



***ALABAMA WIC PROGRAM
VENDOR PROCEDURE HANDBOOK***

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**Bureau of Family Health Services
Alabama WIC Program
Vendor Management Branch**



Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook, Effective October 1, 2023

ALABAMA WIC PROGRAM VENDOR PROCEDURE HANDBOOK

**Vendor Management Branch
Women, Infants, and Children Division
Bureau of Family Health Services
Alabama Department of Public Health**

This handbook is a living document. Revisions may be applied as needed. For the most recent version, please visit the Alabama WIC Program Vendor Management page.

Follow the link to Authorized WIC Vendor Information at:

<https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/wic/vendors.html>.

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INTRODUCTION TO WIC

WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (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 in the local county health departments and administrated by the Alabama Department of Public Health and some private local agencies.

Local clinics certify individuals for participation in the WIC Program. Women applying for WIC must be either pregnant, had a baby in the past six months, or breast-feeding. Infants and children up to five years of age are also eligible to apply. Applicants must have proof of residency in Alabama, proof of identity, and proof of income. In addition to meeting income requirements, the participant must also have a nutritional risk, as determined by a health professional. Once certified, participants receive nutrition counseling, breastfeeding support, health care and social service referrals, and supplemental foods.

Currently, over 110,000 of Alabama's women, infants, and children participate in the WIC Program resulting in over \$83,000,000 being spent at authorized WIC vendors across the state. Everyone that works for an authorized WIC vendor plays an important role in ensuring Alabama's participants receive only WIC approved foods. Foods provided by the WIC Program are good sources of nutrients. These foods include milk, yogurt, eggs, cheese, fruit juice, fortified cereal, peanut butter, dried or canned beans/peas, whole grain bread, brown rice, whole wheat or whole grain pasta, and fresh fruits and vegetables. Infants receive infant cereal and infant foods at the appropriate age. For infants who are not breastfed, iron fortified infant formula is provided.

Participants are issued benefits via an electronic process where the food benefits are automatically added onto a card, like a debit card. This card is known as the eWIC card. Participants receive a shopping list at the clinic that specifies the types and quantities of foods allowed for purchase. The benefits are good for a specific 30-day period and can only be redeemed at vendors authorized by the State WIC Office.



eWIC VENDOR ENABLEMENT AND CERTIFICATION



eWIC Vendor Enablement and Certification

The Alabama WIC Program moved from a paper-based benefit delivery system to an electronic process known as eWIC in 2019. To process eWIC transactions, vendors must obtain the appropriate Point of Sale (POS) system and/or software. The POS system must be certified prior to accepting eWIC transactions.

To maintain authorization as an Alabama WIC vendor, all vendors must have their POS system certified to accept eWIC by Alabama's eWIC Processor or a Third-Party Processor (TPP) certified by the state's eWIC Processor.

Failure to obtain certification of an integrated POS system or a stand-beside (single function) device will result in termination of the vendor's Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement.

Level III Certification

Level III Certification is a live in-store test by WIC staff to verify the proper installation and set-up of the store's cash register system. Level III Certification involves successfully completing an eWIC balance inquiry, purchase, and void of an eWIC transaction.

Note: If the vendor's POS system is not already certified with the Alabama eWIC service provider prior to becoming an authorized Alabama WIC vendor, a Level III Certification is required before accepting eWIC transactions.

Point of Sale Systems

There are two types of Point of Sale (POS) systems in eWIC:

Integrated Vendor – WIC software is part of the store's cash register system. Integrating WIC into the POS system and normal business processes are the preferred solutions as they allow grocers to manage inventory, payment, and settlement for WIC foods within the same system that manages transactions for cash and other payment tenders.

WIC authorized retailers that use an integrated POS:

-  Accept all forms of electronic payment – eWIC, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), credit, and debit
-  Allow for a mixed basket transaction
-  Provide a more streamlined purchase experience for the WIC customer

Non-Integrated (Stand-Beside) Vendor – eWIC software is on a WIC only, single function POS device that accepts WIC payments. Vendors using a stand-beside device must reconcile the eWIC transaction to their Electronic Cash Register (ECR) system.

