

NEWSLETTER



Welcome to Annual Training

The purpose of this communication is to ensure that you are knowledgeable of all current program requirements, scheduled changes, and meeting the federal fiscal year training requirements as outlined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Carefully review all information provided, as it will aid you in remaining in compliance with your Vendor Agreement. Review of this newsletter is to fulfill your annual training requirement.

It is the responsibility of the owner and store management to ensure that this training is reviewed by all store employees who handle WIC transactions in any way.

All authorized WIC vendors are required to complete annual training each Federal Fiscal Year. At least one representative from each vendor must review this training newsletter to remain in compliance with the WIC Vendor Agreement. Failure to complete training may result in sanctions or disqualification.

To meet the annual training requirement of the Mississippi WIC Program:

Review and ensure adequate training of all store personnel engaged in WIC transactions, paid or unpaid.

Training Requirements

The Mississippi Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program is required to offer training to WIC Authorized Vendors on an annual basis.

As required in the signed two – year (October 1, 2024 – Sept. 30, 2026) vendor agreement, your organization is required to complete the annual training by **September 15, 2025**, in order to maintain the current agreement with Mississippi WIC.

The annual training attestation must be completed no later than **September 15, 2025**.

The information in this newsletter covers the following required elements set forth in the federal regulations (7 CFR § 246.12 (i) (2)).



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Why WIC Matters: Purpose & Mission

WIC is a federally funded health and nutrition program for infants, children (ages 1 to 5), pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers up to one year and postpartum women up to six months.

Mississippi WIC provides information regarding nutrition and health, support and information about breastfeeding, assistance finding healthcare and community services, and vouchers to purchase healthy food items from WIC authorized vendors.

The mission of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age five who are at nutrition risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care.

New this Year: Program Updates You Need to Know

Vendor Applications

As of August 2, 2024, the MSDH WIC Program will accept applications year-round to become an authorized WIC Vendor in the state of Mississippi. Applicants must submit a completed Mississippi WIC Vendor Application Packet with required relevant application documents. All vendor applicants must accurately and truthfully complete relevant application documents prior to submission. Failure to do so could result in delays with processing or application denial.

Important Note: The Mississippi WIC Program accepts applications but does not process vendor applications between July 1 and October 1.

Final Rule updates: 2024 WIC Food Package Revisions

Effective June 17, 2024, USDA modernized the WIC food packages, the first substantial update since 2014, to align with the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines and National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine’s recommendations

Major shifts include increased allowances of fruits, vegetables, canned fish, and reduced allowances of juice, dairy, and cheese, while adding non-dairy options like plant-based and lactose-free milk.

Be ready to stock more fresh produce, canned fish, and expect lower juice, dairy and cheese allotments.

As changes are made, memos will be sent via email from vmu@msdh.ms.gov.

Infant Formula Change

MSDH has a publicly posted intent to award stating the infant formula rebate contract will be awarded to Abbott. This decision is scheduled to be finalized on August 6, 2025. This means that we plan to switch from Mead Johnson to Abbot Laboratories Inc. as the infant formula manufacturer for standard formula.

eWIC & CVBs: Accepting Benefits the Right Way

To process eWIC transactions, vendors must obtain and be certified to use integrated Point-of-sale (POS) terminal(s) and/or software. Conduent serves as the eWIC processor to facilitate all vendor enablement and certification processes for Mississippi WIC.

If the vendor location does not have an integrated point-of-sale system and is needed for participant access, the location will be provided single function stand-beside equipment, following the guidelines for minimum lane coverage.

Vendors in need of assistance with the certification process, including completion of contract documentation and set up of single function devices, may contact Conduent using the information listed below.

Retailer Helpdesk (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week): 1-844-309-5652



For an eWIC transaction, every food item should be scanned. When a food item is scanned, the POS system first checks the internal Approved Product List (APL) to validate it as approved for WIC. Then the system verifies that the product is available on the food prescription. If both of these conditions pass, the product quantity is deducted from the available food prescription when the sale is finalized.

WIC customers may purchase non-WIC items along with WIC items in the same transaction. This capability is referred to as a Mixed-Basket Purchase. If non-WIC items are purchased, the participant should swipe the eWIC card first. The POS will then deduct the eligible WIC items from the eWIC account and then display a total remaining balance to be paid for by another tender.

