

# Montana WIC Program

## Retailer Newsletter

### Training Issue 2017



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## WIC Training Materials

The training issue of the WIC newsletter provides WIC training reminders and updates on changes to the program. Use this newsletter together with the Retailer Reference Manual, Online Cashier Training, Retail Staff Training Guide and the WIC food list to provide comprehensive training. Call the State WIC Office or ask your LARC (Local Agency Retail Coordinator) for more copies of training materials.

## Purpose of WIC

WIC is a special supplemental nutrition program that is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) with the purpose of providing healthy foods and nutrition education for families. This program brings money into your store and local community. WIC offers families:

- Nutrition education
- Breastfeeding promotion and support
- Health and social service referrals
- Benefits to buy healthy foods and formula

## Who Qualifies for WIC?

In order to qualify for WIC, families must meet four eligibility criteria:

- 1) Household income guidelines
- 2) Be a pregnant or postpartum woman, an infant or a child under 5 years of age
- 3) Have a medical or nutritional risk factor
- 4) Live in Montana

Please share this information with your staff.





## Montana WIC Facts

- ⇒ WIC participants served – 17,731
- ⇒ Authorized retailers – 189
- ⇒ Benefits (checks) paid – 44,476
- ⇒ Benefits (checks) rejected – 532
- ⇒ Top rejection reasons:
  - » Missing Stamp – 258
  - » Illegible Stamp – 20
  - » Over Max Price – 185
  - » Missing Signature – 19
  - » Early Cashing – 17

January  
2017



## WIC Benefit Transaction Procedures

If you have any questions regarding proper WIC benefit transaction steps and procedures please refer to the Retailer Reference Manual. This is available online at <http://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/WIC/Retailers>. You can also contact the MT WIC Program directly at 406-444-5533 and request a copy.

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## Retailer Sanction System

A violation of WIC Program rules is either a Class A, B, C or D violation, each class being subject to the sanctions outlined in the most current version of the Montana WIC Program [State Plan](#)

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## Minimum Stocking & Variety

The Montana WIC Program requires all authorized WIC stores to carry a minimum stock of certain WIC foods. The minimum stocking requirements are included with your contract and are available in the Retailer Reference Guide (available online). The stocking requirements are broken out by peer groups. If you cannot meet minimum stocking requirements, you will be removed from the program. For questions, please contact Glade Roos.

# Infant Formula Distributors

All WIC retailers may only purchase infant formula from an approved infant formula distributor. The list of approved distributors is available on the WIC website for your reference. If you have any questions on the list or would like to seek approval for an additional distributor, please contact Glade Roos.

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## WIC Customer Concerns

If you have a complaint about a WIC customer, please fill out the “Montana WIC Program Report of Attempted Abuse” form and mail it back to the state office (available online or through the state office). This provides back-up documentation for educating WIC customers on proper procedure. We take all complaints/concerns seriously. You may also wish to contact your Local Agency Retail Contact (LARC) to discuss the matter. To find out who your LARC is, or if you have questions, call Kevin Moore: 406-444-5530.

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## Incentive Items

WIC authorized retailers may not use incentive items to get WIC customers to shop at your stores. An example of an incentive item promotion is “Use your WIC benefits here and get free soda.”

WIC customers are allowed to participate in any promotion that is available to other shoppers. Examples of these are free ounces in a WIC approved product, buy one get one or get a free item with the purchase of another item. If there are free ounces of a WIC approved product, for instance cereal, these free ounces do not count toward the total ounces available on the benefit. If a WIC customer brings up two regularly 18 oz boxes of cereal but the promotion allows for 10 free ounces per box, the WIC customer would be able to purchase both boxes.

The important concept to remember with incentive items and promotions is they must be available to all customers and cannot be available to only WIC customers.

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# “eWIC is Coming” Edition, 2017

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## Produce Mapping

Montana WIC’s Approve Product List (APL) contains almost 1,500 PLUs taken directly from the International Federation for Produce Standards (IFPS) list, which most retailers are using. The APL also includes many UPCs for common packaged fresh fruits and vegetables. Seasonal items, packaged product with store generated codes, and any codes not included on the IFPS list must be mapped to a PLU on the APL. View the Retailer page on the Montana WIC website or call us at (406) 444-5530 to view the approved PLU list, and talk to your POS manager to learn about mapping any items that are not included.

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## eWIC Payment Adjustments

WIC’s cost containment system is based on a Maximum Allowable Reimbursement (MAR) price that can be paid for a WIC item, and eWIC is going to change this process considerably. If a retailer’s price exceeds the MAR, the settled price will be automatically adjusted to the MAR, eliminating rejected checks from a retailer’s bank and the need to send those checks into the State WIC Office for review. Every time a retailer sends a requested price for a WIC item, that price will be factored into that item’s MAR in all of the retailer peer groups. This process creates a “rolling MAR,” which is an amount that increases or decreases based on the prices requested from different retailers in a peer group. Rolling MAR prices more accurately reflect actual costs because they are based on the most recent price amounts requested from retailers. There will be a process for retailers to dispute MAR prices if they believe there has been an error.

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## Building the Approved Product List

The UPC database – or, Approved Product List (APL) – is a central part of how eWIC transactions work at your checkout counters. When cashiers scan WIC foods, their UPC or PLU must be listed on the APL for the item to be processed correctly. We have been busy collecting codes for every single WIC food item available in Montana grocery stores by sourcing bulk lists directly from retailers, and by visiting stores and manually scanning items on the shelves. We are continuing this process through the winter and you may hear from us to schedule a time to visit your store for scanning. Our goal is to have a tentative APL ready for distribution in March 2017 for retailers to review and use for testing. We will need your help keeping the APL up-to-date. If you notice missing items, new items, or changed UPCs, we will ask you to submit the full code, product description, and picture (if possible) through email or an online form.

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# Project Timeline

As many of you have heard, Montana WIC's timeline for pilot and rollout has been revised for later in 2017. Retailers in the pilot area will go live with eWIC in June 2017 and statewide rollout will occur in September 2017. The pilot area includes all retailers in the following counties: Broadwater, Deer Lodge, Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, Meagher, Powell, Silver Bow, Beaverhead, and Madison.

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## POS Certifications

Each WIC authorized retailer will have two separate certifications to ensure their POS systems are processing WIC transactions correctly. An initial certification between Solutran and the retailer's system will be conducted remotely, and will involve Solutran working over the phone with the appropriate person for each POS system to conduct the testing for the certification. Solutran will be reaching out to retailers to schedule these tests with pilot-area retailers first in March & April 2017. Solutran will schedule certifications with all other retailers in May and June 2017. The second certification will involve WIC staff visiting each retailer and conducting a WIC transaction in every lane to ensure the end-to-end process is working correctly. WIC staff will schedule these visits with each retailer to occur at least one month before eWIC goes live. For pilot area retailers that will be May 2017 and for all other retailers that will be July & August 2017.





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<https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/WIC/Retailers>

## Who do you call?

Retailers should contact their Local WIC Agency for concerns regarding complaints and participant concerns.

Contact **Kevin Moore** (406-444-5530) for questions about benefit redemption or allowable WIC foods.

Contact **Glade Roos** (406-444-2841) at the State WIC office with questions about your contract or stocking requirements.

Contact **Alex Long** (406-444-4746) with price changes for WIC foods.

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