Single function POS device:

-  Solely used to transact eWIC benefits
-  Requires a “double scan” – first with the stand-beside device and second through the grocer’s ECR system

eWIC System Installation, Upgrades, and Maintenance

Vendors must comply with the following policies regarding eWIC POS system installation, upgrades, and maintenance:

1. Connect the vendor’s POS system for each eWIC device/outlet covered by the WIC vendor agreement to the state’s eWIC system at least once each 24-hour period to download reconciliation files and the Alabama WIC Approved Product List (APL).
2. Maintain an Alabama eWIC processor certified POS eWIC system that is available for WIC redemption processing during all hours the store is open.
3. Request the Alabama eWIC processor to re-certify the vendor’s POS system if the vendor alters/revises the system in any manner that impacts the eWIC redemption/claims process after initial certification is completed. The following applies:
 -  If the POS eWIC system is reconfigured or modified by the vendor and/or other parties in such a way that the eWIC POS system no longer exhibits the required system accuracy, integrity, or performance required and under which requirements the eWIC POS system was certified, the state will not accept a redemption.
 -  The vendor is liable for all costs of all recertification events. Failure to seek recertification when the vendor’s POS system is altered/revised shall subject the vendor to the financial liabilities for all transactions processed.
4. For vendors with integrated systems, obtain EBT card readers to support eWIC transactions within their store(s). The vendor must ensure that the EBT card readers they obtain meets all EBT and Alabama eWIC processor requirements. The vendor must:
 -  Purchase EBT card terminals that are capable of properly reading eWIC card transactions.

- 🍓 Ensure that the EBT terminal(s) will be supported by integrated software that is fully capable of supporting WIC in-lane transactions.
- 🍓 The vendor's POS system must meet state certification requirements, including interoperability and Alabama eWIC processor requirements, prior to being placed in operation to accept EBT transactions.
- 🍓 Acknowledge that the performance of maintenance, cost of maintenance, and cost of future replacement of terminals is the vendor's sole responsibility.

5. Not charged to the Alabama WIC Program:

- 🍓 Third-party commercial processing costs and fees incurred by the vendor from eWIC multi-function systems and equipment.
- 🍓 Commercial transaction processing cost and fees imposed by a TPP that the vendor elects to use to connect to the eWIC system of the state shall be borne by the vendor.
- 🍓 Interchange fees related to eWIC transactions.
- 🍓 Ongoing maintenance, processing fees, or operational costs for vendor systems and equipment.

Vendors in need of assistance with the vendor enablement or certification process may contact the state's eWIC processor.

Vendors will also contact the state's eWIC Processor for:

- 🍓 Assistance with setting up a stand-beside POS system.
- 🍓 Assistance with updating stand-beside contract documentation.
- 🍓 Stand-beside POS maintenance, training, troubleshooting, and replacement.
- 🍓 Transaction history, settlement information, disputes, and reconciliation procedures.
- 🍓 Support on system adjustments and resolution of out-of-balance conditions.

PROCESSING eWIC TRANSACTIONS



Processing eWIC Transactions

Vendors must process eWIC transactions, accurately, in a timely manner, and in accordance with the terms of the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement, the eWIC Processor Vendor Agreement, the United States of Agriculture (USDA) Operating Rules WIC EBT, the WIC EBT Technical Implementation Guide (TIG), and federal regulations.

Transaction processing with the eWIC card is a more streamlined process because there are no paper Food Instruments or Cash Value Vouchers (CVVs) to complete. It is a requirement that a vendor owner, manager, or other authorized representative complete training on eWIC procedures prior to conducting eWIC transactions. Furthermore, the vendor must ensure that all cashiers and store personnel are fully trained on conducting and processing eWIC transactions. The procedures used for eWIC processing are determined by the type of POS system used by the vendor. 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 for independent stores, the company that provides the POS system.

Understanding eWIC

To understand how eWIC works you must understand the Approved Product List (APL) and the WIC customer's benefit balance. Alabama WIC maintains the APL to ensure that the WIC customer purchases only healthy WIC approved foods. WIC benefits are issued to an electronic benefit account at the local WIC clinic. The WIC customer's benefit balance includes all benefits that are available for purchase on their eWIC card. The eWIC transaction is driven by the APL and the corresponding benefits on the WIC customer's card.

