The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a food and nutrition program benefiting infants, children under age 5 and pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women with low to moderate incomes. The National WIC Program was established on September 26, 1972, following a nutrition survey that found anemia (low levels of iron in the blood) and inadequate growth to be common among American children.

This guide is intended for use by grocery store personnel who have a current vendor agreement with the WIC Program using WIC EBT. The information is useful primarily for grocery store personnel as it deals with contracting procedures, payment systems, and monitoring of WIC operations.

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(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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A special thanks to all store owners, managers and employees for your cooperation with the Texas WIC Program in helping to ensure WIC customers use their WIC EBT Smart Cards properly.

Your courtesy and helpfulness in assisting WIC customers are greatly appreciated. When the WIC customers use their EBT Smart Cards in your store, they receive nutritious foods and the WIC Program reimburses your store. Both the WIC customer and your store benefit.

~The Texas WIC Program Staff~
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WIC & Our Participants

WIC—(Women, Infants, & Children)
Offers nutrition assistance to pregnant, breastfeeding, postpartum women, dads, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk.

Who is eligible and who can apply?

- Pregnant women
- Women who are breastfeeding a baby under 1 year of age
- Women who have had a baby in the past six months
- Parents, step-parents, guardians, and foster parents of infants and children under the age of 5 can apply for their children
All Texas WIC vendors need to be in compliance with our **Minimum Stocking Requirement** of all WIC approved foods.

Per policy WV:10.0, all Texas WIC vendors must maintain **Minimum Stocking Requirements** at all times.

For more information on Minimum Stocking Requirements visit our training catalog and view the training New Vendor Training. Policy is also available as a resource on our website.
WIC Infant Formula

The State Agency provides the list of approved manufacturers on the web at http://www.dshs.texas.gov/wich/vo/ApprovedDistributors.aspx

This list is updated and posted on the website October 1\textsuperscript{st} and is effective through September 30\textsuperscript{th} of each year.

When it comes to ordering formula, vendors must select from an approved list of manufacturers. The State Agency provides the list of approved manufacturers on the web at http://www.dshs.texas.gov/wich/vo/ApprovedDistributors.aspx

This list is updated and posted on the website October 1\textsuperscript{st} and is effective through September 30\textsuperscript{th} of each year.

For more information on Infant formula please visit our training catalog and view the training New Vendor Training. Policy is also available as a resource on our website.
Incentive Items

WIC authorized vendors cannot offer incentive items to WIC customers that are not offered to non-WIC customers. Offering incentive items solely to WIC participants is prohibited by Federal WIC regulations.

Please see WIC policy WV:09.0 on the requirements for incentive items.

For more information on Incentive Items please visit our training catalog and view the training New Vendor Training. Policy is also available as a resource on our website.
WIC EBT

It's important for cashiers to know how to do a WIC EBT transaction. Remember it is a chip card and needs to be inserted not swiped.

Once you understand the EBT system, you’ll be able to help your WIC participant have a smooth checkout and avoid delays at the register.

The EBT system is made up of several important pieces:

- The WIC Redemption Path
- The Electronic Cash Register (ECR)
- The Authorized Product List, and
- The Hot Card List
EBT System Claims Process

How does a WIC vendor submit claims in order to get paid for the WIC food items that WIC participants have purchased? After a WIC sale is completed in the store lane, that sale is automatically stored (“bundled”) in a claim file by the store’s cash register system and automatically submitted to the State for payment electronically. The claim file is normally submitted at a pre-determined time of day, directly by the store’s cash register system, to the State’s claims server. The State’s claims server performs certain edits and verifications on the claim file to ensure its validity and integrity.

At the same time that the vendor’s claim is submitted to the State, the vendor’s system also downloads the current authorized product list, the hot-card list for EBT cards reported as lost or stolen, and the auto-reconciliation file (“ARF”), which tells the vendor what they will be paid for the claim submitted the day before. Following the edits/verifications, the State’s server forwards payment directly to the vendor’s bank account through the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts’ payment system. Separately, the next time that same vendor’s system connects to the State, the State downloads an auto-reconciliation file (ARF) that advises the vendor of the specific amount of the claim paid, if there was any part of the claim not paid, and/or the reason for any non-payment.

These claims transactions are all handled electronically without human intervention. How often a vendor is paid depends on how often a vendor submits a claim – but typically one claim is submitted per day. Final payment to the vendor is typically completed within 3-5 days.

