

Alaska WIC Vendor Newsletter

Vendor Teleconferences—Please Participate !

- > Tuesday, January 22, 9:00a.m.—"A" Stores
- > Wednesday, January 23, 9:00a.m.—"B" Stores
- > Call-in: 1-800-281-5354 Code: 259225

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



Women, Infants & Children

The New Food List / Participant ID Folder

WIC participants may already be showing up at your stores with the new Food List / ID booklet. The booklet features easy-to-use stepped pages and larger images of WIC-eligible food items.



The booklet is the only form of ID for participants to whom they've been issued - It is expected that all WIC participants will have the booklets by March 1, 2013; all use of photo IDs for WIC will end on that date. Check-out procedures using the new Food List / ID include:

- **Group WIC items by WIC check at the register. Ask for the WIC shopper's Food List / ID Folder.**
- **Ring up all WIC items and write the total on the WIC check. Hand the check to the WIC shopper as usual for their signature.**
- **Compare the signature to the participant / alternate's signature(s) inside the back cover of the new food list booklet.**
- **Proceed with the transaction as usual. Remember to provide a cash reg-**

Inside this issue:

The New Food List	1
Concentrate vs. Powder	2
Price Sheet Reminders	2
Lost & Found Checks	2
WIC Changes in 2013	3
Vendor Unit Staff	4



LOST CHECKS

If you find any WIC checks in your store, please contact the WIC Vendor Unit immediately!

We will attempt to contact the participant so they can pick up the lost check(s) before they expire.

DO NOT SUBSTITUTE POWDERED FORMULA FOR CONCENTRATE

Under the minimum stocking requirements, small ("A" stores) and medium ("B" stores) are not required to stock infant formula concentrates. "C" stores are required to maintain stocks of some concentrates. Please advise cashiers that, if a program participant is shopping with a WIC check that lists a concentrated formula, **the participant may not substitute powdered formula for the concentrates**, under any circumstances.

Local Agency staff are instructed to contact vendors before writing concentrate prescriptions to see if the store can supply a participant's needs (generally 31 cans of concentrated formula per month per participant.)

Make sure your cashiers read the full description on formula checks to ensure that the correct product is purchased. A sales error in providing powder for concentrate is likely to result in a sale that exceeds the maximum allowed reimbursement (MAR) for the formula. Additionally, the participant may receive program sanctions for the substitution, including being required to reimburse the WIC Program for the overage.

If a participant appears with a WIC check for concentrated formula and the store does not have stock to fill it, please ask the shopper to call their Local Agency staff for assistance in getting an appropriate infant formula for their child.

Please contact the vendor Unit at 907/465-3100 at any time, if you have a question.

REJECTION OF MISSREAD VALID CHECKS

Due to a banking computer glitch some WIC warrants may have been rejected in error with the following code: ADDITIONAL PRESENT NOT ALLOWED or NO MATCH ON FILE/MISSREAD

If you had valid checks rejected for either of these reasons, please fax a copy of your checks to Alice Albrecht at (907) 465-3416, so we can resolve any payment issues.

Price Sheets Are Important Program Requirements!

All State WIC agencies are required by federal regulation to collect shelf prices for WIC foods at least twice each year. Alaska is also required to request inventory figures, due to USDA's concerns that minimum stocks are not maintained by Alaska's WIC vendors. The purpose of the WIC Program is to provide supplemental food to women, infants, and children who are in need in our state. Keeping sufficient WIC food items on store shelves every day is the critical component of a vendor's authorization.

The Vendor Unit has been working to relieve some of the reporting burden for vendors, while maintaining our own compliance with federal requirements. Below are some helpful reminders for the Spring 2013 price sheet:

- Read all instructions – they matter to your store!
- All information on the front page is required, including total sales.
- Prices are required for every item, even if the inventory amount is not required.
- If an inventory is blacked-out inventory, it is no required.
- Brands and flavors are required information, do not leave those boxes blank.
- If you do not have an item in stock, or if you have less than the minimum required, tell us. We may be able to give you an exemption for the item. If it needs to be ordered, list it on the order page.
- If you are unsure about your store's exemptions, contact the Vendor Unit.

If you have any questions regarding your price sheet, the WIC Vendor Unit is here to assist you; contact our office by email or phone. We are always trying to improve - please contact us with your suggestions.

WIC CHANGES IN 2013

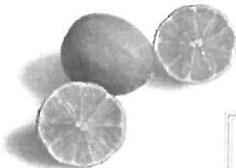
We wish all of our vendors a joyous New Year!

2013 will bring some changes to the Alaska WIC Program's vendor-related operations. We are working to make sure the changes are improvements for vendors. Here's what you can expect to see and how it is likely to affect you:

SPiRiT Management Information System (MIS):

SPiRiT is a client information system that will also manage our retailer functions. It will be phased into use starting in the spring 2013.

The biggest difference for vendors under the SPiRiT system is that we will change from calculating Not-to-Exceed (NTE) amounts based on a rolling average of WIC checks processed by the bank to calculating the NTE based on a formula using the average price per WIC food item as reported on vendor price sheets, by peer group. We expect this system to help provide a more predictable business environment for WIC vendors.



New WIC Check Processing Contract:

On December 1, 2012 the Alaska WIC Program started a new contract with Solutran, Inc. to process WIC checks after they are deposited in vendors' banks. Solutran is a payment processing firm based in Minneapolis, and they provide service to 58 other WIC programs.

During the transition from AKWIC to the SPiRiT system, Key Bank's check processing services will be phased out and Solutran's phased in. Although an Alaska WIC check will have a different look under the new system, the check processing procedures will be largely unchanged. However, since most WIC participants are issued checks for three months at a time, there will be a period of time when the "old" state warrants and the new checks are being redeemed at vendors. We will keep you up to date as changes are phased in.

WIC Vendor Monitoring:

Along with this newsletter, you should receive a revised Penalty and Sanction Schedule. Please review the schedule carefully, because we have made some significant changes. Category I program violations have state-determined penalties; in many cases, we reduced the penalty for a first violation to a warning letter. However, the program will more closely monitor vendors to make sure that WIC participants have access to their prescribed foods, and according to program rules. Category II violations are required by federal regulation for serious offenses against the program.

We thank you for your continuing support for healthy families in Alaska, and look forward to working with you in 2013.



State of Alaska

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

Phone: 907-465-3100
Fax: 907-465-3416
E-mail:



Please post this newsletter
for your staff to read.



Vendor Unit Staff

Gina Roust joined the WIC Vendor Unit as an Assistant Vendor Coordinator on October 25, replacing Eric Hunter, who left Alaska to pursue a graduate degree. Gina has a degree in cell biology and a strong interest in nutrition and fitness. She is the staff lead for price sheets, and monitoring and compliance. Along with Alice Albrecht, Gina will also assist vendors with questions or concerns about any other aspect of WIC. We're very excited to welcome Gina to our WIC vendor world.

Many of you met Chrissy McNally, a graduate student who worked as a temporary with the Vendor Unit last winter, and who returned in Fall 2012 to assist us with vendor reauthorizations, Fall Price Sheets, data analysis, and many other projects. Chrissy's last day with us is January 7, but we'll keep a chair warm just in case we can lure her back at another time. Thanks for all of your very hard work, Chrissy!

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.

Sandy Harbanuk
Vendor Coordinator
Sandra.harbanuk@alaska.gov
907/465-4704

Alice Albrecht
Assistant Vendor Coordinator
Alice.albrecht@alaska.gov
907/465-8630

Gina Roust
Assistant Vendor Coordinator
Gina.roust@alaska.gov
907/465-6399