The Approved Product List

The APL file is a database of categorized Universal Product Codes referred to as UPCs. It ensures WIC customers only purchase Alabama WIC approved foods. The APL is maintained by the Alabama WIC Program. The APL file restricts cashiers from overriding items. The Alabama APL file includes the International Federation for Produce Standards (IFPS) Price Look-Up (PLU) Codes. Store generated fresh fruit/vegetable UPCs must be mapped (linked) back to an IFPS PLU for the same produce item in Alabama's APL.

Note: No UPCs other than those for fresh fruits and vegetables can be mapped.

To appropriately configure an eWIC system to identify WIC approved foods for purchase, vendors must upload the APL in their system. The APL file is updated on an ongoing basis.

- 🍎 Non-integrated vendors with stand-beside devices will automatically have the APL programmed into the device when they receive it from the eWIC processor and will receive updates to the APL through automated downloads, as necessary.
- 🍎 Regardless of the type of eWIC system used, vendors must connect the vendor's POS system for each outlet covered by the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement to the state's eWIC processor's system at least once each 24-hour period to transfer reconciliation files and the WIC APL file. It is imperative that the APL is downloaded to each eWIC device/outlet in the store at least once every 24 hours.
- 🍎 Vendors will adhere to the IFPS for PLU codes for fresh produce. Any store or manufacturer generated fresh fruit/vegetable UPC must be mapped back to an IFPS PLU for the same produce item in the eWIC APL.

Vendors, manufacturers, and wholesale suppliers can submit requests to update/add UPCs to the APL by completing an online submission form or via the Alabama WIC app.

Guidelines for submission of UPCs via the app and the online UPC submission form can be found at: <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/wic/ewic-vendors.html>.

Understanding the Benefit Balance

The benefit balance shown below is a combination of the Quantity, Unit of Measure (UOM), and Subcategory Description of the Item. Cashiers will need to know how to read eWIC receipts in order to assist WIC customers with the eWIC transaction.

Some items have ounces, abbreviated oz as a unit of measure. eWIC allows the customer to purchase only the WIC foods offered on their monthly benefit balance. As purchases are made, the foods will be deducted from their monthly benefit balance. The available amount will be reduced by the purchased amount if the WIC customer only purchases part of their available benefits.

For example, if the WIC customer begins with 72 ounces of cereal and buys one 18 oz box, there will be a remaining benefit balance of 54 ounces of cereal. If a participant buys 4 cans of peas/beans, their benefit balance will be reduced by 1 container, as 4 cans equals 1 container.

BENEFIT BALANCE:		
Quantity	UOM	Description
2	Dozen	Eggs – Any Size, White Only
48	Ounces	Bread/Tortillas/Pasta/Brown Rice
4.5	Gallons	1% of Fat-Free Milk
2	Pounds	Cheese
\$20.00	\$\$\$	Fruit and Vegetables - Fresh or Frozen
3	Gallons	Whole Milk
72	Ounces	Cereal
3	Containers	Canned Peas/Beans/Dry Peas/Beans/Peanut Butter
3	Containers	Juice (48 oz.) OR 1 Can Frozen Juice (11.5-12 oz.)
32	Ounces	Yogurt - Whole Milk
32	Ounces	Yogurt - Low Fat/Non-Fat
2	Containers	Juice (64 oz.)

Processing an Integrated eWIC Transaction

If the vendor uses an **Integrated (multi-function) System**, the process is as follows:

1. It is generally not necessary to separate items for purchase with eWIC benefits.

The vendor scans the UPCs and/or PLU codes for all items presented for purchase by the WIC customer.

If the scanning device is not working, then the vendor can manually enter the correct UPC/PLU codes to complete the transaction.

Integrated systems are programmed to select the correct WIC approved foods by UPC/PLU code and deduct them from the WIC customer's benefit balance. Items presented for purchase that are not WIC approved, will not be paid for by WIC and cannot be deducted from the WIC customer's benefit balance.