Please see the WIC Vendor Training in the online training catalogue for more details regarding the EBT system and claims.
WIC Sanctions

Texas WIC is a federally funded program and there are strict guidelines that need to be met by both Texas WIC and Texas WIC vendors. It is important to ensure vendors are in compliance with every WIC rule and regulation. By your contract your store is subject to be monitored at any time during your contract period.

**Onsite Evaluation** is performed as part of the initial application process and your store is given two attempts to pass. This evaluation is performed by the local agency WIC staff in your area or by the State Agency staff. This evaluation will determine if your store will be allowed onto the program to accept WIC. Minimum stocking, expired foods, proper labeling and prices are part of the Onsite Evaluation. If the evaluator identifies one or multiple issues while performing the evaluation, then an F (finding) or O (observation) will be placed in the corresponding section. The difference between an Observation and a Finding is risk (Table 1). A Finding poses a higher risk than an Observation. Observations indicate a deficiency in the operation of a store. Uncorrected Observations are a sign of systemic process weakness and rise to the level of Finding. Findings poses a higher risk to WIC participants, such as but not limited to, the inability to access WIC foods or the sale of expired infant foods, formula or cereal. A Finding at an initial onsite evaluation will trigger a second evaluation. A Finding at a second evaluation triggers an automatic disqualification. As a best practice, the State encourages a store manager walk the store with the evaluator during the evaluation. One thing to note is that the evaluator is checking your prices of some WIC items by using a training card, so please ensure that your staff knows how to place the register in training mode.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Finding (F)</th>
<th>Observation (O)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stock</strong></td>
<td>Inadequate stock in store</td>
<td>Inadequate stock on shelves, replaced on request, minimum stock confirmed prior to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expired</strong></td>
<td>Infant &amp; baby cereal, formula</td>
<td>All other foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pricing</strong></td>
<td>Exceeded NTE on both 1st and</td>
<td>Exceeded NTE on 1 evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labeling</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A food category has some but not all of the food items la-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An **In-store Review** occurs after your onsite evaluation. If you are a brand new account, you’ll have your first store review after six months of passing your onsite evaluation. Existing accounts could receive an In-store Review at any time after passing the onsite evaluation. This type of review is performed by our Office of Inspector General, Monitoring Oversight group or your local agency clinic staff. As a best practice, the State encourages a store manager walk the store with the reviewer but is not required. Upon completion, the reviewer will ask the manager to sign off on the report.

**Compliance buys** are very similar to a “secret shopper”. These evaluations are performed by the Office of Inspector General and Monitoring Oversight group. They will come in dressed as a regular shopper, act like a regular shopper and check out like a regular WIC shopper. Anything found during these compliance buys are sent to the corporate office after the evaluation is complete. As the auditor shops, they are checking posted prices, correct labeling and no unauthorized WIC signage being used. Upon returning, the auditor generates a letter and submits to your store's designated compliance person. The store always receives a letter indicating the results after activities have been conducted at the store. IG and the State monitoring group may conduct an invoice audit based on what they find in the compliance buy. For more information, please attend New Vendor Training. Policy is also available as a resource on our website.
Vendor Complaint Process

Should there be any problems with customers behaving badly, you may call 1-800-252-9629. WIC also receives and processes all complaints against vendors from the WIC participants.
Shopping Guide

This is the Texas WIC Approved Foods Shopping Guide. You may be familiar with this guide and may have even seen this at your register. If you do not have one at the register or the one there is outdated, please reach out to us to order some for your store free of charge. Just use the link provided on the screen.

To place an order visit http://dshs.texas.gov/wichd/vo/request-materials.aspx
Shopping Guide

These are the three types of food categories found in the Shopping Guide

Least Expensive Brand (LEB)

Choose Any Brand

Choose These Brands

Each with their own instructions and criteria for shopping.
Shopping Guide

Least Expensive Brand (LEB)

The First group of food categories in the shopping guide is the Least Expensive Brand WIC foods. The Least Expensive Brand food categories are the items that must be labeled by a pink WIC label. *Pink* labels indicate the item is the LEB (Least Expensive Brand) the store has declared as their WIC item. More importantly, most WIC participants are looking for the pink label as this directs WIC participants to LEBs with minimal effort.

