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Virginia WIC Retailer Bulletin | November 2017

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## [Mandeep's Minute](#)

We are pleased to announce Dr. Mandeep Virk-Baker as the Director of the Division of Community Nutrition (DCN).

Dr. Virk-Baker relocated with her family to Richmond from California to join the Office of Family Health Services (OFHS) team to lead DCN starting August 10, 2017. Dr. Virk-Baker most recently served as Associate Nutrition Advisor at the University of California, Davis where she led the Cooperative Extension low-income nutrition education programs funded by the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and the UC CalFresh Nutrition Education Program (a SNAP-Ed Program). She was also responsible for conducting a multi-county based education and applied public health and nutrition research program for two large California counties. Dr. Virk-Baker has an extensive background in health policy and research and has published in several peer reviewed journals. She is a registered dietitian and received her doctoral degree in Nutrition Sciences. Dr. Virk-Baker earned a Masters of Public Health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and completed post-doctoral fellowships at the NIH and Office of the US Surgeon General.

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The following products have been removed from the current Approved Product List (APL).

UPC	Product Description	Reason for Removal
051933343436	Grissom's Mill 100% Whole Wheat Bread- 16 oz	Discontinued
041130271014	Carlita Whole Wheat Tortillas - 16 oz	Discontinued
041130270826	Carlita Corn Tortillas – 16 oz	Discontinued
080062004109	Pepito Corn Tortillas – 16 oz	Discontinued
080062010179	Pepito Whole Wheat Tortilla – 16 oz	Discontinued
035826085252	Food Lion 100% Whole Wheat Bread - 16 oz	Discontinued
041270830799	IGA Rice Squares Toasted Rice Cereal-12.8 oz	Discontinued
011110853264	Kroger 1 Minute Oats - 18 oz	Not Iron Fortified

**[EPPIC Downtime Notification](#)**

EPPIC is the system that processes the payments for eWIC. You may have noticed that the system was down more than once in September 2017 and as a result, was unable to process any eWIC transactions.

As we become aware of system outages, we alert the contacts that are on file for each store or corporation. Often, these individuals are not physically located at a store when the outage occurs. To ensure that all retail locations are informed of any outages as quickly as possible, we would like your thoughts on how this might work for your individual stores as well as your management.

Please email [WIC\\_Retailer@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:WIC_Retailer@vdh.virginia.gov) with any suggestions or preferences you have regarding how best to receive this notification from us.

**[Reauthorization Questions and Answers](#)**

Answers to the following “Parking Lot” questions posed at the Annual Training are provided.

<b><u><a href="#">eWIC Transactions and Pricing</a></u></b>	
1.	<p><b>Q. If milk has a one-day sale price, does the Stand Beside machine need to be reflect the sale price?</b></p> <p><b>Answer:</b> Yes, the price that is submitted for reimbursement should reflect the actual price of the item being sold. To charge the WIC program more than the actual price would be considered an overcharge. Please see Sanction Section violation C3.</p>

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	<p><b>Answer:</b> No. UPCs and standard PLUs should always be used for fresh produce if they are available. The generic PLU 4469 or 44691 should be used only if there is no UPC/PLU to use or if the UPC cannot be scanned. All WIC approved fresh produce with a UPC should be submitted to the UPC coordinator to be added to the Approved Product List (date for intake of new products may vary).</p>
3.	<p><b>How do participants request their benefits to be sent via text message?</b></p> <p><b>Answer:</b> Participants can sign up for the service by calling the Conduent (formerly Xerox) Help Desk at 877-436-6057.</p>
<p><b>Requirements and Training Resources</b></p>	
4.	<p><b>Q. Can the minimum stocking requirement (MSR) for formula be reduced?</b></p> <p><b>Answer:</b> At this time no, but we will take it under advisement.</p>
5.	<p><b>Q: Can the Cashier Training video be made available in Spanish?</b></p> <p><b>Answer:</b> We will look into options for this request. If you have cashiers who do not speak English, please let us know so we can understand this impact.</p>
6.	<p><b>Q. Is the link to the EPPIC portal available on our website?</b></p> <p><b>Answer:</b> Yes, the link to the reference guide is found here:  <a href="http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/44/2017/02/EPPIC-Quick-Reference.pdf">http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/44/2017/02/EPPIC-Quick-Reference.pdf</a></p>
7.	<p><b>Q. If the State issued shelf labels don't fit your shelves and you don't have customized labels? What other options are available?</b></p> <p><b>Answer:</b> We have two sizes available. If neither work for your tag and shelf setup, please submit a custom label design for approval.</p>
<p><b>Approved Food Lists and Program Updates</b></p>	
8.	<p><b>Q. When will the program update the Food List?</b></p> <p><b>Answer:</b> A new one is scheduled for release in April 2018.</p>
9.	<p><b>Q. Can other brands be approved? For example, small, local brands?</b></p> <p><b>Answer:</b> Submissions for the new Food List were due by July 31, 2017; however requests for individual UPCs can be submitted for consideration at any time using the <a href="#">UPC Update Request Form</a> available from the</p>

