

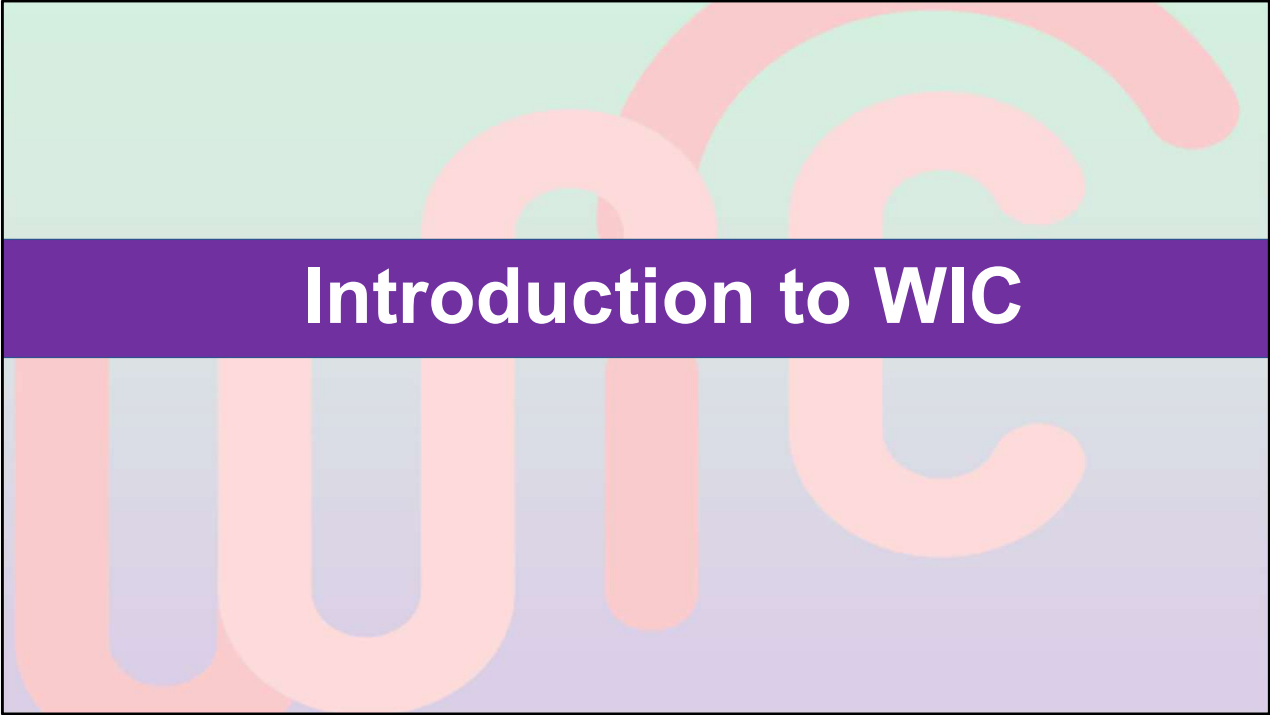


Welcome to the Alabama Vendor Training Module for WIC vendors. Viewing this training module and ensuring all store personnel are trained on WIC policies and procedures will give a basic overview of WIC and help ensure successful eWIC transactions. Additional topics will be covered after the module ends including an opportunity for you, our vendors, to ask the State WIC Office questions.

Training Outline

- Introduction to WIC
- Understanding eWIC
- eWIC Transactions
- Other Important WIC Information
- Q&A

By the end of this training module, you should have a general understanding of the WIC program, how eWIC works, the basic steps of an eWIC transaction, and general knowledge of other important WIC information. We will also cover additional topics such as what to do with a lost eWIC card, the complaint process, and the materials and resources available from the State WIC Office.

The background of the slide features a large, stylized 'WIC' logo. The letters are composed of thick, rounded strokes in shades of pink, red, and light blue. The 'W' is on the left, the 'I' is in the middle, and the 'C' is on the right. The logo is set against a background of soft, pastel-colored waves in shades of green, blue, and pink.

Introduction to WIC

WIC is a Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children funded by the United States Department of Agriculture otherwise known as USDA. The mission of the WIC program is to improve the health and nutritional status of women, infants, and children during critical times of growth and development. In Alabama, WIC services are provided through the Alabama Department of Public Health and some private agencies.

Alabama WIC Eligibility Requirements

Women

- Pregnant
- Postpartum
- Breastfeeding

Infants

- One year of age and under

Children

- Five years of age and under

To be eligible for Alabama WIC, participants must meet the requirements above, have a nutritional risk, and meet income guidelines. Once certified, WIC participants are issued a variety of supplemental foods such as milk, eggs, fresh fruits and vegetables, and infant formula.

Benefit Issuance

Alabama's eWIC Card



Participants are certified at local WIC clinics and are issued benefits via an electronic benefit transfer where the food benefits are added onto the eWIC card. These benefits may be used statewide at any authorized WIC vendor.

Participants receive a shopping list that specifies the types and quantities of foods allowed for purchase. These benefits are good for a specific time frame and can only be redeemed at authorized WIC vendors.

Items purchased must match the participant shopping list and have a sufficient quantity left to process an eWIC transaction.

Benefit Balance Availability

- WIC Shopper App
- Use their shopping list from WIC clinic
- Online portal or participant service number
- Receipt from last eWIC transaction
- Balance Inquiry at the store

Alabama WIC offers many ways for WIC participants to check their benefit balance:

- The participant may check their balance utilizing the WIC Shopper app.
- The participant can use the shopping list provided by the WIC clinic.
- They can also visit the online portal or call the participant service number on the back of their card.
- The receipt from their last eWIC transaction lists their balance.
- The store may perform a balance inquiry for the participant.
- It is a federal requirement to perform a balance inquiry upon request of the WIC participant.