Know Your Stock: Approved WIC Foods

With eWIC, the POS system determines which foods are authorized for the WIC customer. The Mississippi WIC Vendor Food Guide and WIC Shopping Guide describe the eWIC shopping procedures and identify WIC authorized foods. Both guides will go through an overhaul after the Final Rule updates are completed.



WIC Shelf Requirements: Minimum Stocking Requirements

The minimum stock requirements are the minimum variety and quantity of supplemental foods that a vendor must stock at all times to be an authorized WIC Vendor.

Each vendor is required to stock daily and maintain the minimum inventory of approved WIC foods as well as a substantial amount of non-WIC foods. This is an important measure to guarantee compliance with the WIC Program guidance and policies.

The inventory must be on the shelf or in the store's stockroom. Available WIC-approved inventory must be within the manufacturer's expiration date, during the application process, including the pre-authorization visit, for the following WIC approved food items: milk, eggs, infant formula, and any potentially hazardous foods (meaning foods with time and/or temperature controls for the safety of the product) that are labeled "Keep Refrigerated".

Failure to stock the required inventory of any WIC food item can result in a violation and lead to disqualification.

WIC Approved Foods List

The WIC Approved Foods List outlines foods that are approved for purchase using eWIC benefits. Only these food items may be purchased by the participant or proxy using the WIC food instrument.



**We Value Fresh Fruits
and Vegetables**

To appropriately configure an eWIC system to approve WIC supplemental foods for purchase, vendors must be provided the Authorized Product List (APL). The APL file is a list of authorized food items established by Mississippi WIC.

- Updates will be made to the APL monthly and as new products have been authorized or authorized changes to product indicated by manufacturers.
- The APL file must be downloaded daily to the vendor's cash register system to ensure accurate WIC-eligible food items are available for purchase.

Produce Mapping for Fruits & Vegetables

To ensure fruits and vegetables scan correctly during eWIC purchases, all fresh produce must be mapped to an approved IFPS PLU code in your store's system. If items aren't mapped, they may be rejected at checkout - leading to lost sales and unhappy customers.

- ✓ Map all fresh produce (loose, bagged, and pre-cut)
- ✓ Use IFPS PLU codes or approved "any fruit/any veggie" codes
- ✓ Contact your POS provider if you need help
- ✓ Train staff to recognize and report mapping issues

Review the Mississippi WIC Produce Mapping Guide available at www.freshnewwic.com.

Infant Formula Rules: Where You Can (and Can't) Buy It

All authorized vendors are required to purchase infant formula solely from suppliers approved by Mississippi WIC. The program does not allow vendors to purchase infant formulas from other program vendors. Only purchases from the approved list of manufacturers, distributors and wholesalers will be permitted.

If your current supplier is not approved by Mississippi WIC, you must switch to a supplier found on the List of Approved Infant Formula Suppliers. Vendors may also contact MSDH WIC to obtain more information to add your current supplier to the list.



Records of infant formula purchases must be maintained for a minimum of three (3) previous years plus the current year (or until any pending investigations are closed). In the event of an investigation, only purchase invoices from those permitted suppliers will be considered legitimate.

The list of authorized manufacturers, distributors and wholesalers are posted on www.freshnewwic.com.

Want to Offer Incentives? Here's How to Get Approval

An incentive item is an item or giveaways made available to customers.

WIC Vendors are prohibited from offering incentive items solely to WIC participants to encourage participants to redeem their eWIC benefits at those stores. If coupons, discounts, or other promotional specials are provided to non-WIC customers these must be given to WIC participants and vice versa.

WIC vendors must receive prior written approval from the Mississippi WIC Program before offering any incentives (like discounts, coupons, or free items) to WIC participants.

To request approval:

1. Submit a written proposal to MS WIC detailing the incentive, who it's for, how it will be offered, and the timeframe.
2. The MS WIC will review the request to ensure it complies with federal and state policy.
3. Vendors will receive a written response with approval or denial.

Offering incentives without approval is a program violation.

eWIC Card Replacement – What You Need to Know

Lost or stolen eWIC card? Here's how participants can get a replacement:

- **Standard Process:** Participants should call 1-855-897-5897 or use the Cardholder Portal to report and request a replacement. Cards are mailed and may take up to 7 business days to arrive.
- **Urgent Need?** If benefits expire in less than 7 business days, participants should contact their WIC clinic for a same-day replacement.
- **Verification Required:** Only the authorized representative, primary cardholder, or participant can request a replacement. ID must be shown in person. For phone requests, clinic staff must verify at least two details (e.g., DOB, ZIP code, WIC participant names).