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10.	<p><b>Q. If you are the only independent store in your peer group in your zip code are you compared the larger store in your area?</b></p> <p><b>Answer:</b> No, peer groups are established based on location (urban or rural), number of registers, and in some cases, total WIC sales. Urban and rural designations are determined by city/county as reported by the U. S. Office of Management and Budget. Stores are compared only to stores that are in their same peer group throughout the entire state.</p>
	<p><b>If you have additional questions, contact your assigned WIC Vendor Liaison.</b></p>

### [Retailer Supply Web Request Form](#)

The paper Retailer Supply Request form that has been used for years by retailers to submit requests for WIC supplies has been redesigned as a web form. While the old paper form is still available, the new [Supply Request Web Form](#) allows all of the information that is on the paper form to be submitted via our web site and an order submitted electronically. Please give it a try the next time you need to order WIC supplies.

### [Cashier Training Video](#)

The updated Cashier's Training Video and answer key were released Spring, 2017. This video is approximately 20 minutes in length and a great tool to assist in training cashiers on eWIC. This video is available in multiple formats: a USB drive (MP4, Windows media and Quick time files), a playable DVD, and can also be viewed directly from the link on the Retailer [Resources](#) page. If you would like a copy, please complete the [Supply Request Web Form](#) that is also available on the Resources page.

### [New Food List](#)

A new Virginia WIC Approved Food List will be available in early 2018. This new list will contain many of the same items as the 2016 version; however, some new foods will be added (yogurt, whole wheat pasta and national brand breakfast cereals), and some format changes will be made. The 2018 WIC Approved Food List will have slightly more pages than its predecessor and each food category will have a different colored tab to allow you to more quickly find a particular food item. Food categories that require stores to post a "Wholesome Informed Choices or WIC" shelf label have the WIC logo

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distributing the new approved food List.

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### [2017-2020 WIC Retailer Agreement Distribution](#)

Per federal regulations, every store needs a signed retailer agreement with the WIC Program in order to participate in the state or territory that the store is located. In Virginia, we renew all agreements on a three-year cycle. We just entered a new cycle from October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2020. All stores that applied for reauthorization and complied with our regulations have been authorized for the new contract period. The Vendor Compliance Manager for the Virginia WIC Program (Alex Acharya, 804-864-7811, [alex.acharya@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:alex.acharya@vdh.virginia.gov)) has signed all of the agreements and they have been emailed to each store's contact email on file. If you did not receive your signed agreement, please reach out to Alex or your [Vendor Liaison](#) and another signed copy will be emailed or mailed to you. We appreciate your assistance in getting every store trained on WIC over the summer and appreciate your continued support of the WIC Program. Please feel free to contact Alex with questions regarding the signed retailer agreement or any other issue.

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### [Store Monitoring Reviews](#)

Unannounced store visits can be conducted at any time by State WIC office, local agency, appointed officer, or USDA. The purpose of these visits is to partner with our WIC Retailers to ensure the integrity of the program. Although not required, store personnel are encouraged to walk through the store with the reviewer so they can ask questions and correct defects as they go. This partnership is a "win-win" situation for WIC and its retailers. During the visit, the WIC representative will check the [minimum stock requirements](#) (MSR) and [shelf labels](#), and confirm that all program materials are up to date. The MSR and shelf labels requirements can be found in the Food list or on the Resources page on WIC Retailers website. Studies have shown that WIC participants purchase more products when shelf labels are present.