Minimum Stock Requirements

- Maintain the Minimum Stock Requirements of WIC approved foods at all times
- Minimum Stock Requirements are listed in the Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook and on the Vendor Management section of the WIC website

Let's discuss the Minimum Stock Requirements.

Authorized WIC vendors must maintain the Minimum Stock Requirements of WIC approved foods at all times. The minimum stock requirements are a listing of important supplemental foods for WIC participants. These supplemental foods range from fruits and vegetables, cereals, whole grain options such as breads and tortillas, juice, eggs, canned fish, peanut butter, milk, and infant foods and formulas. Approved supplemental foods go beyond the minimum stocking requirements and additional information can be found in the Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure and in the WIC Shopper app.

Minimum Stock Requirements – Example

Enfamil® Infant 18 Cans. 12.5 oz. Powder

Enfamil® Prosobee 6 Cans. 12.9 oz. Powder

Enfamil® Gentlease 12 Cans. 12.4 oz. Powder

Enfamil® AR 6 Cans. 12.9 oz. Powder

Infant Cereal 10 Containers. 2 Varieties.

Infant Fruits and Vegetables 64 Containers. May be any combo of approved product.

Whole Grain Options: 12 Packages. Must stock 3 different Varieties of whole grain choices.

Bread Tortillas Pasta Brown Rice Oatmeal

Cereal Total of 18 Containers Including 6 Varieties. 4 Varieties Must Be Whole Grain. 8.9 oz. to 36 oz. Boxes or Bags

Fresh Fruit and Vegetables 4 Varieties of each

Frozen Fruits and Vegetables 4 Varieties of each

These requirements allow for a WIC participant to shop at your store and not deplete the inventory should another WIC participant wish to purchase the same items. We recommend stocking more than the bare minimum so that your store is always in compliance with the requirements.

It is important to note that spoiled or expired foods do not count towards the Minimum Stock Requirements.

Minimum Stock Requirements – Continued

Milk 10 Gallons. Fat Free, 1% or Lactose Free, Reduced or Calcium Enriched. Any Combo Gallon, Half Gallon or 96 oz.

Milk Whole 4 Gallons. Includes Lactose Free, Reduced or Calcium Enriched. Any Combo Gallon, Half Gallon or 96 oz.

Eggs 6 Dozen. Any Combo Grade or Count 6,12,18 White Only

Cheese 12 Packages. May be any combo of approved product

Yogurt 12 Containers. May be any combo of approved product

Juice 10 Containers. 64 oz. or 128 oz.

Fish 30 Containers. May be any combo of approved product

Peanut Butter or Nut/Seed Butter 8 Containers. 16 - 18 oz.

Make sure pertinent store personnel are aware of the Minimum Stock Requirements and that they are to always meet the requirements. There is no exception to this rule. If a WIC representative visits your store and you do not have the Minimum Stock Requirements on hand, a monetary penalty may occur.

Approved Formula Suppliers

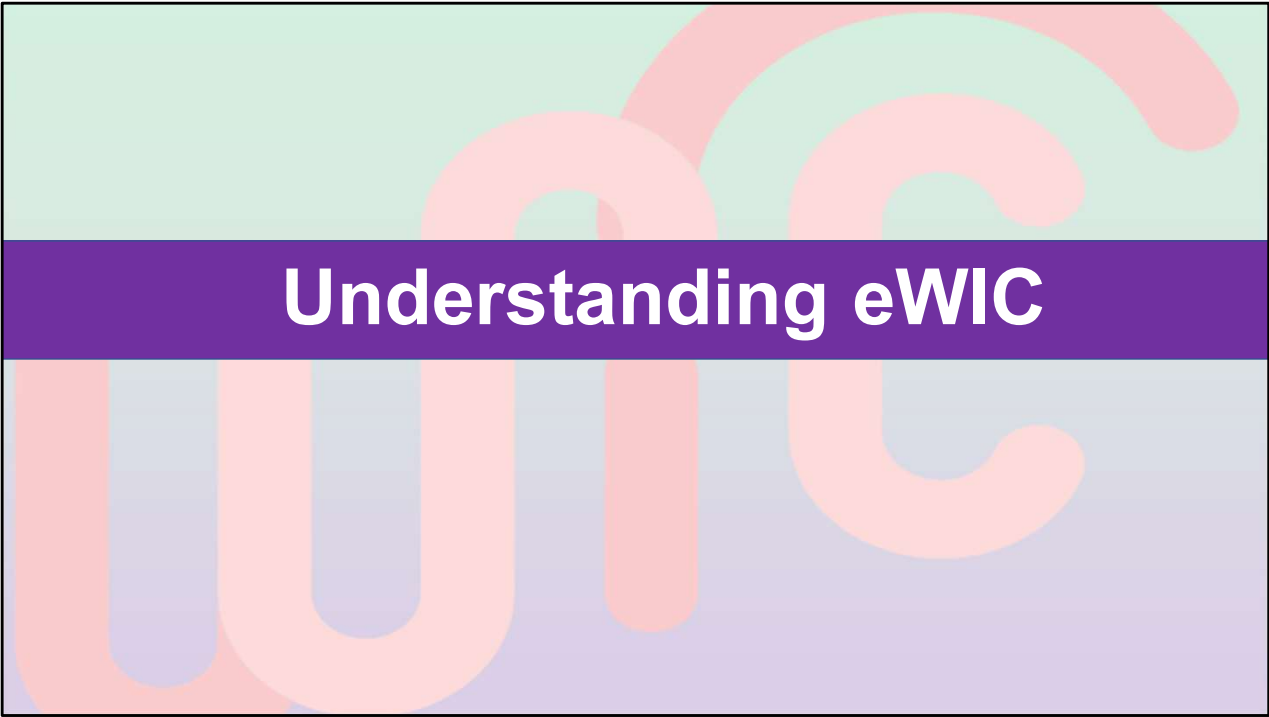
- Alabama authorized WIC vendors must purchase infant formula from a list of approved sources maintained by the State WIC Office
- Complete list of Alabama WIC Program Approved Formula Suppliers is available on our website

