

2020

ANNUAL VENDOR Training

**Changes in
Termination
Period**

**Effective December
2019**

WELCOME TO ANNUAL VENDOR TRAINING FOR AUTHORIZED TWO YEAR AND THREE-YEAR AGREEMENTS!

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 and afford the Georgia Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (Georgia WIC) participant a meaningful shopping experience. 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.

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

- Review and ensure adequate training of all store personnel engaged in WIC transactions, paid or unpaid.
- Certify training completion by submitting a completed Annual Training Checklist no later than July 31, 2020.

Click here for checklist: <http://dph.georgia.gov/training-materials-and-resources>

If you have any questions, please contact the Vendor Relations Unit at 404-657-2900.



Training Requirements

The Georgia Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is required to offer training to WIC Authorized Vendors on an annual basis. As a two-year agreement holder (Oct. 1, 2019- Sept. 30, 2021) and three-year agreement holder (Oct.1, 2019- Sept. 30, 2022), your organization is required to complete the annual training by July 31, 2020 in order to maintain the current agreement with Georgia WIC. The annual training checklist must be returned and postmarked no later than July 31, 2020.

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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Purpose of the WIC Program

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



WIC Approved Foods

The WIC Approved Foods List outlines foods that are available to the WIC participant. Only these food items may be purchased by the participant or proxy using the WIC food instrument. To view the WIC Approved Foods List click the following link: <http://dph.georgia.gov/wic-approved-foods-list>

REMINDER:

No WIC approved food items can contain added sugars, fats or oils.



Infant Formula Sources

All authorized vendors are required to purchase infant formula, used for consumption by WIC participants, solely from suppliers approved by Georgia WIC. The program does not allow vendors to purchase infant formula from other program vendors. Only purchases from the approved list of manufacturers, distributors and wholesalers will be permitted. 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 the Georgia Department of Public Health WIC website. The program may also require vendors to supply written permission to confirm their infant formula purchase history with suppliers. A list of approved infant formula suppliers can be found here:

<https://dph.georgia.gov/infant%20formula%20supplier>

Infant formula wholesalers and distributors interested in becoming an approved supplier for the Georgia WIC Program must complete and submit an Infant Formula Supplier Request Form. Approved manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors and suppliers must be registered with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for consideration. Click the [request form](#) if you would like to become a supplier.

Completed request forms may be submitted through mail or email.

Mail to:

Georgia WIC Program
Office of Vendor Management
2 Peachtree Street NW, Floor 10
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3142

or

Email to:

wic-vendor.relations@dph.ga.gov

For the most current information concerning infant formula, please check the Georgia Department of Public Health WIC Vendor website below:

<http://dph.georgia.gov/wic-formula-resources>

Minimum Inventory

Each vendor is required to daily stock and maintain the minimum inventory of approved WIC foods as well as a substantial amount of non-WIC foods. This is an imperative measure to guarantee compliance with the WIC Program guidance and policies. The inventory must be in the store or the store's stockroom. WIC minimum inventories must be within the manufacturer's expiration dates 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"**. Expired foods do not count toward minimum inventory and are sufficient grounds for denying the application.

Note: All observed concerns with sanitation and food safety will be immediately reported to the Georgia Department of Agriculture and may result in an application denial. Click [Minimum Inventory Requirements](#) for more information.

Failure to stock the required inventory of any WIC food item will result in a CATEGORY I VIOLATION which could lead to disqualification. Click [Sanctions and The Sanction System](#) for more information.



Program Complaints

The Vendor Relations Unit will document all received complaints. If the complaint is participant related, it will be referred to the Office of Program Integrity and Strategy for follow up and resolution. All vendor complaints will be handled as outlined in "[Vendor Complaints](#)".

Georgia WIC has a vendor customer service hotline available to assist WIC vendors with any aspect of the WIC program. The hotline number is 1-866-814-5468. We are available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, with the exception of state holidays.



Vendor Complaints

Vendor complaints are those complaints filed by WIC participants or others concerning an authorized WIC vendor. Examples of vendor complaints include, but are not limited to:

- Adverse treatment of a WIC participant by a vendor's owner, manager or employee.
- Charging more to WIC participants than other customers.
- Providing outdated or spoiled food items.
- Refusal to accept manufacturers' coupons or other store discounts.
- Inadequate variety and/or quantity of WIC-authorized supplemental food items.

Click here for [Performance Compliance](#).

