



**Retailer Newsletter – Training Issue
March 2020**

How Does WIC Help?

Studies show that WIC:

- Reduces premature births and low birth weight babies.
- Increases access to prenatal care.
- Reduces low iron anemia.
- Increases pregnant women’s consumption of key nutrients.
- Increases child immunization rates.
- Improves families’ diets.
- Increases access to regular health care.

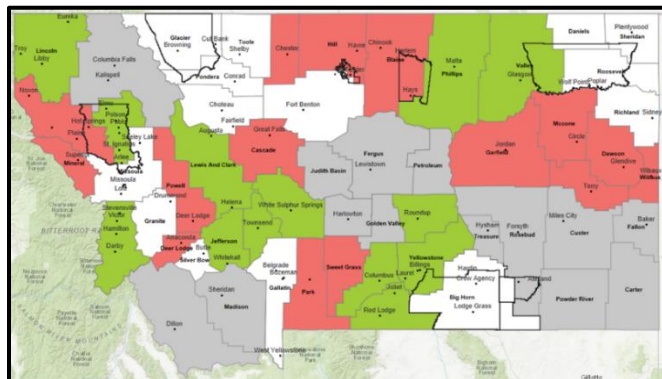
Annual WIC Vendor Training Newsletter

The Montana WIC Program thanks you for your partnership in this important public health program. In the 2019 WIC Participant survey, 90% of respondents said they had a good store experience most or all the time they went shopping. That reflects your commitment to customer service and supporting healthy families.

This newsletter serves as an annual training on the WIC Program, and it is your responsibility to ensure this information is available to all employees involved in WIC at your store.

What is WIC?

WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. With funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) the program offers families nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, referrals to other health and social programs, and benefits to buy healthy foods and infant formula. WIC safeguards the health of pregnant and post-partum women, infants and children up to age five. Montana WIC serves just over 15,000 individuals per month that receive services across 32 agencies statewide. 80% of those served are infants and children.



State Authorized Supplemental Foods

WIC Nutritionists approve specific foods that WIC customers can buy based on federally defined nutritional criteria, product availability and product cost. The Authorized Food List details the allowed brands, sizes, and types of foods that are allowed for WIC, and each cardholder is prescribed certain types of foods based on their nutritional needs. Even if an item is allowable for WIC, it may not be prescribed to every cardholder. On October first of each year a new WIC food list is released, which may include new foods added or existing foods removed.



The image shows a screenshot of the Montana WIC Program Approved Food List. The document is titled "MONTANA WIC PROGRAM APPROVED FOOD LIST" and includes logos for WIC Montana, the Montana Department of Health and Human Services, and the USDA. It is dated October 1, 2019. The list is organized into several categories: INFANT-FORMULA AND COMBIS, CEREAL-COMPOSITE, SOY BEVERAGE, INFANT FORMULA FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN, and INFANT VEGETABLES/FRUITS. Each category contains a list of approved products with their respective brands and sizes.

Stocking Requirements & Infant Formula Distributors

It is very important that WIC customers can choose to purchase all their WIC foods when they are in your store, which is why the program requires certain items to be stocked at all times. Please visit the WIC website for the full list of WIC stocking requirements and call if you have any questions about your store's stocking requirements.

In addition, WIC authorized retailers may only purchase infant formula from a WIC approved infant formula distributor. This insures the products are safe for WIC customers to use. Almost all formula distributors in Montana are approved, but please take a moment to review the list approved distributors on the Montana WIC website.

Complaint Process & Program Integrity

We appreciate your participation in the WIC Program and welcome any input you may have to help improve it. If you experience any concerns with a WIC customer, please do not hesitate to let us know. Retailers may fill out a Program Complaint Form available on the Montana WIC website, or may simply call the vendor manager at (406) 444-5530.

Please remember that buying, selling, or misusing WIC benefits is a crime, and we need your help to ensure program integrity. If you suspect fraud – either among your store staff or with a WIC customer – please let us know immediately. If you would prefer to submit that information directly to the USDA, you may do so here: <https://www.usda.gov/oig/hotline.htm>.

