

WIC Vendor e-Bulletin

January 2022

Welcome to the January 2022 Washington State Department of Health WIC Vendor e-Bulletin. Please share this with all staff involved in WIC. *READ, INITIAL, and place in WIC Training binder.* You can find a copy of this document and back issues of e-Bulletins on our DOH WIC website: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WIC/WICVendors>.

Contact us at WICRetailManagement@doh.wa.gov or 1-800-841-1410 Ext. 2 if you have questions or need assistance.

CASH VALUE BENEFIT (CVB) INCREASE EXTENSION

In April 2021, investments were made to increase Cash Value Benefits (CVB) for WIC participants to purchase more vegetables and fruits. A continuing resolution was signed in early December which extends these WIC benefit increases through March 31, 2022 – maintaining current levels of \$24/month for children, \$43/month for pregnant and non-breastfeeding participants, and \$47/month for pregnant and postpartum month for breastfeeding participants.

This is a significant benefit increase for all eligible participants and will help to promote healthy food choices. We are asking our WIC vendors to help promote this additional benefit by reminding participants of this increase whenever possible.

With the increase in CVB through March 2022, the importance of produce mapping must be mentioned.

Importance of Produce Mapping: Fresh Fruits and Vegetables with or without a UPC are not included in the WIC Approved Product List. These items must be mapped to an approved Product Lookup Code (PLU) identifying these food items available for purchase. A fresh fruit or vegetable which isn't allowed for purchase by WIC customers at your point of sale (POS) system may not be properly mapped in the POS system. Once properly mapped the product can be allowed as a WIC purchase. Notify your store's front-end manager or POS provider to update the produce mapping for these items. We have a list of approved PLUs on our website.

WIC ONLINE ORDERING GRANT AWARD

Washington WIC (WA WIC) recently partnered with Gretchen Swanson [Center for Nutrition](#) who is conducting a 3-year grant project to identify recommendations for implementing WIC online ordering with online and in-person transactions for all WIC stakeholders nationwide.

On December 1, 2021, WA WIC was awarded a sub-grant to explore key aspects of WIC online ordering and purchasing in support of this project. As one of three state and tribal groups awarded in the country, WA WIC will partner with Massachusetts WIC and Walmart Corporation to complete pilot projects in each state. You can read more about the scope of the Gretchen Swanson project here: [Center for Nutrition — WIC Online Ordering](#)

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Walmart will expand their current online ordering capabilities allowing WA WIC participants to use their WIC cards to purchase WIC approved foods online. The pilot will allow for curbside pickup at any of Walmart's WIC authorized locations across WA and MA with future delivery options being explored. Minimum order and delivery fees aren't supported by USDA FNS.

Project Goals:

- Improve the WIC Shopping Experience
- Increase Redemption of WIC benefits
- Increase WIC Participation (Caseload)

Project Timeline:

- Planning: December 2021-October 2022
- Implementation: November 2022-March 2023
- Evaluation and Report: April 2023-July 2023

Results of this pilot project will be shared with WA WIC Vendors. If you have any questions about the project or the future of WIC online ordering opportunities, contact Steven Strong at 360-236-3763 or wicretailmanagement@doh.wa.gov. Stay tuned for more information about this project!

VIRTUAL INTERACTIVE TRAINING SCHEDULE

Stores that have not met their training requirement must attend an interactive training by the end of the current contract period of September 30, 2023. We are offering on-line interactive trainings to help you accomplish this goal. If your store has met this requirement, this is a great opportunity for a refresher.

Your store can sign up for an online training by registering at [WIC Vendor Training Information :: Washington State Department of Health](#) for one of the following dates/times:

- January 12, 2022: 2:00pm – 3:30pm
- February 16, 2022: 9:00am – 10:30am
- March 16, 2022: 2:00pm – 3:30pm
- April 13, 2022: 9:00am – 10:30am
- May 11, 2022: 2:00am – 3:30pm
- June 15, 2022: 9:00am – 10:30am

If you're unsure that your store has met this requirement, please contact us.