2. The WIC customer swipes the eWIC card through the card reader device and enters their Personal Identification Number (PIN). This can be done at any time during the transaction.
3. The vendor's cash register system determines the items that will be applied to the eWIC card and then deducted from the customer's benefit balance.
4. The vendor applies all discounts and coupons the WIC customer is eligible for.

5. The WIC customer reviews items listed as WIC approved and then confirms the WIC portion of the transaction.
6. The vendor then submits the transaction.
7. The vendor's cash register system receives the response from the eWIC processor and the remaining balance for the transaction (if any) is presented to be paid.
8. If there is a remaining balance after the eWIC card has been tendered, the remaining balance must be paid by using another tender type (SNAP, Credit/Debit, Cash). **When a multi-tender transaction is performed, the WIC customer must swipe their eWIC card first before any other tender type is applied to ensure that the proper items are deducted from the WIC customer's benefit balance before another tender is used.**
9. The vendor provides the WIC customer with a receipt which shows the items purchased and the remaining benefit balance.

Note: The transaction guidelines for integrated systems may vary slightly based on the vendor's POS system. The State WIC Office **does not** train on how to conduct an eWIC transaction as all register systems are different. Vendors with integrated systems should refer to the training materials provided by your VAR or Corporate Office for comprehensive instructions on how to conduct eWIC transactions.

Processing a Stand-Beside eWIC Transaction

If the vendor uses a **Stand-Beside (single function) Device** provided by the eWIC processor, the process is as follows:

1. The WIC customer **must** first separate WIC approved foods from all other foods.
2. The WIC customer then swipes the eWIC card through the device and enters their PIN to authorize the transaction.
3. The cashier then scans the UPC or PLU for the WIC approved food, fruit, or vegetable into the stand-beside device. If the scanning device is not working, the vendor may manually enter the correct UPC/PLU code. Foods presented for purchase that are not WIC approved will be rejected by the system and will not be deducted from the WIC customer's benefit balance.
4. Once the UPC/PLU code is scanned or entered, the cashier must enter the item price into the stand-beside device. Depending on the vendor's cash register system, collection of the item price will vary. The price may be obtained directly from a sticker on the food item or from the store's cash register system display.

Steps 3 and 4 must be repeated for every WIC approved food, fruit, or vegetable presented for purchase by the WIC customer.

5. The vendor then enters any discounts and/or coupons which the WIC customer is eligible for into both the stand-beside device and the store's cash register system.
6. The vendor calculates a total and then submits the transaction using the stand-beside device.
7. The vendor provides the WIC customer with a receipt printed from the stand-beside device which shows the items purchased and the remaining balance. The transaction is then complete in the store system.

Additional eWIC Transaction Requirements

1. Require the WIC customer to swipe their eWIC card to complete all eWIC transactions. Only in instances where the eWIC card's magnetic stripe or the card reader is not working can store personnel enter the number on the eWIC card to complete the transaction. A vendor must not manually enter the eWIC card number from any source other than the eWIC card.
2. Scan or manually enter UPC codes directly from the WIC food item being purchased. Vendors are prohibited from scanning codes from a "scan book", UPC codebook, or reference sheet in place of scanning the UPC directly from the product being purchased by the WIC customer.
3. Provide the WIC customer only the WIC approved foods, fruits, and/or vegetables contained in the APL after it has been determined that the WIC customer has an available balance on the date of the transaction.
4. Require the WIC participant to accept/approve the eWIC transaction and ensure vendor store personnel do not accept/approve any eWIC transactions for WIC participants under any circumstances.
5. Transmit and charge the current shelf price for the WIC-approved foods being purchased and provided to the WIC customer.
6. Do not require additional identification from a WIC customer. Individuals presenting with the card and entering the PIN can complete an eWIC transaction.
7. Store personnel must not enter the PIN for the WIC customer.
8. Upon request, store personnel must provide a balance inquiry to the WIC customer.

Receipt Requirements

Vendors are required to provide WIC customers with an itemized receipt for each eWIC transaction that clearly identifies the following three items:

9. The item or items purchased, with the individual price charged for each item listed.
10. The remaining balances of WIC items available.
11. The last day to use the WIC benefits.

