

Alaska WIC Vendor Newsletter

Business Tagline or Motto

State of Alaska

Alaska WIC Program
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Please post this newsletter
for your staff to read.



Remember to stock fresh fruits and veggies!

PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

The purpose of the WIC Program is to provide supplemental foods and nutrition education through payment of cash grants to State agencies that administer the program through local agencies at no cost to eligible persons. The Program shall serve as an adjunct to good health care during critical times of growth and development in order to prevent the occurrence of health problems, including drug and other harmful substance abuse, and to improve the health status of these persons. The program shall be supplementary to the Food Stamp Program; any problem under which foods are distributed to needy families in lieu of food stamps; and receipt of food or meals from soup kitchens, or shelters, or other forms of emergency food assistance.

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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Women, Infants & Children

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WIC News in Brief

- > Spring Vendor Teleconference May 8, 9:30a.m.
Call-in: 1-800-281-5354 Code: 259225
- > Electronic option for price sheets in Spring 2012
- > All vendors must be reauthorized in Fall 2012
- > New vendor peer groups to take effect July 1

Food Changes & Clarifications

Brown rice— any 16 oz. brown rice is allowed, including organic.

Low-fat evaporated milk— includes fat-free, 1%, and 2%. Vendors must carry a minimum amount of whole and a minimum amount of any low-fat evaporated milk.

Tree-Top Apple Juice blend, made from three types of 100% apple juice, is allowed.

Kraft American/Kraft American Deluxe have been discontinued.

Kraft Deluxe Singles is the only authorized American cheese at the present time

Infant Fruits & vegetables— multiple whole fruits and/or multiple whole vegetables are allowed. Fruit medleys without added sugars are allowed. Added vitamin C and ascorbic acid are allowed additives, but added rice, cereal, salt, sugar, etc. are not.

Refrigerated juices are not allowed. Frozen concentrates are allowed.

Tortillas - both corn and wheat tortillas are allowed.

Buttermilk— may be substituted for all or part of the milk listed on a warrant.

Canned beans—any brand of 15–16 oz. is allowed,.

8th Continent Soy Beverage— in the half-gallon size may be substituted for two quarts of other soy beverages.

Exemptions—If you believe an exemption from carrying a specific food is needed, contact the Vendor Unit or the Local Agency to discuss. The Local Agency must agree that the food is not prescribed in your community. Local Agencies may agree to a reduction in the minimum amount required to be carried by a vendor.

Substitutions—Foods that may be substituted are described on the Food List. No other substitutions are allowed.

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Spring 2012 Price Sheets

USDA requires state WIC programs to collect price information from vendors at least twice each year. Our Spring 2012 price sheet and minimum stock inventory was sent to all vendors on April 24. Your price sheet must be returned or postmarked by June 6.

This spring, for the first time, price sheets may be filled out in Microsoft Excel and submitted by email. (Paper copies will also be accepted.) We have also made changes to the way some of the prices to be reported. For more details, see page 3.



Vendor Peer Groups Re-evaluated—Changes Effective July 1

USDA requires each state WIC agency to establish a vendor peer group system. This is a means of organizing vendors into groups based on at least two criteria, one of which must be a geographic factor, to help agencies keep costs in check. Vendors must stay within their peer group's price averages that set a Not to Exceed (NTE) Amount for each food item. The prices that vendors charge for WIC foods should be more similar within each group than between groups.

State WIC agencies are required to evaluate appropriateness of

their peer groups at least every three years.

WIC first established peer groups in 2006, and they were reviewed, but not changed, in 2009. The current review started in January 2012, and, after an analysis that included geographic region, method of delivery, population size, total retail and food sales, and federal economic data, changes were recommended.

A draft report will be available later this spring for your comments. The new peer group structure will take effect on July 1, 2012.



The SPIRIT system will use price sheet data to set NTEs twice yearly, rather than using rolling averages of redeemed WIC warrants. We expect the new peer groups and consistent NTE amounts to help vendors avoid returned checks.

Alaska WIC Transitioning to SPIRIT

The Alaska WIC Program is replacing the AKWIC management information system with SPIRIT, a state-of-the-art information system for WIC programs. SPIRIT (Successful Partners in Reaching Innovative Technology) is used by Arkansas, Minnesota, Missouri and Montana, and soon, Maine and Montana. The Chickasaw Nation adminis-

ters SPIRIT for a consortium of 13 Indian tribes in Oklahoma and New Mexico.

Alaska WIC will test the use of SPIRIT in June-October 2012, and begin a phased implementation after testing is complete. SPIRIT will primarily track client information, but it will also have vendor func-

tions. WIC checks with participants' food prescriptions will be printed out of SPIRIT, and the system will perform the banking reconciliation and vendor information tracking as well. The most noticeable differences for vendors will include a change in the appearance of checks, and new procedures for accepting the checks.

Lost WIC warrants are not replaced by the Program. If you find an unused warrant, please contact the Vendor Unit so we can notify the participant.

Vendor Contract Renewal

WIC vendors are authorized on a three-year cycle, and 2012 is a vendor contract renewal year. An application packet will be mailed to all current vendors on July 15.

The due date for the completed and signed application will be August 31.

Vendors seeking reauthorization

are not required to submit a price sheet or undergo pre-authorization review by a WIC Local Agency.

A new vendor agreement will be included in the packet, and vendors are encouraged to return the agreement with the application. After the application has been approved, the

new vendor agreement will be signed by the WIC Program Director and returned to the vendor. Your vendor number and stamp will not change.



Dates to Remember

May 8, 2012—Quarterly Vendor Teleconference 9:30a.m.

Call in with your questions or issues about WIC! 1-800-281-5354 Code: 259225.

June 6, 2012—Last date for postmark or email return of Spring Price Sheet



Price Sheet Changes

You will notice some changes to the price sheet collection procedures and to the price sheet itself. This price sheet is 12 pages, rather than 22. This spring, for the first time, we are offering an electronic price sheet for vendors with access to email and Microsoft Excel. The electronic version includes tools like pop-up instructions for each item and a minimum stock calculator that will tally your

entries by food category. However, you may choose to submit a paper price sheet.

We are collecting some price information differently from the way we have in the past. For example, for many products, we are asking for the price of only the highest-cost item in that category, rather than the price of each brand that you carry. For whole grains and cereal, you will

need to provide the price of the highest cost-per-ounce WIC approved product only. A form is included to report any food items that are on order, to reduce the faxed requests for that information.

If you have any questions about the price sheets, please call the Vendor Unit.

Key Bank

recommends that black ink be used to sign, date, and fill in the purchase totals on warrants - black is the best color for bank imaging machines to read.

Vendor Trainings 2012

Every authorized WIC vendor must participate in interactive training at least once every three years. The Vendor Unit provides some of this training during quarterly teleconferences (attendance is recorded). A substantial amount of training is given by Local Agencies during monitoring visits. In 2012, the Vendor Unit will offer vendor training in Anchorage, Fair-

banks, Kenai, and the Mat-Su Valley. Vendors will be contacted when training is scheduled in your area. We hope to provide training in rural hubs in the future.

MICR Line Warning

Please remind cashiers to make sure that the MICR (bank routing information)

line is printed and complete on the bottom of each WIC check. Checks that are missing the MICR line are generally rejected by the banking system. You may refuse to accept the check, and ask the participant to get a replacement from their clinic. Please notify the WIC Vendor Unit so we can alert the clinic that they have a printer problem.