WIC's Spending Impact in January 2020

- **9,039 families went shopping with their eWIC cards**
- **There were 29,712 successful purchases**
- **184 different grocery stores accepted WIC benefits**
- **Statewide WIC spending totaled \$819,413.78**

What Every Cashier Needs to Know About eWIC Transactions

- 🛒 Always treat WIC customers with the same considerations as all other customers.
- 🛒 Provide the WIC customer with an “available balance” printout upon request.
- 🛒 Allow WIC customers to participate in all promotions that are available to all other customers, such as coupons and sale items.
- 🛒 Scan food items using only the UPC attached to that item.
- 🛒 Allow WIC customers to purchase as many or as few of their WIC foods as they choose.
- 🛒 Provide a mid-transaction receipt so the WIC customer can know which items are paid by WIC.
- 🛒 Allow WIC customers to purchase non-WIC items with a different form of payment.
- 🛒 Provide a legible receipt after each WIC transaction that includes a remaining WIC balance.

- ⊗ Never offer WIC customers incentives such as a free item in exchange for using WIC benefits at your store.
- ⊗ Never ask a WIC customer for identification.
- ⊗ Never provide a cash refund for WIC transactions.
- ⊗ Never scan a UPC that is not attached to the WIC food item.
- ⊗ Never exchange WIC foods unless the item is defective, then exchange that specific item only.

Get to Know your LARC

Each WIC clinic has a **Local Agency Retail Coordinator (LARC)** assigned to support the stores in their areas. They are your first point of contact for program complaints or questions about WIC authorized foods. LARC staff do the bi-annual store monitoring and can provide copies of the authorized food list, or other resources stores may need. Reach out to your local WIC clinic to find out who your LARC is and keep their contact information handy. Or, call the State WIC Office at (406) 444-5530 and we will put you in touch.



How Does eWIC Work?

eWIC transactions are based on real-time communication between the store's Point of Sale system (POS) and Montana WIC's EBT processor. Here is a quick review of the process:

- ♥ When the customer brings their WIC and non-WIC items up to the checkout, they tell the cashier they have an eWIC card, and upon instruction swipe the card and enter their PIN.
- ♥ The Store's POS sends that information to the EBT processor, which validates the store, the card, and the PIN, and may return an available balance if requested.
- ♥ The cashier scans the items, and the POS validates those items against WIC's Approved Product List (downloaded nightly to the POS), and the cardholder's available balance. The cardholder is asked to approve the purchase on the pin pad.
- ♥ The POS sends the purchase information to the EBT processor, which reduces the cardholder's balance based on the items purchased, and sends the remaining balance information back to the POS. The cashier prints the receipt and the purchase is complete.



Please remember that the eWIC card is always the first form of payment accepted, and to provide beginning and ending balance receipts to WIC customers if requested.

What if an item doesn't ring up as WIC?

There are a few different reasons this can occur. The item may not be WIC approved, or it may not be approved for that cardholder, or it may need to be added to the Approved Product List. Please send WIC any UPC you would like considered using the form on the Montana WIC website or by emailing WICUPC@mt.gov.

One quick and easy way to check if an item is authorized for WIC is to use the WICShopper App. This allows anyone to scan foods in the store and see if it is allowed on WIC. Search for the WICShopper app and select Montana when prompted.



Retailer Sanction System

As per federal regulations and the WIC Retailer Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), WIC authorized retailers are held accountable for a range of program violations and issued corresponding sanctions. Please review the Montana WIC State Plan (available online) for a description of Class A, B, C, and D violations and the sanctions that accompany them. Please reach out to the WIC Program if you have any questions about violations and sanctions.

Where Can You Find More Information?

Visit Montana WIC's Retailer website for many retailer resources:

www.dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/WIC/Retailers

Retailers can contact their Local WIC Agency for concerns regarding participants and food items.

Contact **Kevin Moore** (406) 444-5530 for any eWIC transaction or program questions.

Contact **Glade Roos** (406) 444-2841 with questions about your contract or stocking requirements.

Thank you for your partnership with the Montana WIC Program.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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