The printed receipt provided to the WIC customer is a record of what was purchased at the vendor's store. Vendors must provide WIC customers with printed receipts in accordance with receipt requirements listed in the USDA Operating Rules WIC EBT.

Troubleshooting an eWIC Transaction

Cashiers must help troubleshoot why an item isn't ringing up and help the customer with the best solution.

There are six primary reasons an item may not ring up:

1. The item is not Alabama WIC approved.
2. The item is WIC approved but not in the APL. It will need to be submitted to the State WIC Office.
3. The WIC customer has not been issued the WIC approved item.
4. The WIC customer has the benefits but does not have enough of the benefits available to make the purchase.
5. Fresh fruit and vegetables are not mapped (linked).
6. eWIC transaction exceeds 50 unique WIC approved food items (both UPCs and PLUs). WIC approved food items above 50 unique UPCs/PLUs will need to be separated into a separate transaction.

Even though the APL controls what products customers can buy, the **Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure** is still an essential tool that lists allowable food types, brands, and sizes of products. It can be used as a troubleshooting tool when foods are not ringing up as WIC approved and to help customers find the right foods. Additional food brochures can be requested by contacting the State WIC Office.

The Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure is also available by downloading the Alabama WIC App. The app allows store personnel to access the brochure right from their phones.

Understanding the reasons, a product does not ring up as WIC approved will help store personnel assist WIC customers in using their eWIC card. Always remember WIC customers should be treated in the same polite and courteous manner as other customers.

Manufacturer and Store Promotions

WIC customers must be allowed to participate in manufacturer and store promotions.

Vendors are not allowed to offer incentives, promotional items, or services specifically for WIC customers or to encourage WIC participants to shop in a particular store.

Grocery delivery and customer transportation are not allowed.

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



Buy One Get One Free Promotions

If an item is buy one get one free, one item must qualify for WIC, but the free item does not have to be a WIC approved item. In addition, the free product does not count towards the number of items or ounce limits in their eWIC benefit balance.

If a food item is advertised as “buy one get one free” with the disclosure that **each item is sold for half the advertised price**, both food items will count towards the number of items or ounce limits in their eWIC benefit balance.

Buy One Get One at a Reduced-Price Promotions

If an item is buy one get one at a reduced price, **both** items must be WIC approved and count toward the number of items or ounces available in the eWIC benefit balance. The full price is charged for the first item and the reduced price for the second item.

Manufacturer or Store Coupons

Manufacturer's coupons are deducted from the total WIC purchase.

The extra food items obtained from coupons **do not** count toward the number of food items or the ounce limits available in their eWIC benefit balance. **Only** tax on the coupon amount may be added to the discounted total.

Store Savings Cards or Customer Reward Cards

WIC customers are allowed to utilize store saving and customer reward cards used by regular customers

Note: Contact store management if you have cash register programming issues relating to store promotions. The State WIC Office does not instruct store employees on how to program cash register systems.

Returns and Exchange

Store employees should never provide WIC customers with refunds or gift cards. WIC customers can only exchange items purchased with eWIC if the item is defective, spoiled, or outside the sell/use date when purchased.

Alabama eWIC Cards

A sample of an Alabama eWIC card is shown below:

Primary Account Number (PAN):
The 16-digit number on the front of an eWIC card that is associated with the WIC participant.



Lost eWIC Cards

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 key personnel aware of its location.

If the eWIC card is unclaimed after 24 hours, the vendor **must** return the card to the local WIC clinic or mail it to the following address:

Alabama Department of Public Health
State WIC Office
P.O. Box 303017
Montgomery, AL 36130-3017

The vendor **shall not** hold or use a WIC customer's eWIC card and PIN for any reason. Store personnel should never contact WIC customers directly. If store personnel have any questions about returning lost eWIC cards, they should contact the State WIC Office.

eWIC PAYMENT



Vendor Payment

A vendor applicant cannot transact eWIC until all pre-authorization procedures are completed and the vendor is authorized. This includes a pre-authorization site visit, receipt of signed agreements, E-Verify Memorandum of Understanding, and the completion of Alabama WIC Vendor training. The State WIC Office notifies vendors when the vendor is authorized to process eWIC transactions.