Participant Complaints

Authorized WIC vendors are encouraged to report all participant complaints to the Georgia WIC State office. Examples of participant complaints include, but are not limited to:

- Adverse treatment of a vendor's owner, manager or employees.
- Use of altered WIC food instruments (i.e., changing dates, names, or food amounts).
- Attempting to purchase unauthorized foods with WIC food instruments.
- Persistent attempts to purchase larger quantities of an authorized food item than listed on a WIC food instrument.
- Transaction of WIC food instruments outside of the valid period (first day to use, last day to use).
- Transaction of WIC food instruments at an unauthorized vendor.
- Sale of WIC food instruments or other Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) authorized coupons.
- Transaction of WIC food instruments by a person not listed on the Georgia WIC Program ID Card (WIC ID).

Vendor Claims Procedures

When it is determined that a vendor has committed a vendor violation that affects payment to the vendor, or the program identifies errors in a food instrument submitted and paid, Georgia WIC will establish a claim against a vendor to recoup funds. A vendor will be afforded an opportunity to justify or correct the claim amount. Should Georgia WIC not approve the justification or correction, a vendor will be responsible for repayment of the assessed claim in its entirety. Such claims are not subject to administrative review.

Claims for repayment will be collected as follows:

1. Submitting a written request for payment to a vendor specifying repayment within 30 days of the date of the request.
2. Pursuing collection efforts through the State Attorney General's Office if a claim is not paid within 30 days of written request for repayment.



WIC Banking

WIC Banking is a valuable tool that provides vendors with an efficient and accurate audit trail for tracking voucher payments. Vendors are strongly encouraged to consistently use this resource as a means of assuring competitive product pricing. If you are in need of your assigned login and password, please contact the Vendor Relations Unit. For more information on WIC Banking, please click the link: <https://www.wicbanking.com/>

If there are any updates to your banking information, it is imperative that you provide the program with your most current and accurate information. Please notify your assigned Vendor Relations Consultant directly of changes regarding:

- Special Payment Arrangements Needed
- Routing/Account Numbers
- Banking Institution
- Returned Vouchers.

Vendor Sanction System

It is essential that all authorized retailers comply with WIC Program policies and procedures. Georgia WIC will monitor all vendors for adherence to their agreement. Violations will result in the imposition of sanctions. These sanctions may include termination of the agreement, disqualification from WIC and SNAP for a specified period of time and/or a civil monetary penalty. Sanctions are based upon the Federal and State Sanction System. (see “Sanctions and The Sanction System” in the Vendor Handbook). Vendor Relations Staff are available to provide technical assistance.

Federal Sanctions

- Category IV, Disqualification for one (1) year.
- Category V, Disqualification for three (3) years.
- Category VI, Disqualification for six (6) years.
- Category VII, Permanent disqualification.

State Sanctions

- Category I, Disqualification for six (6) months on third violation.
- Category II, Disqualification for eight (8) months on third violation.
- Category III, Disqualification for ten (10) months on second violation.

For the current approved procedure for the Sanction System, click to see the up-to-date version of the [Vendor Handbook](#).

Prohibited Use of Incentive Items



Georgia WIC participants must be allowed to participate in in-store or manufacturer promotions that are available to the public. This allowance extends to special promotions on WIC approved food items that include coupons and “buy one get one free”. However, Georgia WIC prohibits any vendor from using incentives to solicit the patronage of WIC participants. Vendors who use advertisements to solicit the business of WIC participants, or who offer incentives or delivery services to participants will be subject to sanctions as explained in the Vendor Agreement and Handbook. Incentives are defined as any item, service, or gimmick used to solicit the patronage of a WIC participant. Incentives may include the following:

- Free or complimentary gifts
- Home delivery of foods
- Store memberships
- Other free or discounted services that are offered to WIC customers to entice them to transact food instruments.

Georgia WIC will not authorize or continue the authorization of a vendor that advertises, promises, provides or indicates an intention to provide prohibited incentive items to customers.

Georgia WIC Vendor Handbook effective December 31, 2019

The following are amendments to the Termination of the Vendor Agreement and Administrative Review and Appeal Procedure requirements for authorized Georgia WIC vendors. The content changes are highlighted in red.

TERMINATION OF THE VENDOR AGREEMENT

The specified termination period outlined by Georgia WIC has been added to each reason for termination. Please see pages 58 – 59 of the Vendor Handbook to view the complete Termination of the Vendor Agreement list.

Reasons for termination may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Voluntary withdrawal from the WIC program (termination period of 6 months).
2. The decision to sell the store (termination period of 6 months).
3. Use of the WIC acronym, WIC logo, or close facsimiles thereof, in total or in part, in a manner that violates the provisions of this vendor handbook (termination period of 12 months).
4. Accepting food instruments through the mail or mailing any approved formula/ medical food directly to the WIC customer (termination period of 12 months).