Also, each store's WIC Binder will be checked for the current edition of the following: Approved Food List (English), Formula Flyer, Cashier Handbook, and the Retail Store Manual (unless it is available online). In order for all store personnel to know where to find this information, **store management should select a specific location for the binder (cash office, customer service counter, store manager's office, etc.).** Store management should ensure that **that all store personnel know the selected location, and that the binder is always returned to this location.**

Please contact your [Vendor Liaison](#) with any questions about store visits or any other area of the Virginia WIC program.

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address. Using MailChimp reduces the number of emails being considered “Spam”, and allows for a common branding of the Virginia WIC Program. Additionally, because MailChimp doesn’t allow attachments, storage space and malware concerns are reduced.

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### [Certified Trainer Training](#)

The WIC Program is offering a ‘**New**’ *Certified Train-the-Trainer* workshop for 2018. The workshop’s purpose is to train retailer staff to become “WIC Certified Trainers” that would be responsible for internal WIC training. Upon completion of this specialized workshop, attendees are able to deliver WIC authorization training for new store enrollment. Additionally, they will also provide the annual federally mandated training for WIC authorized stores.

The benefits of having WIC Certified Trainers include giving corporations the flexibility in scheduling on-site training, in lieu of attending a State facilitated training. This two-day training workshop is not intended for individuals who previously attended a WIC certified trainer workshop in 2016, or a refresher training webinar in 2017, unless they will be picking up additional training responsibilities.

Additional details and a “Save-the-Date” announcement will be going out in early 2018.

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### [Compliance Update](#)

Twenty-seven stores were chosen for a WIC Inventory Audit. The audits involved physical inventory counts and review of purchase invoices for the selected audit items. All audits were completed prior to September 30, 2017. Twenty-three of the stores audited passed their audits, the remaining four stores failed their audit due to incomplete purchase records. All stores should have received a certified letter with their audit results. Stores that did not pass their audit received information regarding any sanctions that were levied connected with the audit. If you have not received your letter, please contact [Robert.Altermatt@vdh.Virginia.gov](mailto:Robert.Altermatt@vdh.Virginia.gov).

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### [WIC Participant Satisfaction Survey](#)

The partnership between the Virginia WIC Program and Authorized Retailers is a vital collaboration for many reasons. The Virginia WIC Program conducts a Participant Satisfaction Survey every year. However, with the implementation of the

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- Over 90% of participants received instructions from staff about how to use the eWIC card at the store.
- 77.7% of the participants rate their understanding of eWIC card use as excellent, yet a combined 61.6% of participants are told by cashiers that they have picked up the wrong WIC food item.
  - This is an opportunity for our Vendor Team and Retailers to come together and identify ways to decrease this gap in understanding. There seems to be a greater need for clear and consistent education from the top to the bottom in all retailer locations.
  - This also speaks to the need for consistent labeling at all retailer locations so that participants don't become confused about which WIC items are eligible or ineligible.
- Our participants predominantly shop at grocery store chains (65.4%) that are within 5 – 15 minutes from their house because it is closest.
- They value a good selection of good quality foods, as well as helpful and friendly staff.
- Only 52.6% reported buying all of the loaded foods. When asked why, they either forgot it, or more importantly for retailers, they could not find the items in the store.
- Cereal, whole wheat bread, and dry beans remain the hardest items to find, but labeling in the dairy sections also seems to be a problem.
- The largest grocery store challenge is inadequate stock (35.7%), followed closely by locating WIC foods (32.5%).
- Our participants are technologically advanced. Over 90% have a smartphone and use it often.

This survey not only highlights opportunities for improvement but also opportunities for innovation. In Southwest VA, Food City is leading the way by actively creating a WIC Friendly shopping experience. They have partnered with WIC Coordinators, the State Community Outreach Coordinator, and United Way to develop a visual food guide and will be kicking it off next month. By looking at how WIC can better partner with retailers to streamline labeling and communication, we believe retailers will increase participation in their individual stores, and attract non-users because they will be providing better service all around. They can also look at this as a way to invite non-traditional partners to the table in order to better service the nutritional needs of all of their customers, not just our wonderful WIC participants.



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1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;  
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(3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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