Reminders:

- Benefits will be transferred to the new card.
- Cards will not be forwarded if mailed to the wrong address. Participants must update their address with the clinic, not the EBT processor.
- WIC Staff must document lost/stolen reports and deactivate the card in SPIRIT if not already done.

Please help spread the word and ensure participants act quickly if their card goes missing!



Refunds/Exchanges

WIC purchases cannot be returned or exchanged unless the item is:

- Spoiled,
- Defective,
- Or recalled by the manufacturer.

When replacement is necessary, vendors may exchange the item for an identical WIC-approved product only.

Refunds, store credit, or substitutions are not allowed.

Reminder: Replacements must be documented clearly on receipts and should match the item originally purchased.



WIC Sanctions: What Puts Vendors at Risk

Vendor sanctions are penalties set forth by the federal government and state WIC program to respond to violations of WIC policies and procedures. Federal Sanctions are mandated in the federal regulations and have disqualification periods associated with each violation.

Mississippi WIC Program sanctions can be applied against a vendor for program violations. Please review the Vendor Handbook for in-depth information about Federal and State sanctions. State sanctions are applied via sanction points and the penalties associated.

Violations Happen: Here's the Claims Process

If an investigation reveals a violation has occurred after the vendor has received payment for WIC transactions, the State can establish a claim to recover the dollar amount paid to that vendor. Sanctions and monetary fines may also accompany this action.

Any WIC Vendor who issued a sanction under the mandatory Federal sanctions and/or Mississippi WIC Program sanctions vendor sanctions has the right to appeal according to the procedures outlined in the Vendor Handbook.

Vendor Records: What You Must Keep (and why)

All vendors have agreed in the WIC Vendor Agreement to retain all invoice records for a period of three years. This process is used to ensure the WIC Vendor is obtaining food from wholesalers and distributors listed on the Mississippi WIC Program website and that the WIC Vendor has purchased sufficient quantities of items to support the redemption claims submitted.



WIC & SNAP: Shared Penalties Between WIC & SNAP

Mississippi WIC will disqualify a vendor who has been disqualified from SNAP. The disqualification must be for the same length of time as the SNAP disqualification, may begin at a later date than the SNAP disqualification, and is not subject to administrative or judicial review under the WIC Program. The vendor may be assessed a civil money penalty in lieu of disqualification if it will impose an accessibility hardship on participants. Participant access is not subject to review, and the vendor does not have the right to appeal any decision under this section. Mississippi WIC has the right to disqualify a vendor who has been assessed a civil money penalty for hardship in SNAP, as provided under 7 CFR 278.6. Violations that lead to disqualification from the MSDH WIC may result in disqualification of authorization to participate in SNAP. This disqualification from WIC may result in disqualification as a retailer in SNAP. Such disqualification is not subject to administrative or judicial review under SNAP.



Appeals 101: Your Rights & the Review Process

Vendors have the right to appeal certain WIC decisions through an Administrative Review process. Here's what to know:

- **Eligible for Review:** Vendors may appeal actions like denial of authorization, disqualification, imposition of a civil money penalty, or other adverse decisions as outlined by WIC policy.
- **Request Timeline:** Appeals must be submitted within 15 days of the notice date.
- **How to Request:** The written appeal must be sent to the address provided in the notification letter and must clearly state the action being appealed.

Review Process includes:

- The opportunity for a fair hearing before a designated hearing officer.
- The right to submit evidence, bring witnesses, and be represented by counsel.
- A written decision issued within 90 days of the appeal request.

Important Note: Some WIC decisions, such as mandatory disqualifications based on federal regulations, cannot be appealed

Changes in Ownership, Location, or Closing? Report It Fast!

Any changes to the information provided on the vendor application must be communicated to Mississippi WIC.

Mississippi WIC requires the vendor to provide advance written notice of any changes in vendor information including ownership, store location or cessation of operations. At a minimum of 30 days when applicable changes to ownership should be reported.

The Vendor Agreement is non-transferable. Any transfer of ownership or sale of the business by the vendor shall render the Vendor Agreement null and void. Changes can be submitted to vmu@msdh.ms.gov. Mississippi WIC will acknowledge receipt of this information.

Train Your Team: Keeping Staff WIC-Ready

Each vendor is required to send at least one representative to an initial training to become an authorized WIC vendor. This representative will be responsible for ensuring all other staff are properly trained.