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SPANISH VIRTUAL INTERACTIVE TRAINING

Coming in early 2022, there will be a WIC virtual interactive training in Spanish. All WIC vendors are welcome to attend, especially those who might gain more insight and dialogue participation in Spanish. We are working to translate the training to ensure accuracy and effectiveness.

Please look for upcoming trainings in Spanish on our website.

A principios de 2022, habrá una capacitación interactiva virtual de WIC en español. Todos los proveedores de WIC son bienvenidos, especialmente aquellos que podrían obtener más información al participar en la capacitación en español. Estamos trabajando para traducir la información para garantizar precisión y eficacia.

PEER GROUP CHANGES EFFECTIVE JANUARY 3, 2022: COMBINATION OF URBAN & RURAL 11K-40K STORES

Federal regulations at 7 CFR 246.12(g)(4)(ii)(C) require the State agency to assess *“the effectiveness of the peer groupings and competitive price criteria every three years”* and to modify the criteria as needed to enhance system performance. The State must use at least two criteria to identify vendor peer groups, and the criteria must include geography.

A recent peer group analysis study was completed to determine if the current WA WIC peer group structure, implemented in 2016, was effective for cost containment across all WIC vendors of different sizes and locations.

Results of our 2000-2001 study found store square footage is the strongest correlation for predicting food costs for stores between 11,001 and 40,000 square feet. Previously, we had two separate peer groups, delineating, urban and rural stores between 11,001 and 40K square feet. Based on this analysis, our current peer group system will be modified, combining urban and rural stores with 11,000-40,000 square feet into a single, statewide peer group and other peer group structures remain intact. This ensures the most advantageous and effective cost containment of Washington authorized WIC retail vendors. This change will take effect on January 3rd, 2022.

WIC DATA PER COUNTY: WHAT'S IN YOUR “WALLET”?

Being an approved WIC vendor has a big impact for both the store and WIC families. The data below shows how many WIC dollars were spent at stores in each county as well as the number of families it's impacted. Thank you for being such a great partner and providing nutritious foods to WIC participants.

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WIC Participants & Dollars Redeemed at Stores Per County - October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2020

County	Total # of WIC Participants	Total # of Children & Infants Served	Total Women Served	Total WIC \$ Redeemed	Total F&V \$ Redeemed
Adams	2,895	2,031	864	\$1,225,939	\$132,156
Asotin	744	537	207	\$270,567	\$22,897
Benton	6,692	4,819	1,873	\$2,708,415	\$262,843
Chelan	3,778	2,672	1,106	\$1,492,350	\$148,836
Clallam	1,942	1,367	575	\$564,459	\$59,977
Clark	10,273	7,300	2,973	\$3,559,650	\$409,511
Columbia	94	72	22	\$33,422	\$3,122
Cowlitz	4,207	3,074	1,133	\$1,505,191	\$149,877
Douglas	1,161	871	290	\$429,193	\$48,355
Ferry	266	201	65	\$92,414	\$8,761
Franklin	7,634	5,540	2,094	\$3,182,978	\$333,124
Garfield	54	41	13	\$17,805	\$1,495
Grant	6,272	4,551	1,721	\$2,594,389	\$270,219
Grays Harbor	3,034	2,265	769	\$1,189,886	\$112,283
Island	1,956	1,417	539	\$664,711	\$77,591
Jefferson	545	388	157	\$166,020	\$18,167
King	42,191	30,196	11,995	\$14,900,914	\$1,555,637
Kitsap	6,388	4,648	1,740	\$2,025,618	\$227,055
Kittitas	926	693	233	\$371,421	\$39,657
Klickitat	677	503	174	\$259,716	\$25,555
Lewis	3,039	2,175	864	\$1,086,446	\$104,900
Lincoln	223	175	48	\$78,242	\$9,077
Mason	2,134	1,553	581	\$775,058	\$75,893
Okanogan	2,627	1,943	684	\$888,744	\$94,861
Pacific	498	367	131	\$184,663	\$15,370
Pend Oreille	287	205	82	\$104,857	\$8,944
Pierce	26,009	18,560	7,449	\$9,265,288	\$915,022
San Juan	304	210	94	\$84,104	\$10,732
Skagit	4,439	3,225	1,214	\$1,562,523	\$173,665
Skamania	147	99	48	\$49,220	\$4,021
Snohomish	16,628	12,147	4,481	\$5,057,619	\$524,963
Spokane	18,098	13,128	4,970	\$6,181,543	\$665,613
Stevens	1,094	803	291	\$338,771	\$34,634
Thurston	6,103	4,342	1,761	\$2,114,917	\$202,803
Wahkiakum	46	36	10	\$17,665	\$1,420
Walla Walla	2,023	1,471	552	\$822,941	\$79,586
Whatcom	5,140	3,744	1,396	\$1,725,584	\$193,853
Whitman	748	539	209	\$238,345	\$28,358
Yakima	19,678	14,408	5,270	\$7,764,002	\$829,412
Statewide Total	210,994	152,316	58,678	\$75,595,590	\$7,880,245

