

IMPORTANT DEADLINE FRIDAY, AUGUST 20, 2021

This special edition of the WIC Retailer Bulletin is the annual training bulletin. This document serves as the Annual WIC Training curriculum and provides WIC program changes, highlights compliance and integrity issues, and provides useful tips on processing eWIC transactions.

Training Required Actions

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Federal regulation 246.12, **each** WIC-authorized store has to designate a manager or representative to complete and verify annual refresher training. To verify the 2021 Retailer Annual training follow actions below:

1. Read this Retailer Bulletin **in its entirety**.
2. Acknowledge that you have completed your annual training:
 - For “individual” stores (stores without a Certified Trainer) - Complete the survey with store WIC ID number at this link: <https://redcap.link/2021VAWIC>
 - For “corporate” stores (stores with a Certified Trainer) - Follow the instructions sent to you by your Certified Trainer;
 - For Certified Trainers: Refer to email with instructions sent to your parent company with subject title “**2021 VA WIC Annual Training**”. If you have not received instructions from the State WIC Office when you receive this Retailer Bulletin, please contact Alex Acharya - Alex.Acharya@vdh.virginia.gov.

3. Share this special edition with other store personnel (i.e. cashiers, bookkeepers, and customer service managers).
4. Complete your annual Conflict of Interest review (see "Conflict of Interest Reminder" below).

Find a copy of the Retailer Bulletin on our webpage: [VirginiaWICRetailers.com](https://www.virginiawicretailers.com).

Please complete training and submit confirmation to the State WIC Office by Friday, August 20, 2021.

Please contact Jennifer.Trower@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions on this section.

Print and POST this Bulletin in a central location at your store and place a copy in your Retailer Manual binder for future reference. This training bulletin can also be used as an additional resource and training tool for cashier and staff training.

Training

1. The Purpose and History of the WIC Program

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) serves low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk. WIC provides participants with nutritious foods to supplement participant diets, nutrition education, and referrals to health and other social services. Established as a pilot program in 1972 and made permanent in 1974, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers WIC at the Federal level. At the State level, WIC is administered by 89 State agencies, including all 50 States, 33 Indian Tribal Organizations, American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Services are provided at a variety of local clinic locations including, but not limited to, county health departments, hospitals, schools, and Indian Health Service facilities.

Refer to the USDA website for more information: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/wic-program/>

Please contact Ephraim.Ewing@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions on this section.

2. 2022 New Food List Release

A new Virginia WIC Food List 2022 is expected to be released in the spring 2022 to each WIC authorized store. If you need additional copies, of the current 2020 food list please use the Retailer [Supply Request Web form](#), or by sending an email to WIC_Retailer@vdh.virginia.gov.

Please contact Brian.Tun@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions on this section.

3. Minimum Stocking Requirements (MSR)

As specified in [Section D2](#) of the Retail Store Manual, the Minimum Stocking Requirement (MSR) must be met at all times. The products must not be expired and must be in the store during normal business hours. **Failing to meet the MSR three times in a 12-month period will result in disqualification from the WIC Program.**

Use the [Approved Product List \(APL\)](#) and the [WIC Approved Food List](#) to determine approved brands, varieties, and UPCs that may be used to meet the MSR.

Below is a summary of the current MSR, this easy to use [Minimum At-A-Glance](#) document was developed for retailers.