The Department will make payment to authorized WIC vendors upon receipt of valid eWIC transactions. Vendors will receive payment for all eWIC transactions processed in their store through an Automated Clearing House (ACH) system in which payments are directly deposited into the vendor's bank account. Vendors are responsible for all arrangements with their payment processor, their financial institution, and the State of Alabama WIC eWIC processor.

In eWIC, each item will have a maximum allowable price. The maximum allowable price is also known as the Not to Exceed (NTE) amount. If a vendor submits an item price that is above the NTE, their payment will be decreased to the NTE amount for the item. Vendors shall not seek restitution from customers for eWIC transactions not paid or partially paid by the Department.

The Alabama WIC Program will not reimburse an out of state vendor for any eWIC transactions unless the vendor is authorized by the Alabama WIC Program.

Vendor ID Number

Each authorized WIC vendor is issued their own unique vendor ID number by the State WIC Office. This number is used to identify payment processing for eWIC. The vendor ID number is not transferrable and must only be used for transactions redeemed at the location listed in the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement. If the store is sold the new owner must complete the application process and if approved will be issued a new vendor ID number. Vendors who violate this will be subject to applicable sanctions.

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES



Vendor Agreement

- ✎ The Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement is a legal, binding agreement between the Vendor and the Alabama Department of Public Health. It is imperative that as an authorized WIC vendor you carefully review your agreement and are familiar with its content.
- ✎ The Alabama WIC Program is a federally funded program that is governed by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Federal Regulations and state requirements. Authorized vendors are required to adhere to all rules, policies, and procedures of the Alabama WIC Program. Authorized WIC vendors will be notified in writing of any program changes that occur during the agreement period.

Minimum Stock Requirements

- ☺ Authorized WIC vendors must always maintain the minimum stock of WIC approved foods, regardless of the number of eWIC transactions at any given time. A complete list of the Minimum Stock Requirements can be found at the end of this handbook. Items listed as “supply upon request” are not part of the required minimum stock.
- ☺ Food items must be within the manufacturer’s product eligibility dates to count towards the minimum stock requirement. Expired food items will not count towards the minimum stock requirement.
- ☺ A vendor shall not use another store’s brand items as part of the minimum stock requirements.
- ☺ If at any time a WIC representative determines the vendor does not meet the Minimum Stock Requirements, the vendor will be required to show official documentation that the item is on order and scheduled for delivery. Failure to have such documentation on hand or provide documentation within 24 hours of the request will result in termination of the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement.

Infant Formula

The Alabama WIC Program promotes breastfeeding, but in cases where breastfeeding is not the option chosen, iron fortified infant formula is provided. The quantity, formula name, size, and type (Powder, Concentrate, or Ready to Feed) will be identified by the designated UPC available in the WIC customers benefit balance.

At the request of a health care provider, specialized formula is available through the WIC Program. The State of Alabama does not require vendors to stock all special formulas; however, at times, the local clinic or a WIC customer may request you, as a vendor, to stock a special formula.

Alabama authorized WIC vendors and vendors applying for WIC authorization **must** purchase infant formula from a list of approved sources maintained by the State WIC Office. The list will be updated periodically and is available on the Alabama Department of Public Health website: www.alabamapublichealth.gov/wic/vendors.html.

The only invoices for which the authorized WIC vendor will receive credit during any type of compliance activity must be from businesses on this list.

Vendors must adhere to the following procedures regarding infant formula:

- 🍊 **NO** substitutions are allowed.
- 🍊 **NEVER** issue a rain check, or I owe you (IOU).
- 🍊 **NEVER** allow a WIC customer to exchange formula for another type of formula or for cash. If the WIC customer requires a different formula, instruct them to return to their local WIC clinic and a licensed nutritionist will assist them in determining what changes may be required.

Price Survey Requirements

The Alabama WIC Program is federally required to collect shelf prices on all new vendors.

Alabama's WIC program has received a Shelf Price Exemption that excludes the collection of price surveys from currently authorized WIC vendors.