To ensure the safety of our participants, all Alabama authorized WIC vendors are required to purchase infant formula from a list of approved sources maintained by the federal government. The complete list of Alabama WIC Program Approved Formula Suppliers is available on our website and is updated periodically. Invoices showing formula purchases must be made available to WIC representatives when they visit your store. These requirements are outlined in the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement.



Historically, Alabama WIC has served over 100,000 women, infants, and children throughout Alabama. Those women, infants, and children participating in Alabama WIC result in over 100 million dollars being spent statewide at authorized WIC vendors.

As an authorized Alabama WIC vendor, you play an important role in your community by providing WIC participants an opportunity to purchase these nutritious foods. It is imperative to understand how WIC works to help your community and your store's bottom line!



Understanding eWIC

Knowing how eWIC works, how to troubleshoot problems, and helping the WIC participant but more importantly, your customer, will ensure that the shopping experience is positive and does not result in a loss of sales.

In order to understand the eWIC process, let's start out by reviewing some basic information about eWIC such as the approved product list, how to read the benefit balance, and the mapping of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Two Ways to Process eWIC

Integrated



Stand-Beside



The Point-of-Sale system or POS is the place where retail transactions occur. There are two types of POS systems that process eWIC transactions. An Integrated system and a Stand-Beside system.

In Alabama, over 97% of our authorized WIC vendors utilize an Integrated POS system. This training will be focused on the integrated system. If your store utilizes a stand-beside system, continue to pay attention as the following program information is useful. If you have questions surrounding the stand-beside system, please contact the State WIC Office or the eWIC processor.

Integrated Point of Sale (POS)

- Accepts all forms of payment – eWIC, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), credit, debit, and cash
- Permits a mixed basket transaction
- Provides the WIC participant with a streamlined purchase experience

The Integrated POS system is programmed to accept all forms of payment, including eWIC, SNAP, credit cards, debit cards, and cash. This helps streamline the transaction process where all forms of tender may be used.

It also permits what is known as a mixed basket transaction where a WIC participant does not have to separate WIC foods from other items. This allows the WIC participant the same shopping experience as all other customers.

Mixed Basket Transaction

- Mixed Basket = WIC items and non-WIC items
- WIC participants are usually not required to separate WIC items from other items
- POS system identifies which items to deduct from the WIC benefit balance

A mixed basket transaction features both WIC and non-WIC items. In a mixed basket transaction, the WIC participant is not required to separate their WIC items from other items. The POS system identifies which items are WIC approved and which items will be paid for using another payment method.

Order of Tender

1. eWIC
2. SNAP EBT
3. Debit, credit, or cash



When conducting a mixed basket transaction, it is important that the participant use their tender types in the correct order, which is most restrictive (WIC) to least restrictive. The eWIC card should be used first, then SNAP if applicable, then any other form of payment.

Approved Product List (APL)

- eWIC transaction is driven by the APL
- APL is a list of Universal Product Codes (UPCs)
- APL restricts overrides

UPC Code



To ensure smooth eWIC transactions, Alabama WIC maintains a database of Universal Product Codes. This is called the Approved Product List or “APL” for short.

The APL should be downloaded at least once every 24 hours to ensure that the most recent version is available. If the APL is out of date, WIC foods may not be eligible for purchase resulting in a loss of sales and a negative shopping experience for the WIC participant.

An out-of-date APL may result in a monetary penalty in addition to lost sales, so it is critical to understand the APL, its purpose, and how to ensure the most recent version has been downloaded. Your POS provider is responsible for ensuring the APL is downloading once every 24 hours and should be contacted if a product that is WIC approved is not populating as WIC approved at the register.

If an item is WIC approved in the WIC Shopper app but not WIC approved at the register, that is an indicator that your APL may be out of date.

APL Submissions

- Guidelines for submission can be found on our website at alabamapublichealth.gov/wic.
- Submit UPCs via the WIC Shopper App.
- Submissions are not a guarantee of placement on the Alabama APL.

The APL is always a work-in-progress as new products enter the market and manufacturers may change UPCs. We need your help to make sure the APL is as up-to-date as possible. If you have items that you believe should be Alabama WIC approved, but they did not scan as Alabama WIC approved you can submit the UPC to the State WIC Office via our website or you may submit it through the WIC Shopper app for Nutrition Review.

Items submitted to the State WIC Office will be thoroughly reviewed to ensure they meet all federal nutrition requirements. If after review the product is approved, it will be added to the APL list and available for purchase in the future.

Understanding the Benefit Balance

Benefit Balance:

Quantity	UOM	Description
1	Dozen	Eggs - Any Size, White Only
10	Can	Enfamil NeuroPro Enfacare(13.6 oz Powder)
48	Ounces	Whole Grains - AL WIC Approved
3	Gallons	1% or Fat-Free Milk
1	Pounds	Cheese
36	Ounces	Cereal
1	Containers	Canned or Dry Peas/Beans or Peanut/Nut/Seed Butter
10	Ounces	Fish
32	Ounces	Yogurt - Low Fat/Non-Fat
1	Containers	Juice (64 oz.)
\$47.00	\$\$\$	Fruits and Vegetables - Fresh or Frozen

To help better understand the benefit balance, here is an example. The benefit balance is shown as a combination of the Quantity, Unit of Measure, and Subcategory Description of the Item.