Tools that can be used to train store associates on WIC policies and procedures are available. WIC Vendor Training for Grocery Store Associates and WIC Vendor Training for Pharmacy Associates can be found in the Documents section at www.freshnewwic.com.

Vendors must complete training provided by the Mississippi WIC Program at least once annually. This training may be in person or electronically. Vendors must complete annual training to remain authorized.



Got a Concern? - Vendor Complaint Process

Mississippi WIC takes complaints seriously to ensure all vendors meet program standards and participants are treated fairly.

Complaints can be submitted by anyone: WIC participants, staff, or the public and may involve issues like denied items, refusal to order specialty formula, overcharging, or rude behavior.

When a complaint is received, it's reviewed and may lead to an investigation, which can include store visits or compliance buys. Depending on the findings, actions may range from additional training to formal warnings or disqualification from the program. **Your best defense?** Stay stocked, follow procedures, and treat every WIC customer with respect.

Vendor Complaints: We Want to Hear from You!

MISSISSIPPI WIC
Women, Infants and Children
WIC Vendor Complaint Form

The WIC Vendor Complaint Form is ONLY for use by current WIC authorized vendors to send complaints about WIC issues and participants to the WIC State Office. The WIC team may take up to 5 business days to review and respond to this complaint.

Thank you!

Vendor Information

Vendor Name:

Vendor ID:

Submitted By

Name: Staff Role:

Phone Number: Email:

Incident Information

Date of Incident:

If you experience issues related to the WIC program such as policy concerns, difficulties with participants, or questions about procedures you can report them using the official WIC Vendor Complaint Form.

Where to Submit:

Complete the form found at www.freshnewwic.com. Vendor complaints help improve the program. Your feedback is important and confidential.

Participant Complaints: What to Expect & How to Respond



WIC participants have the right to report negative experiences related to shopping, staff behavior, or store practices. These complaints are reviewed by the Mississippi WIC Program and shared with vendors as needed for awareness and correction.

- If your store receives repeated participant complaints (more than nine in a year), it may be designated as high-risk and subject to additional oversight.

Time to Re-Up? What to Know About Reauthorization

Reauthorization of existing stores will occur at the end of each vendor agreement period. Vendors applying for reauthorization are required to complete the application and have it submitted no later than 09/30/2026. Vendors who fail to complete the reauthorization process will be unable to accept eWIC once their vendor agreement expires. The vendor agreement will be terminated and considered null and void.



Mississippi State Department of Health WIC Program Vendor Application

Submission of this application does not constitute authorization to participate in the Mississippi State Department of Health WIC Program (MSDH WIC Program). This application is NOT an Agreement. Participation in the MSDH WIC Program will not be authorized until all completed application materials have been received, evaluated, and approved.

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS, ATTACH DOCUMENTATION, AND SIGN. INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE PROCESSED.

Select (x) One:

New Application

Add Additional Location

Change of Ownership

Re- Authorization; Enter Vendor Number(s):

Need Help? How to Request Technical Assistance

Vendor information, documents, and forms can be found at www.freshnewwic.com.

For technical assistance with WIC policies and procedures, please contact the WIC Vendor Management Unit at vmu@msdh.ms.gov. Be sure to include what you need assistance with.

For technical assistance with an integrated point of sale device (including produce mapping), please contact your point-of-sale system servicer or value-added reseller.

Stay Informed: Using the MSDH WIC Vendor Webpage

Women and Children	<h3>WIC Vendor Information</h3> <p>WIC participants can visit a WIC-authorized vendor (grocery store or pharmacy) of their choice, shop for WIC-approved supplemental foods, and complete the transaction at the cash register using an eWIC card.</p>
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Don't miss a beat! Your one-stop shop for everything WIC vendor-related is just a click away. The Mississippi WIC Vendor webpage is loaded with the latest updates, training materials, policy changes, and important forms. Whether you need to check stocking requirements or stay ahead of program updates, it's all there. Bookmark it. Visit it. Use it. Staying compliant and connected has never been easier!

Contact Information



Mississippi State Department of Health
WIC Program
Vendor Management Unit

Website: www.freshnewwic.com
Email: vmu@msdh.ms.gov

Thank you for your time. Scan the QR code to complete the annual training.



In accordance with federal civil rights law and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the state or local agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. **Mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. **Fax:** (202) 690-7442; or
3. **Email:** program.intake@usda.gov.

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