Competitive Price Criteria

As established by USDA Federal Regulations, the state agency must use cost containment criteria in evaluating the prices charged for supplemental foods.

The vendors selected to participate in the WIC Program will be those that offer the most competitive prices. Since food costs have a major impact on the number of women, infants, and children served, these measures enable the largest number possible to benefit from this valuable program.

All authorized WIC vendors are placed into a specified peer group based on store type and number of cash registers. A maximum allowable reimbursement level is set for each WIC approved food item.

The competitive price determination for individual food items will be computed by peer group using the redemptions for WIC eligible items.

The Alabama WIC Program utilizes the following four peer groups:

Peer Group	Description
1	Chain store with own wholesaler
2	Major Independent - 5 or more cash registers
3	Minor Independent - 3 to 4 cash registers
4	Small – 1 to 2 cash registers

Vendor Status Changes

Change in Information and Store Closure

The vendor must notify the State WIC Office, in writing, at least 15 days prior to any changes in information including, but not limited to, name of store, management, business structure, or store closing. Written notification must include the effective date of the identified change or store closure.

Upon the effective date of the store closure, the vendor agreement and vendor number will be terminated. If, for any reason, there is a change in the store closure date, written notification must be provided to the State WIC Office.

Change in Ownership

If ownership changes, the WIC agreement is no longer valid. The State WIC Office must be notified, in writing, 15 days before the store is sold. Vendor agreements are not transferable. Once the State WIC Office is notified of the change in ownership, you will receive written notification regarding termination of your Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement.

If the new owner wishes to become an authorized WIC vendor, they must submit an Alabama WIC Vendor Application and complete the authorization process.

Should the Alabama WIC Program discover that a change in ownership has already occurred, the vendor authorization number will be immediately terminated. The State WIC Office may file a claim for any eWIC transactions that occurred after the change of ownership.

Agreement Termination

Vendors may voluntarily end their Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement by notifying the State

WIC Office in writing at least 30 days prior to the effective date. Upon receipt of such notice, you will be sent written notification regarding termination of your Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement.

Changes in Store Location

Vendors must notify the State WIC Office, in writing, at least 15 days prior to any changes in location. Each store is authorized based on the ownership and street address that exists at the time of authorization; therefore, the WIC Vendor Agreement is **not transferable** to another location.

If the change in location is five miles or more from the original store site, the vendor must submit an updated application and sign a new Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement.

If the change in location is less than five miles from the original store location, the vendor must only submit an updated application. A new Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement is not required.

Regardless of the distance, a site visit will be conducted by the State WIC Office to ensure the store continues to meet the Alabama WIC Program Criteria for Participation.

Temporary Closure due to Natural Disaster

Vendors shall notify the State WIC Office of any situation that occurs which negatively impacts participants' access to shop at an authorized store location, including but not limited to, natural disasters, fire, or any other adverse action which significantly reduces the store's normal operating hours.

Under no circumstances shall a store accept or process eWIC transactions while its status is considered "temporarily closed".

For emergency situations outlined above, vendors must send written notice **within 72 hours** of the qualifying event, through one of the following methods:

Facsimile Transmission: 334-206-2914
Attn: Vendor Management Branch
Subject: Temporary Closure due to Natural Disaster

or

U.S. Mail: Alabama Department of Public Health
Bureau of Family Health Services – State WIC Office
The RSA Tower – Suite 1300
P.O. Box 303017
Montgomery, AL 36130-3017

Telephone notification to 334-206-5673 or 1-888-942-4673 may be made as a last resort if none of the other means are practical.

In the written notice sent to the State WIC Office, the vendor must include the following information:

Name of the store; name of the contact person; store's WIC vendor number; active day-time telephone number; brief description of the emergency/event that has occurred that necessitated the store being unavailable for participant access; and an approximate date of when the store will resume normal operations.

After a temporary closure, vendors shall request, in writing, to the State WIC Office that the store's WIC vendor number be reactivated. This request must be submitted at **least 15 days in advance**. A site visit will be conducted to ensure the store continues to meet the Alabama WIC Program Criteria for Participation. If the POS system has not been altered/revised and is certified with the eWIC processor, a new Level III Certification will not be conducted. Closures that exceed 90 days require the vendor to complete the application process.