Understanding how to read the eWIC benefit balance will help store personnel assist with eWIC transactions and to help troubleshoot problems during the transaction.

The participant is not required to purchase all items in their benefit balance at one time. As purchases are made, the foods will be deducted from their monthly benefit balance. For example, if the WIC participant is issued 36 ounces of cereal and purchases one 18 oz box, they will see a remaining benefit balance of 18 ounces of cereal.

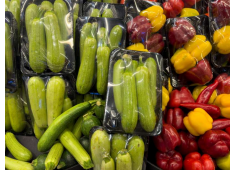
Successful Transaction

Up to date Approved Product List (APL)
+
Understanding the WIC Customer's Benefit
Balance
=
Successful eWIC Transaction

Here is the formula for a successful eWIC transaction. It is important to note that if the starting benefits and ending benefits are different, the participant is owed those items. It is critical to review receipts and compare to the benefit balances.

Mapping Price Look Up (PLU) Codes

- Mapping is Retailer Managed
- PLU Codes can be found at:
<https://www.ifpsglobal.com/PLU-Codes>



Let's talk about Mapping and its importance to your stores bottom line. Mapping is required due to the abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables that enter the market. To ensure a positive shopping experience and to ensure another sale, mapping is critical to understand and implement for inbound fresh fruits and vegetables.

Typically, corporate offices will handle mapping for their respective stores. If a fresh fruit or vegetable isn't populating as WIC approved, please forward that information to management or the corporate office.

Independent stores will likely complete the mapping process at the store level. For stores that enter products at the store level, please add mapping to the new item entry process. New items must be placed into the system to ensure it rings up at the register, SNAP eligibility, etc. and mapping should be added to the process for fresh fruits and vegetables, as applicable.

Price Look Up (PLU) Codes

The Alabama APL file includes the International Federation for Produce Standards (IFPS) Price Look Up (PLU) Codes.

PLU



If a fresh fruit or vegetable with a UPC code is not populating as WIC approved at the register, this is a STORE issue and not a WIC issue. Please understand this process and talk with the appropriate party to ensure the UPC is mapped to the correct four digit PLU code. If you are unsure who to talk to about mapping, start with your corporate office or your POS provider to assist with mapping. Alabama WIC is also here to assist you with mapping.

For example, the PLU code 4131 is for a Large Fuji Apple as shown on the screen. If the cashier wanted to scan the UPC code, the specific UPC on the apple would need to be mapped to the PLU code 4131.

We want you to have strong sales and we want our participants to have a pleasant shopping experience including the ability to use all WIC benefits at YOUR store!

Lost eWIC Cards

- Turn in the card to the manager on duty.
- If the eWIC card is unclaimed after 24 hours, the vendor **must** return the card to the State WIC Office.



If an eWIC card is found, store personnel should turn in the card to the manager on duty. The manager should keep the eWIC card in a secure place and make other store personnel aware of its location.

If the eWIC card is unclaimed after 24 hours, the vendor **must** return the card to the State WIC Office. The mailing address can be found on the back of the Alabama eWIC card.



eWIC Transactions

We hope you have gained some basic knowledge about eWIC and other relevant WIC information for your store. We will now review some important information about eWIC transactions, common issues and how to troubleshoot them.

Because all POS systems operate differently, Alabama WIC **does not** train store personnel how to conduct an eWIC transaction. Store employees should receive training on how to use their specific POS system from the corporate office or their POS provider.

For the purposes of this training module, we will review the basic steps that occur at the register during an eWIC transaction.

Scanning Items

- Scan UPC barcode directly from the item being purchased
- “NO” scanning codes from a “scan book”, UPC codebook, or reference sheets
- Quantity function allowed for identical items



x2

You are required to scan the UPC barcode directly from the item being purchased. If the item doesn't scan, you can manually enter the UPC directly from the item.

It is a violation of Alabama WIC regulations to scan codes from a scan book, UPC codebook, or reference sheet. Vendors are prohibited from having a clipboard of UPCs to use during an WIC transaction.

How does it work?

- Cashier rings up foods
- WIC participant swipes their eWIC card and enters PIN
- POS prints out midpoint receipt; or it will show on the screen – this allows the WIC participant to verify the correct items are being deducted from their benefit balance

We will now describe the basic steps of an eWIC transaction. Most eWIC transactions flow like a normal transaction except WIC comes first! To process an eWIC transaction, the WIC participant just needs their eWIC card in hand.

A WIC participant will bring their items to the checkout. The cashier rings up each item, totals the transaction, and prompts the WIC participant to pay. The WIC participant swipes the eWIC card and enters their PIN.

Once they enter their PIN, most systems will print out a midpoint receipt and require the WIC participant to approve or deny the WIC portion of the transaction. The purpose of the midpoint receipt is to allow the WIC participant to confirm the WIC purchase quantities and amount before using of additional methods of payment.

How does it work?

- Participant reviews midpoint receipt
 - If everything is as expected, the participant approves the transaction
 - If there is an unexpected balance, the items in question can be removed
- WIC participant pays any remaining balance
- Cashier provides a final receipt to the WIC participant

Please hand the participant the midpoint receipt as it will help troubleshoot issues if they occur. The WIC participant may accept or deny the WIC portion of the transaction.

