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VENDOR NEWS

Your source for State of Alaska WIC program news related to vendor management. In this newsletter you will find important and useful information affecting vendor agreements with the WIC program. *Enjoy!*

REQUIRED Training

At least one manager or training supervisor at each store must attend ANNUAL TRAINING at one of the following teleconferences. This is a requirement of your vendor agreement.!

Rural & Small Stores

FEB 12 — February 12, 10:00am AKST

Urban & Large Stores

FEB 14 — February 14, 10:00am AKST

Last Chance - All vendors

FEB 21 — February 21, 10:00am AKST

Call: 1-800-281-5354
Passcode: 646725

eWIC Update

Alaska WIC is continuing work toward our transition to electronic benefits for WIC. An updated schedule for the pilot and rollout of the changes is shown below. We will continue to provide updates and training as more information becomes available.

eWIC Implementation	Region	Date
PILOT REGION 1	Northern Southeast Alaska	Feb 2019
PILOT REGION 2	Southern Southeast Alaska	March 2019
ROLLOUT REGION 1	Anchorage, Mat-Su Valley, Fairbanks, Interior	June 2019
ROLLOUT REGION 2	Kenai, Kodiak, Valdez-Cordova	July 2019
ROLLOUT REGION 3	North Slope, Seward Peninsula, Northwest Arctic	July 2019
ROLLOUT REGION 4	Bethel, Kusilvak, Bristol Bay, Aleutians-Pribilofs	August 2019

Vendor Stamps

Check your vendor stamp! Are you getting a clearly printed number when you use your vendor stamp? Are you getting checks returned for missing, altered, or unreadable vendor stamp?

You need a working vendor stamp and you need to use it! If your stamp is not printing clearly, contact the Vendor Management Unit to order a new one. It will take up to two weeks for you to receive a replacement stamp from us, so don't wait till it's completely unreadable. It is **never** allowed to write in your vendor number or to try to darken the ink with a pen.

Before depositing checks, make sure you have stamped each one with your vendor stamp in the appropriate box to ensure that your WIC checks won't be rejected for this very simple requirement.

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Invalid WIC Checks

In December 2017, a small number of misprinted checks were issued to WIC participants and a few were presented at stores. The checks were missing the "MICR" line (across the bottom with the State's banking numbers,) as well as missing a place for the participant to sign. On the left side of the check, the amount of each food item the participant could purchase was missing.

These checks could not be validly used at the store or processed by the bank. Please train cashiers to reject incomplete checks that are missing portions of the top, bottom, right, or left in the unlikely event that checks that misprinted checks are issued to participants.

If any unusual WIC checks are presented at your store., refer the participant to their clinic to request new checks. Make a copy of the problem check, or note all of its irregularities. Contact the Vendor Management Unit immediately.

WIC Vendor Authorization 2018-2021

- All current Alaska WIC vendor authorizations will expire on September 30, 2018.
- Every WIC vendor will be required to reapply and be reauthorized for the period October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2021.

The vendor reapplication packet will be distributed on about July 1, 2018, and complete applications will need to be received in the State WIC Office no later than August 20, 2018.

Under federal regulations, a State may authorize WIC vendors for a period of no more than three years. Alaska has chosen to authorize vendors for the maximum period allowed. For any vendor authorized during the three-year cycle, the vendor agreement expires in the last date of the cycle. Because the 2015 - 2018 vendor agreement expires on September 30, any vendor who does not have a fully approved application and signed vendor agreement in place on October 1, 2018 will no longer be authorized. A vendor whose agreement expires without renewal may reapply for authorization during the next open enrollment period for new vendors. New vendor applications will not be accepted during the reauthorization process, which is a streamlined application process for currently authorized WIC vendors.

New Vendors 2018

The Alaska WIC Program accepts applications for *NEW* WIC authorization during an Open Enrollment period from January 1 – March 31 each year. Application materials and guidance for 2018 have been posted on the Alaska WIC website at http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/nutri/wic/vendors/Vendor-Authorization.aspx.

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COMING SOON: Label Changes

Gerber has announced the following label changes for 2018.

Current Graphics	New Graphics – Starting May 2018

For illustration purposes only

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Does Shape Matter for Whole Wheat Pasta?

We often get questions from store personnel about whole wheat pasta – here's the scoop!

By regulation, allowed whole wheat pastas MUST be:

- 100 percent whole wheat (no other grains or additives).
- in a 16 oz package.
- specifically listed by **brand** on the state's food list.

Alaska has authorized the following brands of whole wheat pastas, as pictured in the WIC Allowed Food List: O Organics, Westbrae natural, Bella Terra, DeLallo, Simple Truth Organic, Hodgson Mill, Racconto, Kroger, and Bionaturae. No other whole wheat pasta brands or other pastas may be purchased with WIC checks at this time.

Any pasta **shape** is allowed – 100 percent whole wheat spaghetti, rotini, lasagna, penne, orzo, etc. are all allowed in any of the brands on the list.

Welcome to our new and returning WIC staff!

Abigail Sexton came on board on December 12. Abi has a background in commercial banking and public assistance. She will be the lead for monitoring and compliance, price surveys, and collections., as well as assisting with complaints, routine vendor issues, and special projects.

Erin Fahsholtz rejoined our WIC staff on December 18th (Hooray!) She will be the lead staff person for banking issues, the Mail-Out Vendor Program, and the Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs, as well as assisting with compliance oversight, price surveys, complaint resolution and other tasks.

Contact the WIC Vendor Unit

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