Minimum Stock at a Glance

Item	Type	Size	Variety	Quantity	Shelf Label Required
Milk	1% OR Fat Free	Gallons, ½ gallons, quarts	2 sizes	5 gallons	Yes
Cheese	Sliced American	16 oz.	-	1 pkg.	Yes
	Block Cheddar			1 pkg.	Yes
Eggs	Large, White A or AA	Dozen	-	2 pkg.	
Beans	Dry	16 oz.	-	2 pkg.	
	Canned	15-16 oz.	-	8 cans.	
Peanut Butter	Any approved	16-18 oz.	-	2 containers	Yes
Cereal	Non-whole grain	12-36 oz.	-	24 oz. total	Yes
	Whole grain	12-36 oz. cold 11.8-12 oz. hot	2 types	48 oz. total	Yes
Frozen Juice	Single flavored: apple, orange, grapefruit, grape	12 oz.	2 flavors	2 containers total	Yes
Refrigerated/shelf stable juice	Single flavored: apple, orange, grapefruit, grape	64 oz.	2 flavors	2 containers total	Yes
Whole Grains	Whole wheat bread	16 oz.	-	1 pkg.	
	Brown rice			1 pkg.	
Infant cereal	Rice	8 oz.	-	3 pkg.	
Infant vegetables	Single ingredient or combination	4 oz.	2 flavors	128 oz. total	
Infant fruits	Single ingredient or combination	4 oz.	2 flavors	128 oz. total	
Infant Formula	Similac Advance Powder	12.4 oz.	-	9 containers	
Fruits and Vegetables (cash value benefit)	Fruit subcategories: canned, fresh, frozen	-	4 types of fruit AND 2 subcategories	\$20.00 total	
	Vegetable subcategories: canned, fresh, frozen		4 types of vegetables AND 2 subcategories	\$20.00 total	

BEST PRACTICE - Use this chart and check your MSR regularly and contact the Vendor team with any questions.

Please contact Amy.Romero@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions on this section.

4. Infant Formula Sources and Record Keeping Requirements

Virginia WIC requires that all infant formula offered to WIC participants be purchased from suppliers authorized by the Virginia WIC Program. Purchasing infant formula from an approved supplier protects the health and wellbeing of WIC participants. The current list of [approved formula suppliers](#) is available online. If you wish to source formula for WIC participants from a supplier not on this list, the wholesaler/distributor must contact their Vendor Liaison and request to become an authorized supplier.

Please refer to the following documents for further information:

- [Virginia WIC Program's Retailer Manual, Section D2](#)
- [Retailer Agreement, Section G, Retailer Item 3](#)
- [Federal Regulation 246.12\(g\)\(11\)](#)

Note: The Retailer Agreement states that all retailers are required to maintain inventory records used for federal tax reporting purposes for a minimum of one (1) calendar year; and maintain purchasing records (invoices) for a minimum of twelve (12) months.

Please contact Robert.Altermatt@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions on this article.

5. Procedures for Transacting and Redeeming WIC Benefits

eWIC Transactions For Stores Using Conduent (Xerox) Stand Beside Devices:

1. Separate WIC-approved items and process them first
2. For all non-produce items, scan each item's Universal Product Code (UPC) individually.
3. For produce (Cash Value Benefit (CVB) items)
 - a. Scan/weigh each item into the store's Point-of-Sale register and obtain total dollar amount
 - a. Enter the total dollar amount into the eWIC device using code 44691/4469 or the item's IFPS standard Price Look-Up (PLU) code. This PLU code applies to CVB purchases only.
4. Depending on internal procedures, you may need to process eWIC purchases twice:
 - First, using Conduent (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 to report the sales to the State WIC Office for reimbursement; and
 - Second, using your Point-of-Sales register to capture the actual sale amount and inventory quantity.

Reminder: Check the Conduent (Xerox) [eWIC Retailer Manual](#) for specific steps in processing eWIC transactions using WIC SMART Keys with stand beside devices. Refer to the error codes and descriptions section for more details. Contact the retailer helpdesk at 1-877-436-6057 if you need assistance for your stand beside devices.

eWIC Transactions for Stores Using Integrated Point-of-Sale (POS) Systems

Processing eWIC benefits with integrated POS systems varies, so operations and instructions depends on the way your POS system has been programmed. Contact your corporate office or Value Added Reseller (VAR) for information on processing eWIC benefits with your integrated system. Contact your third party processor (TPP) or store IT if you have any issues with eWIC transactions.

For all transactions (Stand-beside and Integrated POS Systems)

Be particularly careful when voiding a transaction or executing a transaction reversal as it may cancel the eWIC customer's benefits. Follow instructions for voids carefully, and check before and after balances to ensure that no benefits have been lost.

