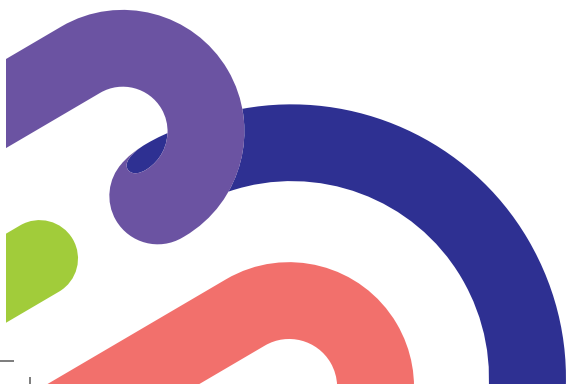




# WASHINGTON WIC 2024 VENDOR TRAINING GUIDE



# WELCOME

## DEAR VENDOR,

Being one of over 780 WIC authorized vendors in Washington State, you play an important role in improving access to healthy foods for Washington families. Thank you for your continued support of WIC participants by accepting WIC transactions.

Whether you're a newly authorized vendor or have been authorized for a long while, training continues to be important. This vendor guide highlights important program changes. We ask that you share the information in this guide with all the staff in your store who interact with WIC participants.

We pledge our support to you as you continue to serve WIC participants and adapt WIC program rules and regulations. Please let us know how we can help.

Sincerely,

Brittany Tybo  
*Director, Office of Nutrition Services*



# INTRODUCTION

## 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 use their WIC Card to purchase food online or bring it to your store or pharmacy 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!**



# INTRODUCTION



## 2023 WASHINGTON WIC FACTS

- **204,026** total WIC customers were served in Washington State at almost **780** vendor locations.
- **147,166** infants and children received nutritious foods.
- **56,860** women participated that were pregnant, breastfeeding, or postpartum.
- **\$100,322,117** was redeemed by WIC vendors.  
Of that, over **\$29,498,803** was spent on just fruits and vegetables and **\$382,320** was spent on infant formula.
- **\$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 participants, 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 over 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 maintain 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.

### Vendor Selection Criteria

To qualify, you must meet Vendor Selection Criteria. This means:

- Your store must meet and maintain Minimum Inventory requirements.
- Grocery stores must be a full-line grocery store and sell a variety of foods.
- Grocery and pharmacy stores must sell a variety of baby products, household cleaners and laundry supplies, and healthcare goods.

### Business Integrity

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

- Maintaining all relevant licenses, permits, and certifications

# BECOMING A WIC VENDOR

- 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 participants 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 a Point-of-Sale system or, where applicable, an online order platform that is compatible to accept WIC Cards.
- 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 or online, 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 online or in a binder.
- 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 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 access to the Washington WIC Shopping Guide, WIC Shopper Mobile App, and Infant Formula Reference Guide.
- 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. Use this guide to help train staff.

### **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.

Stores 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 “fill” their food prescription at your store or online.

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 access to the WIC Shopping Guide, the WIC Shopper Mobile App, and a current Infant Formula Reference Sheet. If you don’t have access to these and would like to, talk to your store manager or contact us about getting copies of the WIC Shopping Guide or Infant Formula Reference Sheet or information on the WIC Shopper Mobile App.

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

Handling WIC transactions incorrectly can cost the 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.
- Always offer any printed mid-transaction receipt to WIC customers.
- 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, same size*



### 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 (VMS) who are available to help you be successful. Your VMS 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.

# QUALITY ASSURANCE

## 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 in person at various locations across the state every year. Available training dates and locations are on the WIC vendor website.
- Make sure appropriate store staff know how to process a WIC 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 and must be available upon request

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**

Filing a complaint with the Washington WIC office of any WIC Customer or clinic concern or issue can be made by any store staff.

A WIC program complaint form is available online at:  
<https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/wic/make-complaint>.

Complaints are reviewed and addressed as appropriate. The submitter and subject of a complaint may be contacted by the WIC office to gather more information, offer assistance or propose a resolution.

## 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
- Expired foods available for purchase.
- Overcharging the WIC program

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 and maintain 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.
- **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 21 languages.

- **WIC Shopper Tool** ▶

This mobile app allows WIC participants to view their current available benefits. It also allows store staff to scan foods to verify if they're WIC approved and submit those products that don't scan as approved. This helps tag WIC approved foods on the shelf and identify foods that may need to be added to the Approved product list. WIC participants and store staff can use the WIC Shopper App is also an official source of WIC approved foods.



# QUALITY ASSURANCE

- **Order of Tender Cards ►**

The order of tender is important to follow when using multiple forms of payment in a WIC transaction.

- **WIC Vendor Supply Orders**

Request materials such as shopping guides, training tools, WIC Accepted Here signs, shelf tags, and more here:



- **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.