC approved food and formula items have shelf labels?**

- No, the WIC Program only requires certain items to be labeled. Stores have the option to label additional WIC approved foods.
- See the Virginia WIC Program Retailer Manual for shelf label guidelines.
- Check with a manager to find out what items the store uses shelf labels for.

**What should I do if a food does not scan?**

- Check the error message and call for management assistance if needed.

**What should I do if the eWIC benefit card is damaged or does not scan?**

- Have the customer step away from the line and call the customer service number on the back of the card.
- If the customer service number is unreadable, it is **1-877-677-5963**.

**What if the eWIC customer asks the cashier to enter the PIN number?**

- The cashiers should tell them it is against WIC Program and store policy, A cardholder's PIN should not be given to an unauthorized individual, including a cashier.

**What if a lost eWIC card is found?**

- Give the card to a manager on duty, who can report it by calling Xerox eWIC Customer Service at 1-877-436-6057.

## *Other Resources*

- WIC Approved Food List;
- Beans/Peas/Juice flyers;
- Website;
- Participant Handbook;
- eWIC cardholder DVD.

## *Manuals*

- Xerox eWIC Retailer Manual (Stores with stand beside equipment only)
- Virginia WIC Retailer Program Manual (All Stores)





The following is a sample of the eWIC card.



The following is a sample of the eWIC Door Decal

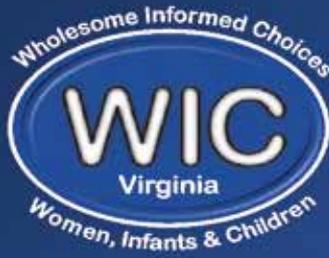


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