Reimbursement

Any WIC transactions after 12:00 pm daily will be processed the next business day. A single electronic settlement payment is made to the eWIC Retailer's designated bank, and a detailed account of each eWIC transaction is provided via the Conduent (Xerox) Vendor Portal or POS system vendor.

Please contact Brian.Tun@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions on this section.

6. The Vendor Sanction System/Compliance

The Virginia WIC Program is mandated by the USDA to periodically conduct undercover retailer compliance investigations. The type of violations tested are identified in the current [Sanctions, Compliance and Program Violation](#) schedule which is available in this training newsletter. Refer to the [annual compliance reminder letter](#) for more information on WIC program compliance.

The sanction schedule addresses both state and federal violations. The sanction schedule also shows different levels of severity for an offense, ranging from a warning letter to permanent disqualification. Two of the minor offenses include not providing a receipt to cardholders unless expressly declined or charging sales tax on eWIC purchases. The most severe charges include trafficking and illegally buying and selling WIC benefits for firearms, ammunition, explosives, or controlled substances. During an investigation, the WIC Program will always provide a written notice of the violation, unless the notice will compromise the investigation. Please review the sanction schedule to familiarize yourself with activities that are deemed a violation. It is also important that you share this information with your store personnel and cashiers to ensure everyone understands the program requirements.

The sanction schedule is available online and can also be provided upon request. If you have any questions about WIC violations, please contact **Alex Acharya at 804-864-7811** or email Alex.Acharya@vdh.virginia.gov.

Reminder: The WIC and SNAP (Food Stamp) Programs share data relating to imposed sanctions. Losing your SNAP authorization will affect your WIC authorization, and vice versa.

Covert “Secret Shopper” Compliance Buys:

At the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic Virginia WIC made the decision to suspend Compliance Buys. Stores were having supply chain issues and were struggling with operational issues around social distancing and mask mandates all while maintaining customer service standards. Now that state ordered restrictions are lifting and supply issues are far less common we will resume Compliance Buys in July 2021.

Please contact Robert.Altermatt@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions on this section.

7. Incident Complaint Reporting

We encourage authorized retailers to report any eWIC cardholder incidents or problems by using the [Retailer Incident/Complaint form WIC #387](#).

Keeping us informed of these incidents as they happen allows us to address them in a timely manner and perhaps reduce repeat occurrences. Examples of incidents to report include:

- Attempts to purchase ineligible items with eWIC food benefits;
- Attempts to return WIC food items for ineligible exchange, store credit, or cash;
- Attempts to purchase excess Cash Value Benefits, not understanding that additional payment is required;
- Does not understand how to use their eWIC benefit card (e.g., PIN, eligible or available food items, spend dates, etc.); and
- Was abusive and/or rude to store personnel while redeeming eWIC benefits.

Please complete the form in its entirety, to include:

- The exact date and time of the incident; and
- A receipt or which checkout line was used (if applicable);
- Details about an ineligible item attempted to be purchased (if applicable), to include product descriptions, brand, size and UPC.
- A description of the complaint, with names of store personnel who witnessed the event, and a description of the eWIC customer (assuming that the customer's name isn't known).

The Vendor Liaison assigned to the store location will process the complaint and may follow-up with your staff for additional details to help with providing the resolution and/or corrective action needed. The WIC Program strives to ensure that complaints are resolved in a manner that improves the retail services provided to WIC customers.

Incidents that need immediate attention please call your assigned WIC Vendor Liaison or the State WIC Office at (804) 864-7800.

Problems with specific Universal Product Codes (UPC) should be submitted using the [UPC Update form](#), or by contacting the Virginia UPC Administrator (Brian Tun, 804-864-7849 or Brian.Tun@vdh.virginia.gov).

There are two complaint forms, one for the participant and one for the retailer. We ask that all incidents to be reported within 30 days. Retailer's complaints are researched by your assigned Vendor Liaison.

Please contact Jennifer.Trower@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions on this section.