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NOT TO EXCEED (NTE) AMOUNT VARIANCE ADJUSTMENTS TO END EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2022

Since the implementation of eWIC in WA, vendors could request reimbursement for individual Not to Exceed (NTE) amount variances while the WA eWIC system captured enough food redemption transaction data to automate and set NTE payment rules. Now that we have had time to analyze the effectiveness of our NTE rules, NTE price adjustments will be phased out.

Why are we changing this?

The NTE amount is the maximum dollar amount WIC will reimburse vendors for a specific WIC food item. If a vendor charges more than the NTE amount for a specific item compared to other vendors in their peer group (similar size and geographic location), this vendor may be paid less than the amount presented for this item. This may result in the vendor's third-party processor generating an eWIC variance report showing the difference between the amount charged and the amount reimbursed by the WIC program's banking provider.

The eWIC system has NTE rules and parameters which are set to calculate expected or future pricing based on purchase trends in each peer group. Since the launch of eWIC in June of 2019, we've been analyzing NTE amounts for effectiveness and researching outliers and product level reimbursements resulting in specific products being removed from NTE calculations. NTE calculations are used to support cost containment measures within the WIC program. We found the eWIC system's NTE management functions are effective at using food pricing redemption amounts and market pricing influences to adjust themselves.

When are we changing this?

Effective January 1, 2022 we'll be discontinuing the process of reimbursing vendors for NTE variances or adjustments.

We understand that certain situations outside of a vendor's control may arise which result in rapid cost increases of certain WIC foods, resulting in the need to increase prices to support these costs. Milk, eggs and cheese are historical examples. The WIC program may make exceptions in response to these events and will be handled through modification of NTE rules that will be applied to all vendors.

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NEW SHOPPING GUIDE – DISTRIBUTION PLAN

The time is finally here! The Shopping Guide has been printed and is being distributed to your store by the end of this month. It's been printed in 15 languages. Your store will receive English and Spanish versions of the guide; however, you may request other languages or additional guides at any time.

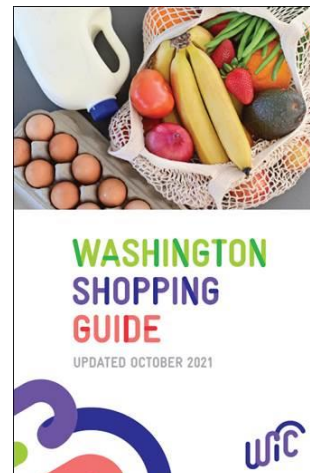
Languages include:

- Amharic
- Arabic
- Burmese
- Chinese
- Dari
- English
- Karen
- Korean
- Oromo
- Pashto
- Russian
- Somali
- Spanish
- Tigrinya
- Vietnamese

**The WICShopper app has been updated to include these language options.*

Changes to the Shopping Guide include updated foods and sizes allowed and eWIC information and tips. Even though 90% of WIC shoppers use the WICShopper app, we suggest keeping a copy at each register that accepts WIC Cards.

