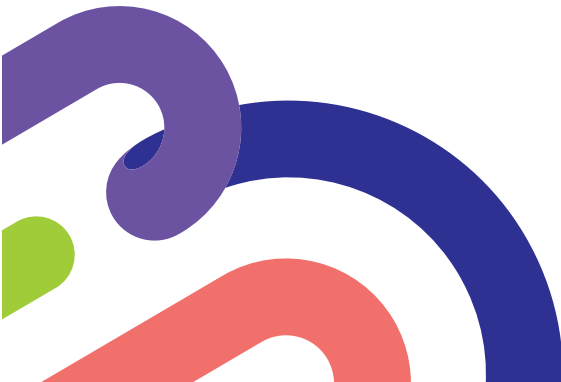




# WASHINGTON WIC 2021 VENDOR TRAINING GUIDE



# WELCOME

## DEAR VENDOR,

In 2019, WIC shoppers started using electronic benefits cards to buy food and formula from nearly 700 WIC vendors. Working together we made history by improving access to healthy foods for Washington families. You played a vital role! Thank you for your continued support of Washington's WIC clients by accepting WIC Cards.

WIC Cards are new for everyone. With WIC Cards come different ways of processing transactions. We hope these changes are a welcome improvement over checks. But, we know there is a learning curve, which is why training continues to be important. This vendor manual highlights important program changes. We ask that you share the information in this manual with all the staff in your store who interact with WIC clients.

We pledge our support to you as you work to adapt to new rules and regulations. Please let us know how we can help.

Sincerely,



Paul Throne  
*Director, Office of Nutrition Services*



## ABOUT WIC

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, often called simply the WIC Program. USDA provides federal funds to the Washington State Department of Health (DOH), which then contracts with clinics and vendors across the state.

WIC participants go to a local clinic where they participate in a health assessment and get a nutritional food prescription. Their prescription is a WIC Card loaded with the food benefits the WIC Card will provide. Participants bring their WIC Card to your store to purchase their food. Because the WIC Card benefits are a prescription, it's important clients only receive the foods loaded on their card.

You help WIC customers achieve healthier outcomes. These include increased rates in breastfeeding, access to healthy foods, and decreased obesity while helping vulnerable children get a healthy start to life. Thank you for making a difference.

**THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE!**



# INTRODUCTION



## 2019 WASHINGTON WIC FACTS

- **254,239** total WIC customers were served in Washington State at almost **700** vendor locations.
- **183,156** infants and children received nutritious foods.
- **41%** of all babies born in Washington State were served on WIC.
- Over **\$83,193,000** distributed to WIC vendors.  
Of that, over **\$9,278,000** were spent on just fruits and vegetables.
- **\$3 to \$4** more spent at the store for every WIC dollar spent.

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

To achieve program goals and meet the demand of WIC clients, the USDA and DOH set rules for everyone participating in the program. Vendors must meet the Vendor Selection Criteria and Minimum Inventory Requirements to stay in the program.

We know there are many rules. We provide training to help vendors understand those rules. As an authorized vendor, a minimum of one representative must attend an interactive training in person or online at least once during the contract period. This representative is expected to share the information learned with everyone at their location. Stores should delegate a representative who will be able to lead training for all other staff at the store. We designed this training guide to support this person as they plan and conduct their own in-house training.

***This guide is provided for training purposes only. Information in this document does not replace or supersede your contract with the Washington WIC program. Please consult with a Vendor Management Specialist for specific issues concerning your participation in the WIC program.***

# BECOMING A WIC VENDOR

## APPLYING FOR AUTHORIZATION

Washington WIC distributes nearly 100 million dollars worth of nutritious food benefits to women, infants, and children to help them get a healthy start in life. Becoming an authorized WIC vendor not only supports businesses, it means your store is playing a vital role in improving the health of families in your community.

In order to become a WIC vendor, your store must apply for authorization. After reviewing your online application materials, a Vendor Management Specialist (VMS) will visit your store for a physical inspection and to provide training on how to be a successful WIC vendor.

