



Alaska WIC Vendor Newsletter

December 2015 — Volume 15, Issue 1

MANDATORY

Annual Training Teleconferences



C Stores

Tuesday
January 26th
10:00am
AKST



A & B Stores

Wednesday
January 27th
10:00am
AKST

Call:

1-800-281-5354

Passcode: 646725

Interactive vendor training is required by federal regulations. A manager or WIC trainer must attend one of the teleconferences.

PRICE SURVEYS: Price surveys will be distributed in mid-January, and will be due on February 16, 2016. We highly suggest you begin as soon as possible to allow time for corrections if needed. Price surveys require you to list your highest priced WIC approved item for each food category listed.

WIC EBT Coming To Alaska in 2017!

WIC participants will begin shopping with a WIC card instead of WIC checks in 2017! EBT will improve WIC shopping in several ways:

- No participant ID required
- System identifies WIC foods by UPC
- No writing sale date or sales total
- No participant signature required
- Vendor ID stamps no longer used
- Fewer cashier errors
- Participant may purchase all or part of their WIC foods during the store visit
- System prints benefits balance on register receipt

The U.S. Congress is requiring WIC benefits in all states to be issued and redeemed electronically by the year 2020. Alaska has teamed with seven other states in the Western States EBT Alliance (WSEA) to contract for electronic banking services. FIS, an international banking and payment processing company, has been selected to provide services for the Alaska WIC and SNAP (Food Stamps) programs. Alaska grocers are already experienced in the use of EBT for SNAP, and the transition to EBT for WIC is expected to be smooth. Planning for implementation of WIC EBT has begun. We expect to test the system in Juneau and Southeast Alaska in May-June 2017, and complete the transition statewide by November 1, 2017.

We will provide more detailed information for vendors as the planning progresses. We hope you will consider participating on a Vendor Advisory Committee to periodically review and provide feedback on the WIC EBT plans.



Vendor Reauthorizations 2015—2018

Thank you to all vendors who submitted a complete and timely application packet. The vendor reauthorization process for 2015 – 2018 has been completed. A revised Alaska WIC Vendor Manual will be mailed to all stores as soon as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS) has completed their review. The draft manual will be posted on the WIC website at <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/nutri/wic/default.aspx> by January 1, and we welcome your comments by mail or email.

Fruit and Vegetable Voucher (FVVs) Changes

In 2015, the Alaska WIC Program began issuing FVVs to infants over the age of 9 months. The infant FVVs may be used for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables only. Each eligible infant receives one FVV per month, for \$4.00 or \$8.00 of fresh produce. The \$4.00 FVVs may not be used to purchase jars of baby food, or canned or frozen fruits or vegetables.

On October 1, 2015, the \$10.00 FVV increased to \$11.00, and the \$15.00 FVV increased to \$16.50.

There are more errors at the cash register in accepting Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers than for regular checks. If the total amount of the FVV purchase is greater than the amount stated on the check, the difference can be paid by the participant with cash, or debit, credit, or Quest cards. **Please remind checkers that FVVs cannot have a total purchase price greater than the amount stated on the check.**

Can I Allow a Substitution for a WIC Food?

WIC participants are allowed to buy – and a vendor is allowed to sell – only the food items listed on the participant's check and included on the Allowed Foods List. No other brands or varieties may be substituted. Infant formula **must** be the exact brand and size listed on the check, and the participant must purchase all of the formula on the check.

If a store is out of stock on the largest size, lowest cost dairy item, the vendor must allow the participant to purchase smaller units to make up the full amount on the check. For instance, if a store is out of gallon-size milk, the participant may purchase two half gallons. However, substituting a different kind of milk, such as 2% substituted for 1% or fat-free milk, is *not allowed*.

When a vendor deposits a WIC check in the bank, the store is claiming that food the items listed on the check were sold to the participant. Maintaining sufficient stocks of WIC food items and verifying that the participant's selections correctly match the WIC check and the Allowed Foods List will help your store avoid problems with reimbursements and/or penalties.

New Infant Formulas

On March 1, 2016, three additional infant formulas will be authorized for WIC participants. Those formulas are Similac Sensitive, Similac Total Comfort, and Similac for Spit-Up. There will be a minimum stock requirement for Similac Sensitive, but not for the Total Comfort or Spit-Up formulas.



Similac Advance Infant Formula Label Change

Used to look like this:



Now looks like this:



Minimum Stocking Requirements

All stores that are approved as WIC vendors sign an agreement that they will carry the required minimum stock of WIC foods at all times. This is especially important because WIC is a nutrition program and participants must be able to buy the foods prescribed for their nutrition needs. Participants around the state have reported that when stores are out of stock of some WIC food items, they are unable to redeem their checks until the foods are in stock. This can prevent participants from receiving certain food items that have been specifically prescribed to them, especially when there is only one WIC vendor in their community.

Minimum stocking requirements are based upon a minimum level of participants; if there is a higher number of participants in an area, WIC vendor(s) may need to carry more stock to meet the demand for WIC items.

Vendors may be assessed penalty points if they do not have the required minimum stock of WIC foods.

Health and Social Services

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

Phone: 907-465-3100
Fax: 907-465-3416
E-mail: wic@alaska.gov

Managers-

Please post this newsletter
for your staff to read

We wish you, your staff,
and your families a very
Happy New Year!

Sandy, Erin & John
WIC Vendor Management Team



No Rain
Checks
Allowed

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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John King

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IF YOU FIND LOST CHECKS: Please notify your local WIC agency or the State Office immediately at (907) 465-3100 so the checks can be returned to the participant.

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