If there is no remaining balance after the participant approves the WIC portion of the transaction, then the transaction is over.

If there is a remaining balance, the transaction will be over after the WIC participant pays the balance with another form of payment.

If there is an unexpected balance, the cashier should offer to void the items before finalizing the transaction.

At the end of the transaction the cashier will provide a final receipt to the WIC participant. The receipt will show the WIC items purchased, the remaining benefits, and the benefit expiration date.

If there are questions about the WIC transaction, please refer to the midpoint receipt and the final receipt to compare the Quantities listed and determine whether a benefit was reduced. If a deduction occurred, the participant is owed those items. It is important to note that once a transaction is finalized, the benefits cannot be added back to the eWIC card.

Troubleshooting an eWIC Transaction

- Item is not an Alabama WIC approved item.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are not mapped.
- Participant not issued the WIC approved item.
- Participant does not have enough of the benefit available to make the purchase.
- APL may not be the most up to date version.
- eWIC transaction exceeds 50 unique UPCs.

It is important to know the six primary reasons an item may not ring up as WIC approved during an eWIC transaction.

- The item is not an Alabama WIC approved item.
- The fresh fruits and vegetables are not mapped (linked) to a PLU code that is in the APL.
- The WIC participant could be attempting to purchase an Alabama WIC approved food item that they have not been issued. A common example is a WIC participant might bring up whole milk when their benefit balance is for low-fat milk. The item will not populate as WIC eligible due to their benefit balance stating low-fat milk rather than whole milk.
- The WIC participant has the benefit but does not have enough of the benefit available to make the purchase. For example, you cannot purchase 18 eggs with 1 dozen eggs on your benefit balance.
- APL is out of date. A quick way to check this is to scan the item in the WIC Shopper app and compare it the POS system. This does not apply to most fresh fruits and vegetables.
- The eWIC transaction exceeds 50 unique UPCs. WIC items may need to be separated if the transaction has more than 50 unique UPCs.

The WIC participant and store personnel should review the benefit balance and midpoint receipt to determine why an item does not populate as WIC eligible. The midpoint receipt is a critical tool to help identify which items are recognized as WIC approved.

If none of the above appear to be the issue, please instruct the WIC participant to call their local WIC clinic or the State WIC Office for further assistance.

Additional eWIC Information

- Manual card entry only allowed if the card is presented by the WIC participant
- Never ask a WIC participant for their PIN
- Cashiers are not allowed to enter the PIN for the participant
- PIN locks after 3 incorrect attempts
- No home delivery, curbside, or mobile payment

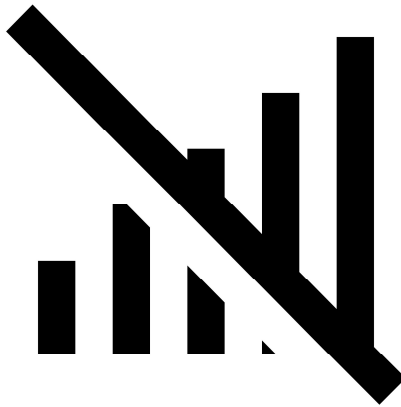
Here we will discuss a few important topics surrounding eWIC transactions including prohibited transactions and security of the eWIC card.

If the eWIC card is not swiping, a cashier can enter the card number manually. Manual entry is **only** allowed if the card is physically presented by the WIC participant. Store personnel cannot ask for or enter the PIN number for the WIC participant.

If a WIC participant incorrectly enters their PIN three times, the card will lock. The participant may call the number on the back of the card to unlock it.

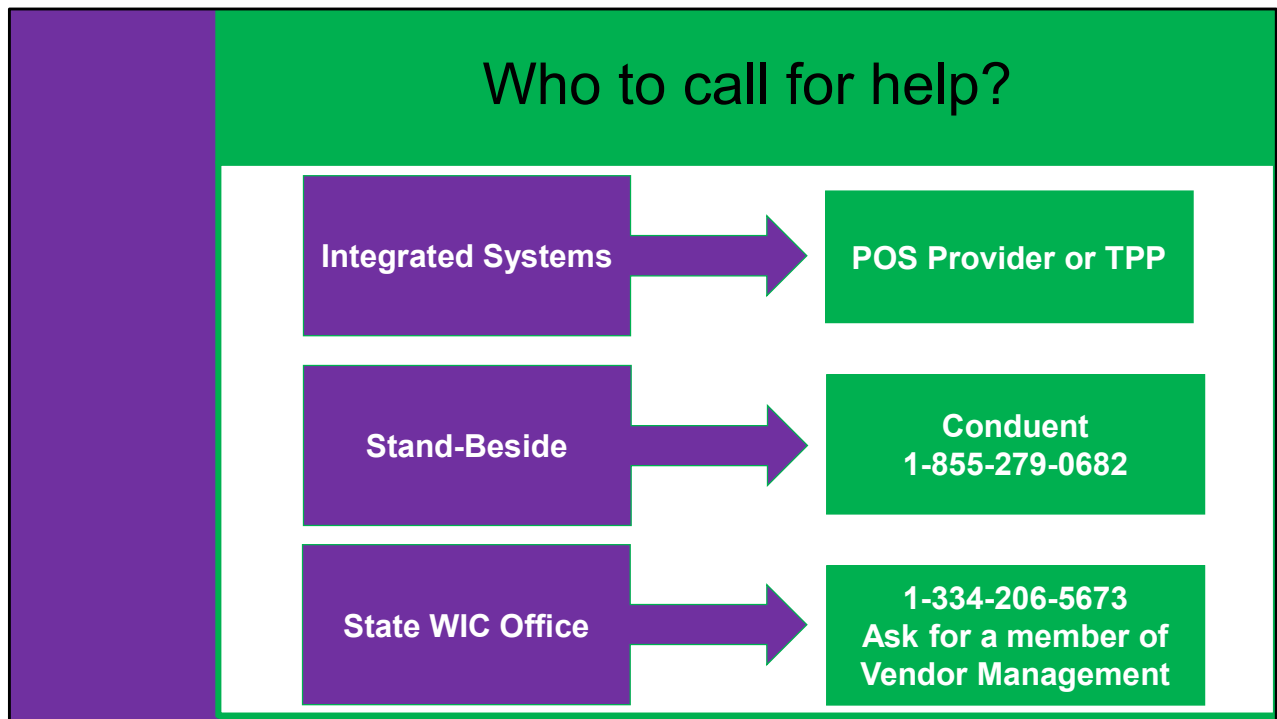
At this time eWIC cannot be used for home delivery, curbside pickup, or any type of mobile payment. Self checkout is allowed at approved locations. If you are interested in eWIC at self checkout, please contact the State WIC Office.