Once your store is an authorized WIC vendor, you must meet all the terms of your WIC contract, including remaining in compliance with the Vendor Selection Criteria at all times. The WIC program has tools and resources to support you. You will learn more about those resources on the following pages of this guide.

The WIC program will provide a follow-up monitor visit to your store within the first six months. This is to make sure you continue meeting program requirements. The WIC program will also provide additional support and training.

## WIC VENDOR SELECTION CRITERIA

Federal and state regulations provide specific and detailed criteria that stores must meet in order to be a WIC authorized vendor. Once authorized, your store must continue meeting these criteria. The selection criteria are extensive; the following information is a broad summary of the criteria.

### **Full Line Grocery**

To qualify, you must be a full line grocery store. This means your store must sell a wide range of:

- Fresh, frozen, and canned foods
- Baby products
- Household cleaners and laundry supplies
- Healthcare goods

The Vendor Selection Criteria defines minimum quantities of each types of product.

### **Business Integrity**

Your business must be in good standing with all federal, state, and local entities. This means:

# BECOMING A WIC VENDOR

- Maintaining all relevant licenses, permits, and certifications
- Complying with all federal and state anti-discrimination and disability access laws
- Ensuring that no owner, manager, or other person with financial interest in the business has committed fraud or engaged in other illegal activity

## Business Operations

Your store must have the capacity to serve WIC clients and conduct WIC transactions correctly. This means:

- Being currently authorized to accept SNAP benefits
- Expecting to receive less than 50% of your annual revenue from WIC
- Maintaining a record keeping system that meets Washington Department of Revenue requirements
- Providing financial or inventory reports to WIC upon request
- Having electronic cash registers capable of printing detailed receipts
- Being open a minimum of eight hours a day, six days a week
- Maintaining email communication with the state WIC office

## Supplier & Pricing

Your store must:

- Use an approved infant formula supplier
- Use a wholesale supplier for all non-formula foods
- Maintain competitive pricing
- Post prices on all foods

### ★ BECOMING A VENDOR: TAKE AWAYS & NOTES

**Q. What are TWO key requirements to become a WIC authorized Vendor and to remain authorized?**

*A. Meet the Vendor Selection Criteria and Comply with the Vendor Contract*

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# ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES



## EXPECTATIONS FOR VENDOR SUCCESS

The WIC program is committed to ensuring program participants have access to nutritious foods. We want WIC participants to experience great customer service at your store, like all other customers you serve. We trust you are committed to the same thing.

To be a successful WIC vendor, you can help your WIC customers by doing the following:

- Continue meeting the WIC Vendor Selection Criteria.
- Maintain the WIC Minimum Inventory at all times.
- Meet training requirements by having a representative attend interactive training at least once per contract period. This person is responsible for training others in your store.
- Keep training records of all trainings you do in your store.
- Complete WIC Card transactions correctly, when selling WIC approved foods
- Follow best practices like using WIC shelf tags and WIC Accepted Here door signs.

The following pages of this guide break down the program rules and responsibilities for:

- Store Owners/Managers
- Clerks/Cashiers

# ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

## INFORMATION FOR OWNERS/MANAGERS

Your store plays a vital role in making sure your WIC customers get the healthy foods they need.

You are responsible for your store's success including avoiding any penalties and violations from WIC. Here are ways to support your employees who are involved with WIC activities:

- Make sure your staff are trained to follow correct WIC Card transactions and identify WIC approved foods.
- Have copies of the Washington WIC Shopping Guide and Infant Formula Reference Guide at every check stand.
- Make sure the right staff attend interactive training. More than one person can attend or participate, but at least one is required. The representatives who attend from your store are responsible for training everyone else at your store.

