

# Alaska WIC Vendor Newsletter



## Vendor Teleconferences—Please Participate!

- > Wednesday, April 24th, 9:30a.m –"A" + "B" Stores
- > Wednesday, April 24th, 1:30p.m –"C" Stores
- > Call-in: 1-800-281-5354 Code: 259225

We need to hear your issues and concerns to make this program work for you!



## SPIRIT Information System for WIC

The Alaska WIC Program serves more than 24,000 participants across Alaska. For many years, we have used an automated management system, AKWIC, to assist in the delivery of services. AKWIC "talks" electronically to the bank that processes WIC checks, which allows us to track and research WIC transactions.

In September 2013, we will begin a transition to the WIC SPIRIT management information system, with more modern technology that will help WIC to better serve participants. When we transfer to SPIRIT, our new contract with Solutran, Inc., will take effect and Solutran will begin processing Alaska's WIC checks. Key Bank will continue to process checks from the AKWIC system until the transition is complete. SPIRIT is already in use by WIC programs in five states and a consortium of 13 tribal organizations. Solutran provides WIC check processing services for 58 state and tribal WIC programs. While these systems are new to Alaska, they have been tested and are in use in many areas of the United States and its territories.

### How will this affect you as an Alaska WIC vendor?

- The new WIC check will have a different design and color. It will be issued from a Solutran bank account rather than from the State treasury.
- The most recent price sheet data will be used to calculate the maximum allowable reimbursement (MAR) for the food listed on the check. Under the AKWIC system, the not-to-exceed (NTE) amount is calculated based on a rolling average of check redemption amounts for a set period. The new system is expected to reduce the number of checks returned for exceeding the allowed amount for a food package.
- During the transition, checks from both systems will be in circulation until the last checks issued under AKWIC have been used by participants. You will be receiving both types of checks, and so long as they are within the valid date range when presented to the cashier, they should be accepted and deposited as usual.

### Here's what won't change:

- There will be no change to the participants' food benefits; participants will continue to purchase the food items listed on their checks.
- There will be no change to WIC procedures at the cash register, or for deposit and redemption of WIC checks.
- You will not need to open a new bank account or provide any new banking information. Your banking information will be transferred electronically to SPIRIT.

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## Spring 2013 Price Sheets

It's that time again! Spring 2013 Price Sheets will be sent to vendors mid-April for completion. Based on input from you we've made some adjustments to make the Spring Price Sheet more user-friendly.

Look for the following on the Spring Price Sheet:

- Updated quick reference instructions
- Items requiring an inventory count all grouped together at the first half of the price sheet
- Fewer items requiring inventory counts

This year the WIC staff **will not review any incomplete price sheets**. If we receive an incomplete price sheet we will return it without review to your store for completion. If it is not completed and returned to the WIC office by the deadline your store will be assigned penalty points.

Tips for a successful price sheet:

1. Read and follow the instructions carefully!
2. Review your price sheet for completeness before submitting it.
3. Pay attention to the deadline to avoid the assignment of penalty points for a price sheet submitted late.
4. Keep a copy for your records.
5. Call the WIC office at 907/465-3100 with any questions, we're happy to help!



### Stale-Dated WIC Checks

As every store manager, cashier, and bookkeeper should know, a WIC check has a first date to use and a last date to use.

Please make sure that your cashiers are checking this essential information before starting the transaction. Checks accepted outside of the valid dates cannot be reimbursed.

### Micr Line Issues

Periodically WIC checks may be printed with problems on the micr line. Please contact the State Vendor Unit right away so we can identify those checks and ensure vendors are paid correctly.

WIC checks are printed using special magnetic ink for the number codes along the bottom of the check; that coding is called the "MICR line." Occasionally, an incomplete line of coding is printed, and these checks are rejected by the bank.

Please make sure your bookkeeper looks for any MICR line problems before making a deposit. If you find a problem, call the Vendor Unit so we can make sure you get reimbursed. If your cashier notices that the MICR line is missing, you do not have to accept the WIC check. Ask the participant to call their clinic for assistance.

## WIC Food List/Participant ID Folder

The complete Food List/Participant ID Folder must be presented by the participant at the cash register.

Many of the WIC List/Participant ID Folders that were provided to participants and vendors last November are losing their staples. Please encourage clients to ask for a new folder if theirs is falling apart.

Cashiers must compare the signature on the food list with the signature on the WIC check. If a proxy's signature does not appear on the food list they cannot cash the WIC check.

Vendors may not ask individuals to show any other identification when cashing a WIC warrant. Contact the Vendor Unit if your store needs additional food lists.



### WIC Product Changes or Clarifications

- Baby food varieties in squeezable pouches are not currently WIC authorized.
- Juicy Juice (shelf stable) concentrates have been discontinued by Nestle and will not be available for order on or before July 1, 2013. Welch's 100% pourable concentrate (non-frozen) 11.5 oz size will be the only shelf stable juice concentrate still available for WIC. All other 11.5 or 12 oz juice brands must be one of the WIC approved frozen juice concentrates.
- V-8 Fusion juices are not allowed for WIC.
- Gerber is changing the packaging for infant cereal from cardboard to plastic. Either type of container is allowed in the 8 oz or 16 oz size.

### Tuna Recall

Bumble Bee Foods has expanded its recall on specific codes of 5 oz cans of Chunk White Albacore and Chunk Light Tuna products. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation confirms that the products were distributed in Alaska. To date, no illnesses have been reported in Alaska or elsewhere.

Can Lot Codes are listed on the FDA web site at this address:

<http://www.fda.gov/Safety/Recalls/ucm342851.htm?source=govdelivery>



## Health and Social Services

Alaska WIC Program  
Div. of Public Assistance  
P.O. Box 110612  
Juneau, AK 99811

Phone: 907-465-3100  
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Please post this newsletter  
for your staff to read.

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### Importance of Vendor Teleconferences

After each Alaska WIC Vendor Newsletter goes out the Vendor Unit holds a vendor teleconference to discuss the items in the newsletter, provide clarification if needed, and answer any of your questions.

We also want to hear from you about what works in the WIC Program and any improvements to that would help you as a vendor. We know that being a WIC vendor presents certain challenges and we want to use these teleconferences to talk about ways we could minimize them.

**We want to hear from YOU!**

Please see the front page of this newsletter for the dates and times of our next vendor teleconferences.

If you are unable to participate in the teleconference for your store type (A, B or C) please call in at the other time.

### Contacting the WIC Vendor Unit

The Vendor Unit will provide assistance to vendors at any time. For questions or complaints, please contact us and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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