When referencing the Approved foods shopping guide, the Pink label next to a food category indicates that it’s an LEB category. Take note that there is no specific brand mentioned as each store is responsible for declaring and then labeling their choice of LEBs. Failure to label these items properly could result in a finding when your store is monitored.

*WIC* Approved Item

Look for the Pink WIC Sticker

**Children 1 Year Old** - whole milk - no buttermilk

- 1 quart (945 mL)
- 1/2 gallon (1.89 L)
- 1 gallon (3.78 L)

**Children 2 to 5 Years Old & Women** - fat-free, low-fat (1/2% & 1%) & buttermilk

- 1 quart (945 mL)
- 1/2 gallon (1.89 L)
- 1 gallon (3.78 L)

**Nonfat & low-fat buttermilk:**

- 1/2 gallon (1.89 L)
- Carton or plastic container

**NOT WIC APPROVED:** Calcium-fortified, high-protein, organic, flavored milk (such as chocolate), milk with DHA or omega-3, rice milk, or goat’s milk.
What do you do for a WIC participant if an LEB is out of stock?

Sell the participant the next Least Expensive Brand available!

This is a question commonly missed by our stores and it is extremely important to know how to assist a WIC participant when this occurs.

Reaching out for assistance from management may be necessary when determining the next least expensive brand.
The second group of food categories found in the Shopping guide allows you to Choose ANY Brand WIC foods. These are WIC approved items that are NOT specific to a brand. Participants may select ANY brand that fits the size, weight, count, and packaging requirements. This includes: Eggs, Peanut Butter, Tuna, Fresh/Frozen Fruits & Vegetables, Baby Foods.

Since these items are not required by the state to be labeled, it’s extremely important that you are able to read the Shopping Guide when determining if an item should be WIC Approved or not.
Choose These Brands

The third group of food categories are the Choose THESE Brands. These are WIC approved items that are specific to a brand based on the size and weight of the item. Choose these Brands include: Yogurt, Oatmeal, Pasta, Canned Beans, and Breakfast Cereal.

While these are not required to be labeled, it is important to familiarize ourselves with the brands and sizes described in the shopping guide.
Contract Formula

Similac Advance
Powder and Concentrate

Similac Soy Isomil
Powder and Concentrate

In the shopping guide provided to WIC participants you will find an insert that indicates the WIC approved formulas. The Texas WIC program has contracted with two manufacturers of infant formula. These formulas are the primary authorized formulas for the WIC program.

The current contract formulas are: Similac Advance (powder and concentrate) and Similac Soy Isomil (powder and concentrate).
All formulas require a prescription from a WIC Clinic Dietician.

Baby Formula is at times the most difficult category for a store to maintain WIC stocking requirements. The current minimum stocking requirements for formula are seven for concentrate and nine for milk based powder.

Minimum Stocking Requirements:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Formula</th>
<th>Powder</th>
<th>Concentrate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similac Advance</td>
<td>9 cans</td>
<td>7 cans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similac Soy Isomil</td>
<td>9 cans</td>
<td>7 cans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contract Formula

Formula Exchanges

When a WIC participant requests an exchange for WIC tendered formula, it’s extremely important to know the basics. Baby formula is prescribed to WIC participants and cannot be exchanged at the store unless the item is damaged, defective, or expired and the participant is requesting the same one. Any request for another type of formula does not fit the prescription provided by the clinic. If a participant wants a different prescription, they will need to refer to the clinic.

Looking at example 1, A participant has purchased Similac Soy Isomil with WIC benefits but found the can is expired. They request an exchange for the exact same item, so this can be processed at the store. In example 2 we see a participant that has the same expired Similac Soy Isomil but is requesting an exchange for a different formula. This cannot be done at the store and the participant would need to refer to the WIC clinic for a change to their prescription.
WIC EBT Smart Card

This is a WIC card. At one time, WIC participants and cashiers were required to complete WIC transactions using paper vouchers (much like a check). Now, WIC benefits are loaded onto an EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) Chip Card, more like the debit cards used today by most Americans.

It’s worth pointing out that this allows the cashier to process the transaction without stating aloud that it is a WIC purchase, and even more so allows the participant to shop like every other customer, even with coupons!

If you happen to find a WIC EBT card or a customer leaves their WIC EBT card in the store, give the card to a manager.
Let’s look at a basic WIC transaction. There are three receipts once completed. The first two, Beginning Balance and Benefits Utilized (Or WIC Foods Purchased) receipts print after all items have been scanned and totaled, these receipts allow the participant a moment to review what is not covered by their benefits if any items scanned as “non-WIC”.