Please note one of the images in the guide is incorrect. For this reason, stores will receive Great Value soymilk labels with each shipment. To get the guide out to everyone in January we are asking stores to place the label on page 30 to correct the error.



CHANGES TO WIC FOODS

Washington WIC made the following changes in the WIC food requirements:

- 1. Breakfast Cereal and Whole Grain:** USDA is requiring WIC to limit which package sizes are allowed to ensure families get the most out of their WIC food benefits.
This change takes effect May 2, 2022. WIC is currently notifying families of these changes in a letter posted in the WICShopper app, on the DOH WIC webpages, and direct mailings to families who don't use the app. As part of this messaging we are also providing a handout called "[Tips for Buying WIC Breakfast Cereal](#)".
- 2. Infant Rice Cereal:** Infant rice cereal will no longer be a Washington WIC approved food effective January 31, 2022.
The infant cereal minimum inventory amount is still in effect. Stores must carry 32 ounces total. In addition, at least two options must be 8 ounce containers. Approved sizes remain as an 8 ounce or 16 ounce box or flip top container. This includes barley, multigrain, oatmeal, and whole wheat options in Beech-Nut, Beech-Nut Organic, Earth's Best Organic, Gerber, and Gerber Organic brands.

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CORRECTION NOTICE: On 1/6/22 we incorrectly stated that infant rice cereal no longer meets the USDA's nutrition guidelines. This is not the case; infant rice cereal does meet USDA nutrition guidelines. The article has been corrected.

All changes are reflected in the [new Shopping Guide](#). You can email our WIC foods team at wawicfood@doh.wa.gov if you have questions.

INFANT FORMULA AVAILABILITY UPDATE

Formula shortages are still present, though slowly improving. We have been in constant communication with the formula manufacturer, Abbott, regarding formula availability and keeping them informed of areas throughout Washington State that has reported shortages.

We continue to do our best in locating formula for WIC participants within your stores when otherwise can't be found by a WIC participant. Limiting the number of WIC approved formula cans sold is still suggested as 2 per person in order to spread the availability to all customers. We've been able to supply some clinics with formula where the need is great and can't be found in stores.

If you have any questions or have a WIC participant who is having a hard time locating infant formula, please email our WIC Foods Team at: WAWICFoods@doh.wa.gov or call our 1-800 number.

STAND-BESIDE POINT OF SALE (POS) TERMINAL REPLACEMENT

Beginning in **December 2021 and continuing throughout 2022**, FIS Government Solutions will be working with WIC's stand-beside vendors to actively deploy upgraded POS terminals.

FIS is communicating directly with all WIC vendors currently using a stand-beside POS terminal by mailing postcards with information, instructions and contact information. Vendors will receive additional information to assist with the replacements in their new terminal shipment boxes.

The following message was sent from FIS about this replacement- *"The initial roll-out in mid-December 2021 will focus on the V400m wireless because the 2G/3G AT&T network they utilize will be permanently shut down by AT&T on Feb. 22, 2022. Merchants who choose not to recycle their Vx680 wireless terminal can return them to FIS through the prepaid return label that will be included in their new V400m shipment box. Later this year, FIS will begin replacing the Vx520 with the V200c through a process of attrition. Further Bulletins may follow."*

Need reports, technical assistance or have a question?
Call us or email us at 1-800-841-1410 or WICRetailManagement@doh.wa.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. **Washington State WIC Nutrition Program does not discriminate.**

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For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY call 711). DOH 963-117 January 2022