### **Not to Exceed (NTE)**

Federal rules require each eWIC program to establish Not-to-Exceed (NTE) prices at the UPC level for all foods on the state's Approved Product List. The NTE amount is the maximum amount allowed for reimbursement by WIC to the store for each WIC approved item. WIC will reimburse the store up to the NTE amount for each eligible WIC item sold. WIC stores are grouped into "peer groups" based on size and corporate structure. Each peer group has its own NTEs for each WIC product.

The NTE amount is automatically and regularly adjusted based on sales of like products by peer group and may be manually adjusted to account for anomalies in pricing by food category.

Grocers should remember that the prices charged to WIC participants cannot be different from prices charged to any other customers. (This is a federal non-discrimination rule).



# ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

## INFORMATION FOR CASHIERS

Every WIC participant meets with a nutrition professional at a local WIC clinic. The nutrition professional gives each participant a food prescription and a WIC Card to buy those foods. WIC customers will come to your store to “fill” their food prescription.

The Washington WIC Shopping Guide, WIC Shopper Mobile App, and the Infant Formula Reference Guide are the official sources of information about current WIC approved foods. You should always have the WIC Shopping Guide and a current Infant Formula Reference Sheet at your check stand. If you don’t have these documents, talk to your store manager about getting a copy.

The WIC Shopper Mobile App is another great resource to help clients understand what benefits they have available and which foods are WIC approved.

Make sure you are handling WIC transactions correctly. Errors can cost your store money and may result in disciplinary action for you as an employee.

Here are some other helpful tips for processing WIC transactions:

- Treat WIC customers as you would treat any other customer.
- Keep WIC customer information private.
- Don’t give WIC customers cash back for any WIC Card transaction.
- Don’t accept returns on foods purchased from WIC, unless the food is damaged or spoiled. *Damaged or spoiled food can be replaced with the same item.*

### ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES: TAKE AWAYS & NOTES

**Q. What are the key components for maintaining compliance with the WIC Contract?**

- A. *Meet WIC MIR, Comply with Training requirements, sell only approved foods, handle WIC Cards appropriately, post shelf prices*

**Q. What are considered best practices?**

- A. *Using WIC shelf tags, posting door signs*

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# QUALITY ASSURANCE



## WIC VENDOR MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS

The state WIC office has Vendor Management Specialists who are available to help you be successful. Your Vendor Management Specialist can:

- Support your store's training representative
- Provide consultation and answer questions
- Conduct monitor visits and provide assistance

Vendor Management Specialists work with all stores and are the designated point of contact for some corporations.

## WIC VENDOR TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

One way WIC maintains the quality of the program is through training. Training is a required component of your WIC contract. The contract specifies your store will:

- Ensure at least one representative attends an interactive vendor training once every contract period. The WIC program conducts trainings online and at various locations across the state every year. Available training dates and locations are on the WIC vendor website.
- Make sure all cashiers know how to process a WIC Card transaction.
- Train all other store staff including managers, supervisors, bookkeepers and inventory control employees on WIC program requirements and potential consequences of non-compliance.
- Maintain current training records at your store. Training records must include the training topic, attendee names, and dates.

Store representatives attending the WIC interactive trainings are expected to train other store staff on WIC program procedures. This person should be someone qualified and capable of fulfilling this responsibility.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE TOOLS OVERVIEW

Quality assurance methods ensure authorized vendors meet program requirements. The following quality assurance methods and tools are used to ensure vendor success in the program:

### Monitoring Activities

A Vendor Management Specialist (VMS) will complete monitor visits. These visits are typically unannounced and involve:

- Verification of inventory
- Educational buys
- Training documentation
- Providing general best practice recommendations

A VMS will conduct a closing conference to discuss any findings and observations after the monitor. Depending on the outcome of the monitor, your VMS may send written notification of the findings and any required corrective action. Significant findings may be referred to program compliance for further investigation.

# QUALITY ASSURANCE

## **Compliance Activities**

The Compliance Team conducts investigative activities to ensure program compliance. Activities include:

- Inventory audits
- Undercover buys
- Fraud investigation
- Business integrity reviews

Most compliance team activities are unannounced, but some may be scheduled in advance.