8. Conflict of Interest Reminder

One definition of “Conflict of Interest” is a situation in which a person is in a position to derive personal benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity. An example of a potential conflict of interest is when a WIC authorized store employee (or a family member 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” policy. Additional information about these Conflict of Interest requirements can be found in [Section C3](#) of the Retail Store Manual.

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

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.

Please contact Robert.Altermatt@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions on this section.

9. Vendor Claims

A Vendor Claims assessment is a requirement for a retailer to repay the Virginia WIC Program for an erroneous or unauthorized reimbursement. Reimbursements for any foods, formulas or medical foods ineligible for purchase using the eWIC benefit card may result in a Vendor Claims assessment. An example of when a Vendor Claim may be assessed is when a generic Product Look-Up (PLU 4469 or 44691) code is improperly used when processing a eWIC transaction. These types of violations discovered during a compliance investigation 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 the amount owed and due date of the Vendor Claim.

Vendor Claim Dispute – Stores are required to send in their Vendor Claim payment within 20 calendar days after receiving notice of the payment obligation. To dispute a Vendor Claim, the store must send a written request to the Virginia WIC Program explaining the reasons for disputing the claim within 15 calendar days after receiving notice of the payment obligation.

Please contact Amy.Romero@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions on this section.

10. Incentives

Federal WIC regulations forbid offering incentives solely to WIC participants in an effort to encourage them to redeem food benefits at your store. Authorized retailers may not offer incentive items solely to WIC participants (and not to non-WIC customers) in an effort to encourage participants to redeem their WIC benefits at the store(s). A WIC retailer must offer WIC program participants and non-WIC customers the same store promotions and sale items, including the use of loyalty cards. Any retailer who knowingly refuses to provide a promotion or discount to a WIC customer is in violation of the retailer agreement. Remember, always treat WIC and non-WIC customers the same. Click here for more details on Federal WIC regulations.

Please contact Ephraim.Ewing@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions on this section.

11. Changes to the WIC VA Program Since July 2020

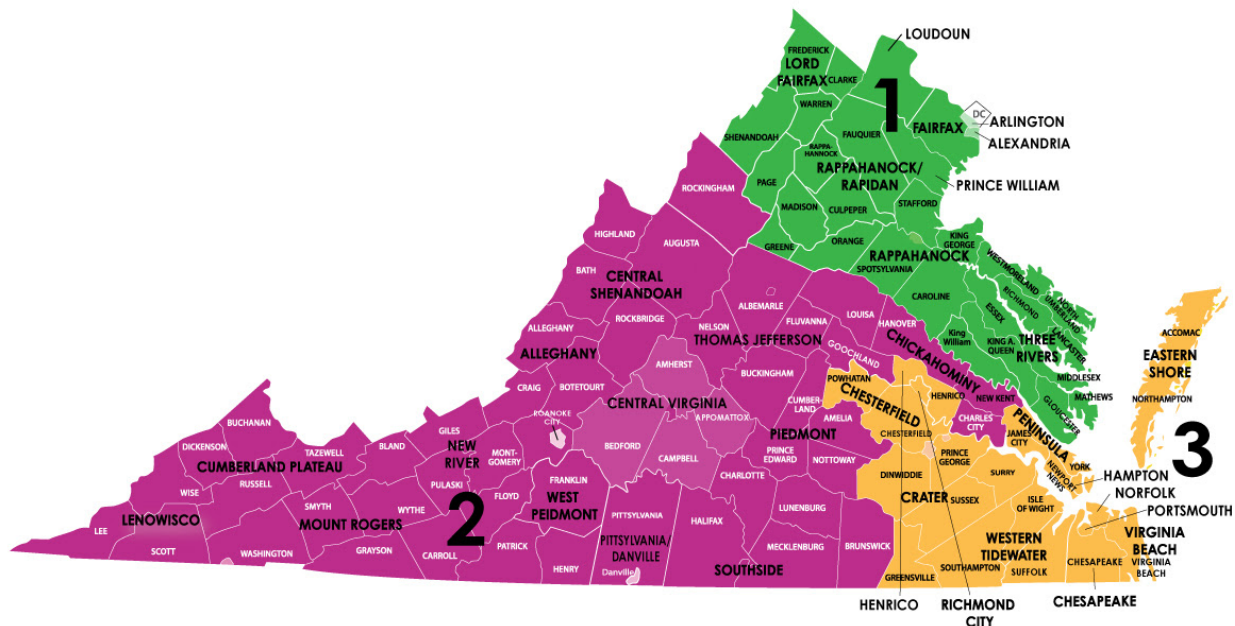
- Temporary products added to the Approved Product list during the COVID pandemic. Refer to [Updates and Notices](#) section on the website for the latest program updates.