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW AND APPEAL PROCEDURES

For the complete outline, please refer to pages 69 – 71, Administrative Review and Appeal Procedures, in the Vendor Handbook .

(2) Full Administrative Review

(b) These procedures shall be followed in cases meriting full administrative review:

- (iii) Upon receiving a timely request for review, the Commissioner shall refer the case to the Office of State Administrative Hearings (OSAH) for initial decision. The referral shall be sent to OSAH within a reasonable period of time not to exceed 30 days after receipt of a timely request for review. If the State agency fails to refer the case to OSAH within a reasonable period of time, the vendor requesting the hearing may petition OSAH directly for an order permitting the vendor to file a request for hearing directly with OSAH.
- (v) Within 30 days after the close of the record, the ALJ shall issue a decision to all parties in the case, except when it is determined that the complexity of the issues and the length of the record require an extension of this period and an order is issued by the ALJ so providing.
- (vi) Every decision of the ALJ shall contain findings of fact, conclusions of law, and a disposition of the case. The ALJ's determination shall be based solely on whether the State Agency has correctly applied Federal and State statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures governing the WIC Program, according to the evidence presented at the review.
- (vii) Every decision of the ALJ shall be a final decision as set forth in O.C.G.A. § 50-13- 17b). Any aggrieved party, including the State agency, may seek judicial review of the ALJ's final decision pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 50-13-19, within the time period prescribed by O.C.G.A. § 50-13-41. If the adverse action under review has not already taken effect, the ALJ's final decision shall be effective on the date of receipt by the vendor.

Shelf Price Survey

Shelf price surveys are used to identify stores that are in compliance with competitive pricing criteria. USDA regulations require the Georgia WIC Program to “ensure that a vendor selected for participation in the program does not, subsequent to selection, increase prices to levels that would make the vendor ineligible for authorization.” Each vendor is required to submit the shelf prices for WIC food items carried in each store location. Georgia WIC collects mandatory shelf prices quarterly, but reserves the right to collect shelf prices outside of that time frame at its discretion.

Georgia WIC may request shelf prices for as many or as few items as it desires. Vendors are encouraged to submit updated prices for any food item as frequently as the price fluctuates. In an effort to collect accurate pricing data, Georgia WIC accepts the submission of Universal Product Code (UPC) files as another method in submitting shelf prices. Approved vendors are encouraged to submit pricing via UPC files as:

- The process is efficient and saves the vendor time.
- Files can be sent any time there is an update in pricing.
- Data received has been found to be accurate.
- Submission of files helps account for all items listed on survey.

Encourage your suppliers and wholesalers to forward formal notices of price increases, including percentage mark ups to the Vendor Relations Unit utilizing their company’s formal letterhead.

Notices may be sent via email to: wic-vendor.relations@dph.ga.gov or brian.firestone@dph.ga.gov. Learn more about changes click [Vendor Information](#).

Automatic Clearing House Form



Vendors who are authorized for participation in the Georgia WIC Program will receive an Automatic Clearing House (ACH) enrollment form. Vendors have five (5) business days from the date of receipt of the form to enroll.

Should the banking information change, you are required to complete a new ACH form and remit the document, with a voided check, to the Vendor Relations Unit immediately. Please mail the form to:

Georgia Department of Public Health
WIC Office of Vendor Management
2 Peachtree ST., NW
10th floor
Atlanta, GA 30303.

Transacting and Redeeming Food Instruments and Cash Value Vouchers

Knowing how to properly transact Food Instruments and Cash Value Vouchers (CVVs) can save time and money. Ensure all cashiers are effectively trained on all procedures to guarantee WIC participants are extended exceptional customer service. Observing the steps below will result in an accurate and efficient transaction:

PROCESSING WIC FOOD INSTRUMENTS

1. Check the participant's WIC ID Card (folder).
2. Check the dates (first and last day to use).
3. Check the food items.
4. Ring up the purchase.
5. Write down the price (use black ink).
6. Obtain a signature (use black ink).
7. Give receipt.
8. Every food instrument transaction must be handled separately. Complete one food instrument before ringing up the next.