Oh No! System Down?



If you suspect the system is down, we recommend trying to run a balance inquiry to see if benefit balance is available or trying a small transaction with one item to verify if the transaction will process.

There is no manual process for accepting eWIC when the system goes down. The WIC participant will have to go to another store or come back later.



Who should the store call for assistance relating to potential WIC outages?

For server and network issues, Integrated stores will call their POS provider or Third Party Processor.

Stores using a stand - beside device will call the Conduent retailer help desk.

The State WIC Office tries to notify our vendors by email concerning expected outages. You can call the State WIC Office and ask if we are experiencing issues with the system. You may experience the outage before the State WIC Office is aware of it.



Returns and Exchanges

The WIC participant and return and exchanges.

Returns and Exchanges

- Store employees must never provide refunds to WIC customers for WIC items purchased using their eWIC card.
- Exchanges are allowed for the exact same item if it is damaged, spoiled, or expired

Some stores wonder if they can give refunds or allow exchanges for foods purchased with the eWIC card.

Once the eWIC purchase has been accepted by the WIC participant, the transaction is final and benefits cannot be placed back onto the eWIC card.

If an item is damaged, spoiled, or expired the store can perform an even exchange for the exact same item.

An example of an allowable exchange is - A WIC participant is requesting to exchange a 16 oz loaf of bread due to mold. The store can allow the WIC participant to exchange it for the same 16 oz loaf of bread.

A non-allowable exchange is – A WIC participant is requesting to exchange infant formula for a different kind of infant formula because their baby likes it better. You must instruct the WIC participant to contact their local WIC clinic.

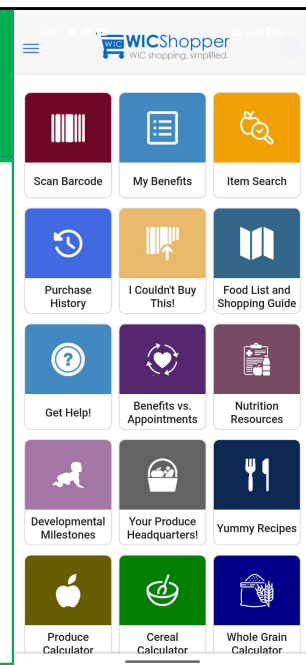


WIC Materials and Resources

The next topic of discussion surrounds WIC materials and resources offered by the State WIC Office to assist both the participant and your store.

WIC Shopper App

- Submit items for the APL file
- Access the Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure



The WIC Shopper app has been mentioned several times throughout the training module. The WIC Shopper app is free and available on both Android and iPhone.

The WIC Shopper app downloads the Alabama WIC APL daily and reflects the most recent APL available. If the item is WIC approved in the WIC Shopper app and the participant has the items available on their benefit balance, this is an indicator that your APL is out of date! Please contact the appropriate party to research this issue.

You may also submit items that you think should be WIC approved through the app. This submission is sent directly to the State WIC Office for Nutrition review.

Approved Foods Brochure

- Shows allowable types, brands, and sizes
- Use to troubleshoot when items do not ring up at the register
- Helps WIC participants to find AL WIC approved foods
- Available on the WIC Shopper app



Even though the APL controls which products participants can buy, the Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure remains an essential tool because it lists the allowable types, brands, and sizes of products. It should be used to troubleshoot when foods don't ring up as WIC approved and to help participants find the right foods. We recommend keeping one at each register in case there is a question about whether an item is Alabama WIC approved.

If you do not have an approved foods brochure at each register, additional brochures can be ordered by contacting the State WIC Office.

You can also view the Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure in the WIC Shopper app. It allows store personnel to always access the brochure.

	Other WIC Materials and Resources
	• Vendor Information Publication (VIP) • Vendor Procedure Handbook • Shelf Labels • Window Clings NOTE: All materials are provided free of charge by the State WIC Office.

There are a few additional materials and resources that are available to assist your store.

The Vendor Information Publication is a newsletter produced throughout the Fiscal Year that discusses field observations, complaints received, and upcoming program changes. These are typically distributed both physically and digitally.

The Alabama WIC Vendor Procedure Handbook is a policy and procedure handbook that provides general WIC vendor information, procedures, and guidance on staying in compliance with both federal and state regulations.

The State WIC Office encourages the utilization of shelf labels in your store to help identify WIC approved food items.

Authorized WIC vendors also have the opportunity to use their own shelf labels, but these labels must be approved by the Alabama WIC Program prior to use. Information regarding the approval process is outlined in the Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook.



