



Retailer Newsletter – *Training Issue* June 2021

WIC's Spending Impact in May 2021

- 7,318 families went shopping with eWIC.
- 188 grocery stores accepted WIC benefits.
- There were 19,912 eWIC transactions.
- Statewide WIC spending totaled \$644,007.03.

Thank You for Serving WIC Customers

This has been a difficult year for grocery stores. There have been food supply challenges, staffing shortages, and some customers stockpiled foods and were uneasy about shopping in-person. Many stores adapted their practices to provide safer shopping experiences for families to help them get the healthy foods they need. Neighbors and communities came together to support each other, and your participation in WIC continues to be an important part of that.

Please review this training newsletter and ensure all of your store staff have access to this information.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN WIC.

New This Summer – Increased Fruit & Vegetable Benefits

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has provided Montana WIC with increased dollars to purchase fruits and vegetables this summer. Women, children, and some infants on WIC normally received \$11, \$9, and \$4 respectively and will now each receive \$35 to spend on fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables each month, June-September. This amount can add up to a lot of fruits and veggies for a family, and we appreciate your encouragement to help them fully utilize this temporary benefit.



Reminders for eWIC Transactions

- Always treat WIC customers with the same considerations as all other customers.
- Provide the WIC customer with an “available balance” printout upon request.
- Allow WIC customers to participate in all promotions that are available to all other customers, such as coupons and sale items.
- Scan food items using only the UPC attached to that item.
- Allow WIC customers to purchase as many or as few of their WIC foods as they choose.
- Provide a mid-transaction receipt so the WIC customer can know which items are paid by WIC.
- Allow WIC customers to purchase non-WIC items with a different form of payment.
- Provide a legible receipt after each WIC transaction that includes a remaining WIC balance.



- Never offer WIC customers incentives such as a free item in exchange for using WIC benefits at your store.
- Never ask a WIC customer for identification.
- Never provide a cash refund for WIC transactions.
- Never scan a UPC that is not attached to the WIC food item.
- Never exchange WIC foods unless the item is defective, then exchange that specific item only.

What if an item doesn't ring up as WIC?

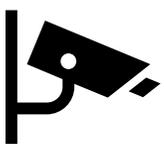
There are a few different reasons this can occur. The item may not be WIC approved, or it may not be approved for that cardholder, or it may need to be added to the Approved Product List. Please send WIC any UPC you would like considered using the form on the Montana WIC website or by emailing WICUPC@mt.gov.

Answer Questions with the Retail Reference Manual

The Retail Reference Manual is the go-to resource for stores and the WIC Program, and includes everything you need to know to meet program requirements and troubleshoot issues that come up. Some of the highlights include:

- Retailer authorization criteria and application process.
- Stocking requirements – these are the items that must be maintained in-stock at all times.
- Use of the Program Complaint Form to report any concerns about WIC customers or program rules.
- Requirement to purchase infant formula from WIC approved distributors.
- Understand WIC’s list of retailer violations and the sanctions that accompany them.

Please review the Montana WIC Retailer Webpage to access the Retail Reference Manual and many other resources. If you would like a hardcopy of the manual mailed to your store, please let us know.



Help Identify WIC Program Fraud

Buying, selling, or misusing WIC benefits is a crime, and we need your help to ensure everyone is following the rules. If you suspect fraud – either among your store staff or with a WIC customer – please let us know immediately. If you would prefer to submit that information directly to the USDA, you may do so here: <https://www.usda.gov/oig/hotline.htm>.

Get to Know Your LARC

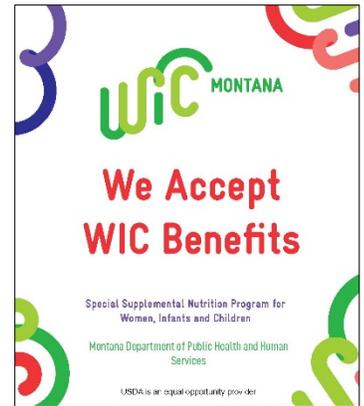
Each WIC clinic has a Local Agency Retail Coordinator (LARC) assigned to support the stores in their areas. You may get a visit from your LARC this summer as they are out conducting retailer monitoring. They are your first point of contact for program complaints, questions about authorized foods, or other needs that may come up. Reach out to your local WIC clinic to find out who your LARC is and keep their contact information handy. Or, call the State WIC Office at (406) 444-5530 and we will put you in touch.



Order More Shelf Tags and Window Decals

Every store is required to post a “We Accept WIC” decal on every entrance to the store, please let us know if you need additional decals or would like a replacement.

Stores are not required to use “WIC Approved Item” shelf tags, but many stores choose to use them because their customers recognize them. If your store chooses to use them, please ensure there is a tag placed under every WIC allowed item in the store and let us know if you need an additional set sent to your store.



The Future of eWIC: Online Ordering & Curbside Pickup

Some retailers provide online ordering options to customers, which became especially important during the pandemic. WIC has historically not been a payment type included in online ordering, but retailers across the country are working to change that. The Montana WIC Program would like to know if any WIC authorized retailers in Montana are currently building any type of online ordering services or are interested in doing so. Montana WIC can help identify federal regulatory considerations, industry standards, and resources that can help. Reach out to kmoore@mt.gov to learn more.

Where Can You Find More Information?

Visit Montana WIC’s Retailer website for many retailer resources:
www.dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/WIC/Retailers

Retailers can contact their Local WIC Agency for concerns regarding participants and food items.

Contact **Kevin Moore** (406) 444-5530 for any eWIC transaction or program questions.

Contact **Glade Roos** (406) 444-2841 with questions about your contract or stocking requirements.

Thank you for your partnership with the Montana WIC Program.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

*Montana WIC Program
Department of Public Health and Human Services
1625 11th Ave. Basement
Helena, MT 59620*