PROCESSING WIC CVVs

1. Check the participant's WIC ID Card (folder).
2. Check the dates (first and last day to use).
3. Check the food items.
4. Check the value of the CVV.
5. Ring up the purchase.
6. Write down the price *(cannot exceed dollar amount on face value of CVV- use black ink).
7. Obtain a signature (use black ink).
8. Give receipt.
9. Include tax for the amount over the maximum on the face of the voucher, when applicable. (See split tender process).
10. If cash is used to complete the purchase, give change for any amount over the face value of the voucher (See split tender process).
11. Every voucher transaction must be handled separately. Complete one voucher before ringing up the next.

*Georgia WIC will **not** pay any dollar amount over the face value of the CVV. Visit [food instruments and CVVs](#) for more information.

Split Tender

Vendors must honor split tender for fruit and vegetable purchases when the total amount due exceeds the value of the presented Cash Value Voucher (CVV). Each CVV should be processed as a separate transaction and you are required to maintain a receipt of all items purchased by WIC.



As an example: a WIC participant presents \$8.50 worth of apples for purchase and uses an \$8 CVV as currency.

- The transaction will show that \$8 of the \$8.50 due was purchased with the CVV and the remaining 50 cents was paid with either SNAP, cash or credit.
- The receipt should document that the applicable taxes were charged for the remaining balance not paid with WIC currency.
- The WIC participant should be given a copy of the receipt for their records.
- If the WIC participant does not choose to use any other method of payment to satisfy the balance due for fruit and/or vegetables purchased over the presented CVV, the fruit and/or vegetables that represent the overage must be subtracted from the purchase.

Split tender applies only to Cash Value Vouchers. It **cannot be applied** to any other WIC food instrument. If you have additional questions or require further clarification on how to properly transact Cash Value Vouchers, please contact the Vendor Relations Unit at (404) 657-4470.

Vendor Stamp Administration

REPRODUCTION OF THE VENDOR STAMP IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED!

Authorized vendors may not use any other means of placing a vendor number on a food instrument other than with the vendor stamp issued by the Georgia WIC Program.

- Food instruments (vouchers) stamped with an unauthorized vendor stamp (any stamp not issued by Georgia WIC) will not be paid.
- Vendors who submit food instruments for payment by stamping the voucher (first or subsequent attempts) with a device other than the Georgia WIC Program issued stamp may be subject to investigation for fraud, a claim for restitution and/or subject to termination of the vendor agreement.
- Vendors will be held responsible for the unauthorized use of the vendor stamp by their paid or unpaid owners, officers, managers, agents and employees.
- The vendor stamp must be kept in a secure location at all times.
- The vendor stamp is not transferable to another location or individual.
- Lost or stolen stamps must be reported to Georgia WIC immediately.
- Damaged stamps must be reported and returned to Georgia WIC immediately.
- If the inkpad dries out, it is the vendor's responsibility to replenish the removable pad.

NOTE: Use only **water based, black liquid ink**

For replacement stamps or any vendor related concerns, contact the Vendor Relations Unit at (404) 657-4470.

Change of Ownership

All vendors must provide Georgia WIC with at least a 21-day advance written notice if the following changes occur:

- Ownership
- Operation
- Corporate structure
- Store management
- Closure of business
- Remodel/Store Renovations
- Addition of new owners
- Corporate officers
- Partners
- Affiliates



If business changes involve the addition of new owners, corporate officers, partners, and/or affiliates, a vendor must include the full name, social security number, and date of birth for each individual in its notice to the Department. People added to an existing business, or who acquire the business must pass the Department's Business Integrity checks. A vendor will be immediately terminated from the program if it fails to provide the Department with advance written notice of such changes and fails to provide the requisite information for the Department to conduct its Business Integrity checks.

Civil Rights Violations

Complaints of Civil Rights violations will be handled in accordance with Federal Law and the USDA policy. The policy states:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

Civil Rights Violations Cont'd

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, 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
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Limited English Proficiency (LEP) – Other Language Services

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibits discrimination based on language. Any individual who applies to or participates in the WIC program who is not proficient in English must be provided with an interpreter.

All participants must be advised at the service delivery point of the availability of other language services at time of service. Please review the Georgia WIC Program Vendor Handbook or the link below for instructions on how to access the language line: <https://dph.georgia.gov/sites/dph.georgia.gov/files/WIC/Administrative%20Review%20and%20Appeal%20Procedures.pdf>.

Contact Information

Georgia Department of Public Health
WIC Program
Office of Vendor Management/Vendor Relations Unit
2 Peachtree Street, NW
10th Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3142
404-657-2900
Customer Service Hotline: 1-866-814-5468
dph.georgia.gov/vendor-information
wic-vendor.relations@dph.ga.gov

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