Manufacturer and Store Promotions

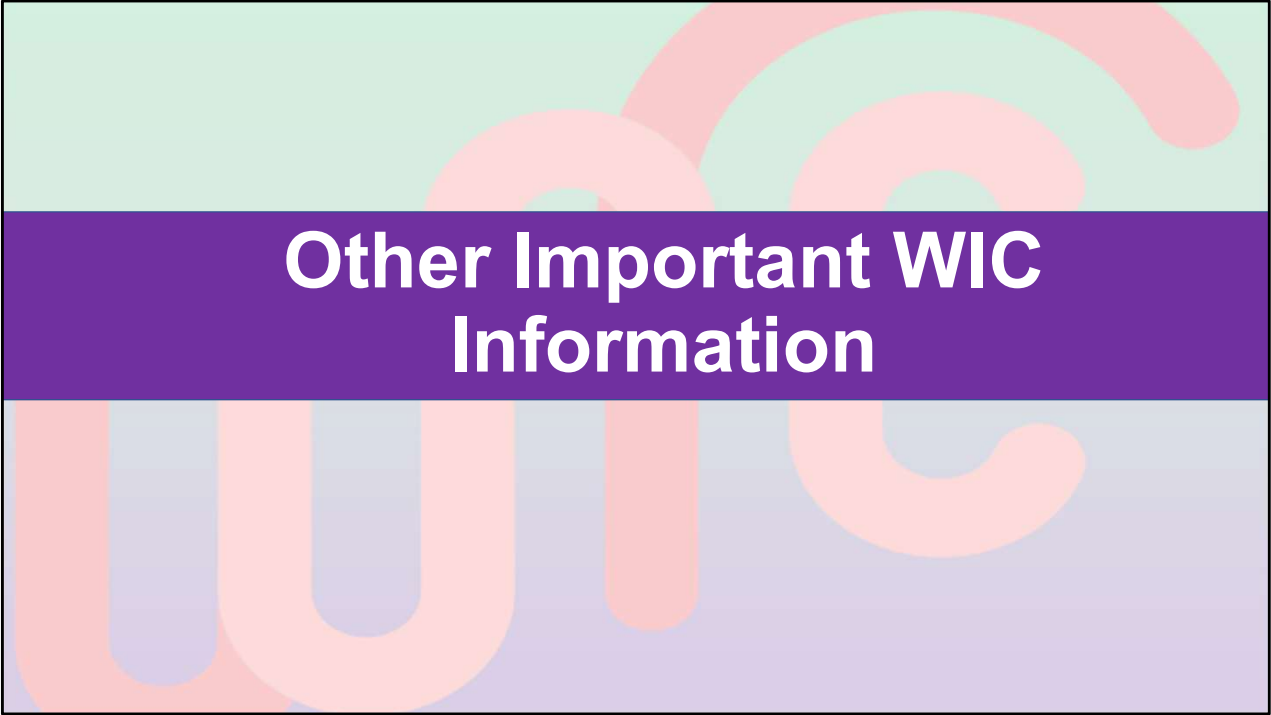
Next, we will discuss the WIC participant and manufacturer and store promotions.

Manufacturer and Store Promotions

The following are examples of promotions and specials that WIC customers are allowed to participate in:

- Buy one, get one free
- Buy one, get one at a reduced price
- Manufacturer or store coupons
- Store “savings” card or “participant reward card”

WIC customers must be allowed to participate in promotions and specials offered to all other customers. This includes sales, coupons, loyalty, or participant reward cards. Some common examples are listed.



Other Important WIC Information

The Alabama WIC Program is a federally funded program and as such we, as well as our authorized WIC Vendors, must adhere to federal regulations. In addition to federal regulations, state regulations must also be followed.

This section of the Alabama WIC training module reviews important WIC regulations for owners, managers, and store employees. The Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook provided to all authorized WIC vendors includes detailed information regarding these regulations and additional requirements. Viewing this training module and reading the Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook will help to ensure that your store stays compliant in all regulations and procedures.

WIC Training and Training Log	
	• The vendor is responsible for training all store personnel on WIC program regulations and procedures • Failure to provide documented proof of new employee and annual training on WIC regulations and procedures is a violation of the WIC Program

Alabama WIC relies on our authorized WIC vendors to provide accurate and consistent training for all store employees who handle WIC transactions.

The State WIC Office handles the initial training for new stores and renewal training for already authorized vendors.

Training Log – as an authorized vendor, new and existing employees should be trained on WIC at least yearly. We encourage you to train key personnel on upcoming program changes whenever a new VIP comes out. This ensures that all personnel are receiving critical WIC information and helps your store stay in compliance.

Failure to provide documentation of new employee and annual training on WIC is a sanctionable offense. If detected, the applicable sanction will be assessed and continued violations will result in disqualification from the WIC program. The documentation must clearly indicate WIC training, employee name and date the training was conducted. The Alabama WIC Program provides a Training Acknowledgement Form on our website for stores that do not have an official training acknowledgement form.



Incentives

Incentives - one thing vendors should never use to entice a WIC participant.

Incentives

- Federal regulations prohibits the use of incentives to entice WIC participants to shop in a particular store.
- Vendors who use advertisements to solicit the business of WIC participants, and/or offer incentives or delivery services will be subject to agreement termination.

Federal regulations prohibit the use of incentives to entice WIC participants to shop in a particular store. Vendors who use advertisements to solicit the business of WIC participants, and/or offer incentives will be subject to agreement termination.

Incentives or promotional activities include free or complimentary gifts, such as but not limited to diapers, free deli meals, and other free services offered exclusively to WIC customers.