## **Complaints**

Complaints are the opportunity for any participant in the WIC program to notify the state WIC office of concerns or problems. You can file a complaint online against WIC customers or WIC clinics. Complaints are reviewed and followed up on as appropriate.

## SANCTIONS AND PENALTIES

It's our goal to help your store avoid errors and penalties.

As part of our routine monitoring and compliance activities, we occasionally discover situations where a store isn't following program rules. The state WIC office will send a notice of violation letter to inform you of any corrective action needed. You will have **15 days** to make corrections.

Common violations include:

- Not purchasing infant formula from an approved supplier
- Failure to meet WIC Minimum Inventory Requirements
- Failure to support produce mapping

In some cases, findings or other program violations may be severe, or we may detect a pattern of findings that is concerning. In these cases, your store may be referred to the WIC Compliance Team, which has the authority to conduct investigations and issue sanctions against your store. The WIC Compliance Team also conducts routine inventory audits and undercover compliance buys as required by federal law.

Some violations may lead to further investigation resulting in:

- Termination
- Disqualification
- Civil Monetary Penalties (fines in lieu of Disqualification)
- Repayment Claims

The WIC Vendor Contract includes state and federal sanction tables. WIC is a federally funded program. Any disqualification from WIC may result in disqualification from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

# QUALITY ASSURANCE

## IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS AND TOOLS

Here's a list of the resources we have referenced throughout this training guide:

- **Vendor Selection Criteria** A detailed list of requirements to become a WIC authorized vendor. Stores must continue meeting these criteria for as long as they participate in the program.
- **WIC Vendor Contract** A formal agreement between each authorized vendor and the WIC program. Your agreement lists the terms and conditions of your participation in the program. The Code of Federal Regulations and the Washington Administrative Code are the governing documents of your participation in WIC.
- **Minimum Inventory Requirements** A list of WIC approved foods and quantities your store is required to have in stock at all times.
- **WIC Shopping Guide** This booklet serves as one of the official guides of foods approved by the Washington WIC Program. You can download an electronic copy of the guide from the Washington WIC website or order printed copies using the WIC Vendor Supply Order Form. The Shopping Guide is available in 12 languages.

- **WIC Shopper Tool** ▶  
This mobile app allows WIC clients to view their current available benefits and report foods which scan as not allowed but are in the WIC shopping guide. The WIC Shopper App is also an official source of WIC approved foods, allowing you to scan barcodes of foods to determine if they are WIC approved.



# QUALITY ASSURANCE

- **Order of Tender Cards** ▶ This card shows the order of tender to follow when using multiple forms of payment in a WIC transaction.
- **WIC Vendor Supply Order Form** An online order form used to request materials such as shopping guides, training tools, signs, shelf tags, and more.
- **Infant Formula Reference Guide** The official list of WIC approved formulas.



All the information you need to support your participation in the WIC program is on the Washington WIC Website:

[www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WIC/WICVendors](http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WIC/WICVendors)

Some materials are available in Spanish.

## ★ QUALITY ASSURANCE: TAKE AWAYS & NOTES

**Q. What are some tools used to manage quality assurance within the WIC program?**

A. *Monitoring, Audits, Education Buys, Compliance buys, Complaints*

**Q. What are some possible consequences for failing to comply with program requirements?**

A. *Termination, Disqualification, Civil Monetary Penalties, Claims*

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**WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
**WIC NUTRITION PROGRAM**

**1-800-841-1410, option 2**  
**WICRetailManagement@doh.wa.gov**  
**[www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WIC/WICVendors](http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WIC/WICVendors)**

**This institution is an equal opportunity provider.**  
Washington State WIC Nutrition Program doesn't discriminate.



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To request this document in another format, call 1-800-841-1410.  
Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay)  
or email [WIC@doh.wa.gov](mailto:WIC@doh.wa.gov).