- According to the National WIC Association, and the American Rescue Plan, state agencies can temporarily provide up to \$35 per child and adult, per month of Cash Value Benefits (CVB). This increase is effective now until September 30, 2021. The CVB is credited with improving the diets of WIC families. With this increase, WIC participants can buy and consume even more healthy fruits and vegetables!
- Effective June 1, 2021, WIC participants no longer need medical documentation from their healthcare provider to receive Similac Sensitive powder and Similac Total Comfort powder. This change may impact issuance and redemption of these items and it is anticipated that vendors will see a steady **increase** in participants redeeming these benefits at your stores. Please continue to monitor and adjust your supply to the needs of our participants. Contact Alex Acharya Alex at Alex.Acharya@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions regarding this issue.
- Beech-Nut [announced](#) a voluntary recall of one lot of Beech-Nut Stage 1, Single Grain Rice Cereal as well as a decision to exit the market for Beech-Nut branded Single Grain Rice Cereal. This announcement likely affects WIC vendors/participants, SNAP vendors/participants, and CACFP vendors/participants. The recall should be treated as any other consumer recall, although because of the subject and consumer population it may generate more questions from stakeholders regarding WIC minimum stock requirements (MSR). This change may impact your sales of Gerber Rice cereal which may determine a pass or fail during future monitoring visits. Please continue to monitor the inventory to satisfy this requirement of the MSR of quantity of two containers for the Dry Infant cereal category.

Please contact Jennifer.Trower@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions on this section.

12. Other Administrative Reminders

The Vendor Compliance Team has three geographical areas:



WIC Vendor Liaisons

Region 1

Amy Romero Vendor Liaison, Northern Virginia

Amy.Romero@vdh.virginia.gov (804)864-7835

Region 2

Ephraim Ewing Vendor Liaison, Western Virginia

Ephraim.Ewing@vdh.virginia.gov (804)864-7813

Region 3

Jennifer Trower Vendor Liaison, Eastern Virginia

Jennifer.Trower@vdh.virginia.gov (804)864-7278

A complete list of who to contact for support with city and county is available on the [WIC Retailer webpage](#).

- Please contact your assigned Vendor Liaison, or the WIC Vendor Compliance Team, if your store ever needs assistance with WIC.
- In Virginia, all WIC Authorized stores operate under the same three-year contract, which currently runs from October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2023. In spring of 2023, authorized stores will receive instructions for becoming reauthorized for the next contract period.
- As indicated in the Retailer Agreement and in the Retail Store Manual, WIC Authorized Stores are required to notify the Vendor Liaison in writing (email is acceptable) at least fifteen (15) calendar days before a store closes, changes ownership, or of any other circumstance that impacts service delivery, i.e., change in location, relocations, renovations, permanent and/or temporary closures, etc.

Important Links

- [WIC Homepage](#)
- [WIC Retailer Homepage](#)
- [WIC Retailer Resources](#)
- [2020 Approved Food List](#)
- [Signage and Shelf Labels](#)
- [Current Approved Product List](#)
- [Contact Us \(list of assigned Vendor Liaisons\)](#)
- [Commonwealth of Virginia WIC Regulations](#)
- Retailer Incident/Complaint form WIC #387
 - [Instructions](#)
 - [Form](#)
- Retailer Supply Request Form
 - [Web Form](#)
 - [Paper Form](#)
- UPC Update Form
 - [Instructions](#)
 - [Form](#)
- [Non-Discrimination Statement](#)

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