This is not always something the reader displays to the participant, so it’s our job as a cashier to provide these slips to the WIC participant after totaling WIC items and before completing the transaction.

After providing the participant with the fist two slips, The register will be waiting for the participant to “Accept” the WIC total on the card reader at this point.

The Ending Balance Receipt shown here, will print out once the participant presses the “accept” button to finalize the WIC tender.

At this point the benefits have not been taken off the card and cannot be put back. Any items that were debited must be given to the participant.
WIC EBT Smart Card

There is a new and exciting feature that’s been added to the WIC EBT process and it’s called Split Tender. The intention of Split tender is to allow WIC participants use of their full benefits when purchasing CVB or Cash Value Benefit items such as fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables.

For example: A WIC participant would like to purchase a head of lettuce priced at $2.99 but only has $2.00 remaining in CVB on their EBT card. In the past, this item would not scan as part of the WIC total and the full amount of $2.99 would be included in the Non-WIC total. With Split-Tender the WIC participant will be able to use the remaining $2.00 towards the head of lettuce and the remaining amount of $0.99 would move to the Non-WIC total. Ultimately allowing the participant to “split” the cost of the lettuce between WIC benefits and an alternate tender.

Split Tender

Before Split-Tender

Lettuce $2.99  $2.00 CVB Remaining  $2.99 would be Non-WIC

With Split-Tender

Lettuce $2.99  $2.00 CVB Remaining  $0.99 would be Non-WIC

Split-tender capability is required Oct. 1, 2017 for existing Accounts and at the time of application for new Accounts and Outlets.

Split-tender capability was required effective Oct. 1, 2017 for existing Accounts, and at the time of application for new Accounts and Outlets.
WIC EBT Smart Card

It’s extremely important to remind every WIC participant to leave the chip card in the reader until it says to remove it. If the chip card is removed too soon, an error may occur known as a “card wipe”. This unfortunately removes all benefits from the card!

If this happens, you will need to reach out to a manager. Once the manager confirms the card has been wiped, they will direct the participant back to the clinic to have their benefits restored.

There is not a process that can be done at the store to correct this.
WIC Foods Not Scanning

Have you ever had a WIC customer come to the register and some of their food items would not scan as WIC approved?

This happens for one of three reasons: It could be that the item is not WIC approved, it could be that the participant does not have the benefits to pay for the item, or it could even mean that the item is approved, but has not been added to the system as a WIC item.
WIC Foods Not Scanning

What should I do if an item is not scanning as “WIC Approved”?

Just remember the three reasons and apply these steps.

1. **Shopping Guide**
   Is the item WIC approved?

2. **Beginning Balance**
   Are the benefits there?

3. **Contact Manager**
   The item should scan.

**Step 1.** The product may not be approved. Check the WIC Approved foods Shopping guide to determine if the item is approved by WIC.

**Step 2.** The Participant may not have the benefits left for the purchase. Check participant’s WIC balance slip (Beginning balance slip) to see if the card has the benefits remaining for the purchase.

**Step 3.** If you have checked the first two steps and it appears that the item should in fact scan as WIC Approved, then reach out to a manager and the UPC/POS team will be contacted to have the item added to the approved list.
If it has been confirmed that an item should be approved but is not scanning as a WIC approved item, management should email the WIC office to have the item added to the Approved Products List or (APL). The email must include a clear picture of the label, a clear picture of the UPC, and a clear picture of the ingredients found on the item. If the item is approved, an email will be sent to your store confirming that the item has been entered into the Approved Products List and that there is a three day delay before the item will scan as WIC approved.
State Contact Information

Questions and Materials Requests:

WICVendorInfo@HHCS.state.tx.us

Or

1-800-252-9629

For more WIC Training go to:

https://www.dshs.texas.gov/wichd

On the left side of the page <Click> Training,

Then <Click> Vendor Training

Contract Support: WICVendorRelations@hhsc.state.tx.us

Training Support: WICVendorInfo@hhsc.state.tx.us

LEB Support: WICLEB@hhsc.state.tx.us

EBT Support: WICEBTSupport@hhsc.state.tx.us

Materials Ordering: http://www.dshs.texas.gov/wichd/

UPC Submission: WICUPC@hhsc.state.tx.us