Incentives	
CAN Do	CANNOT Do
Provide a WIC participant a store loyalty card like all other customers.	Offer WIC customers a free diaper bag if they use WIC at your store.
	

As previously mentioned, WIC participants can receive a store loyalty card and participate in store promotions offered to all other customers. What stores cannot do is offer store incentives that specifically target WIC participants. For example, a store cannot offer the following promotion, “Use your WIC here and get a complimentary diaper bag.”



Compliance Activities

The Alabama WIC Program takes Program Integrity very seriously. There are several ways we ensure authorized WIC vendors comply with federal regulations and the terms outlined in the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement. We will now review the three Compliance Activities conducted by the Alabama WIC Program.

Routine Monitoring

- WIC representative verifies stock, checks product expiration dates, and provides education
- View infant formula invoices, training documentation, and verify pertinent information

Routine monitoring visits are unscheduled and can occur at any time. During a routine monitoring visit WIC staff will check to see if the store has all minimum stock available, check product expiration dates of WIC approved foods and check other store criteria such as a valid Food Permit. Monitoring visits are a great time for store employees to ask the WIC representative any questions about WIC regulations or to express concerns related to the WIC program.

While on site, WIC staff will request to see infant formula invoices, documentation of new and annual store employee training, and will speak with store management on duty.

Compliance Investigations

- Compliance investigations - Consist of a series of undercover buys to detect noncompliance.
- If violations are detected, the State WIC Office will notify the appropriate party for corrective actions.

During a Compliance Buy, an individual posing as a WIC participant will make a purchase and check for compliance with WIC regulations and procedures.

If violations are detected, the State WIC Office will notify the appropriate party for corrective actions.

Inventory Audits

- WIC staff request a stores stock purchase records and compare them to their WIC redemptions.
- Must be provided upon request of the WIC Program

A third method of checking compliance is an audit where WIC staff request a stores stock purchase records and compare them to their WIC redemptions. If the store does not provide the records or is not able to prove that they have purchased as many WIC approved foods as they redeemed the store will be disqualified.



Vendor Sanctions, Overcharges, and Claims

Now, we will discuss some things to avoid such as vendor sanctions, overcharges, and claims.

Vendor Sanctions

- State WIC Office may impose sanctions, up to and including disqualifying the Vendor from participation in the Alabama WIC Program
- A complete list of sanctions can be found in the Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook and in the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement

WIC program violations can be detected during any of the compliance activities we just reviewed. When violations are detected, the State WIC Office may impose sanctions, up to and including disqualifying the Vendor from participation in the Alabama WIC Program. Disqualification periods are determined by the type of violation.

A complete list of sanctions can be found in the Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook and in the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement. WIC Program violations can also result in fines, criminal penalties, and possible disqualification from the SNAP program. In addition, if you as a vendor are disqualified from the SNAP program your Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement will be terminated.

Program violations are separated into categories by the seriousness of the violation. The sanction schedule has eight (8) different categories which include both mandatory federal sanctions and state sanctions. Categories five (5) through eight (8) result in mandatory disqualifications ranging from one year to a permanent disqualification. Categories one (1) through four (4) are state sanctions that also increase in severity. Most state sanctions result in a warning on the first offense but may include monetary penalties and a disqualification period for repeated violations.

If a vendor has previously had program violations with a sanction in Categories five (5) through eight (8) and receives an additional sanction, Alabama WIC will double the second sanction. If a vendor has previously had program violations with two or more sanctions in Categories five (5) through eight (8) and receives an additional sanction, Alabama WIC will double the third sanction and all subsequent sanctions.

Overcharges and Claims

- Overcharging - intentionally or unintentionally charging more for supplemental food provided to a WIC participant than a non-WIC participant or charging more than the current shelf price for supplemental food provided to a WIC participant.
- The Alabama WIC Program can assess a claim for repayment for improperly processed transactions.

The Alabama WIC Program reviews eWIC transactions for potential overcharges and other violations. If a violation is detected, the State WIC Office can prohibit future payments or establish a claim against the vendor.

The vendor must pay any claim assessed by the State WIC Office by the due date specified in the notification, or the vendor will be terminated for cause.

Additional information surrounding claims can be found in the Alabama WIC Vendor Procedure Handbook and the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement.



Complaint Process

The Complaint Process - who to contact when there is an issue with fraud or abuse, such as discrimination.

Complaint Process

- If you suspect a participant or another vendor is abusing the Alabama WIC Program, call the State WIC Office to report the abuse at:

1-888-942-4673



At the State WIC Office, we are very concerned about program fraud and abuse and take all complaints seriously. If you suspect a participant or another vendor is abusing the Alabama WIC Program, call the State WIC Office at 1-888-942-4673 to report the abuse. Investigations are conducted on all complaints received. Due to the confidential nature of WIC investigations, no information can be released as to the outcome.

Non-Discrimination

- Compliance with the non-discrimination provisions of federal regulations is mandatory.
- Federal law prohibits any kind of discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability.

Federal law prohibits any kind of discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. If the State WIC Office receives a complaint that discrimination has occurred in your store it will be thoroughly investigated and applicable sanctions will be assessed.

Instructions on how to file a program complaint of discrimination can be found in the Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook.

Questions



If you have questions regarding WIC regulations and procedures do not hesitate to contact the State WIC Office at 1-888-942-4673. We are here to help our authorized WIC vendors.

Working together, we can ensure every WIC participant has a pleasant shopping experience and you, in turn, can gain a loyal participant and increase your bottom line through successful eWIC transactions.

This concludes the Alabama WIC Vendor Training module. Please complete all applicable training documentation.