Vendor Training

In accordance with USDA Federal Regulations governing the WIC Program, authorized WIC vendors must receive training annually. Annual vendor training is **mandatory**. There are two (2) types of annual training: Agreement Renewal Year and Non-Agreement Renewal Year.

Annual Vendor Training

Agreement Renewal Year: All authorized WIC vendors are required to attend vendor training. Vendors are notified of the date, time, and location of this training. The agreement renewal year WIC vendor training is presented in a train-the-trainer format; therefore, it is important that the individuals selected to attend are those that are responsible for daily WIC operations. These individuals will sign a training checklist acknowledging attendance at training. It is the responsibility of the vendor training attendee to ensure store personnel are trained on WIC Program policies and procedures. It is strongly recommended that the vendor has at least two (2) store representatives present during the training session.

-  Individuals attending the annual train-the-trainer session are **required** to return to the store and conduct annual WIC training with store personnel.
-  The training must be documented, and the documentation must be on file for all store personnel.
-  The documentation must clearly indicate WIC training, employee name, and date the training was conducted.

Non-Agreement Renewal Year: Training is conducted through written material. All vendors shall receive written training instructions/material via mail from the State WIC Office. An acknowledgement form will be included with the training. All vendors must complete and sign the acknowledgement form by the due date indicated. In accordance with the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement, vendors who fail to submit the acknowledgement form by the due date will be **terminated**.

- 🌱 The individual completing the acknowledgement form is **required** to conduct annual WIC training with store personnel.
- 🌱 The training must be documented, and the documentation must be on file for all store personnel.
- 🌱 The documentation must clearly indicate WIC training, employee name, and date the training was conducted.

New Employee Training Requirements

The training sessions used during the face-to-face vendor or virtual training are available on our website to use for training new employees. New employee WIC training documentation must be on file for all store personnel. The documentation must clearly indicate WIC training, employee name, and date the training was conducted.

Training Acknowledgement Form

If your store does not have an official training acknowledgement form, you can use the Alabama WIC Program training acknowledgement form on the Department's website at: <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/wic/vendors.html>. Failure to provide documented proof of annual employee WIC procedures training is a violation of the Alabama WIC Program. If detected, the applicable sanction will be assessed, and continued violations will result in disqualification from the Alabama WIC Program.

WIC Acronym and Logo

- 🍎 A WIC authorized vendor is not permitted to use the acronym "WIC" or the WIC logo, including close facsimiles thereof, in total or in part, either in the official name in which the vendor is registered or in the name under which it does business, if different. In addition, signs promoting the business, as well as advertisements and educational materials aimed at customers, may not use the acronym "WIC" or the WIC logo. Any form of marketing or advertising of the store that gives an impression that the business is owned, operated, approved, favored, or endorsed by the Alabama WIC Program is prohibited. This includes the use of the wording "WIC Only." The Alabama WIC Program only allows the use of State WIC Office issued signage. W.I.C. lettering on the building or outdoor signage is prohibited.
- 🍎 It is a direct violation of the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement and the USDA Federal Regulations that govern the WIC Program for any vendor to use the WIC acronym or

the WIC logo, including close facsimiles thereof, in a prohibited manner. Violators will have their Alabama Vendor Agreement terminated and are subject to an injunction by the USDA.

Shelf Labels

- 🍎 The Alabama WIC Program has available a State WIC Office approved shelf label to identify food items as Alabama WIC approved. These shelf labels are to be placed at the exact spot that contains the WIC approved food item and are provided to authorized vendors at no cost. Applying shelf labels directly on the WIC approved food item is strictly prohibited.
- 🍎 Authorized WIC vendors also can use their own shelf labels. However, these shelf labels must be approved by the Alabama WIC Program Director **prior** to use.
- 🍎 Vendors must submit the final artwork/graphic image of the proposed shelf label, along with a written request for consideration of approval, to the State WIC Office. The request must include the proposed size, color, and any other distinguishing features. All requests must be submitted at least 45 days prior to the intended use date. A decision will be sent by the State WIC Office within 30 days of receipt of request.
- 🍎 The proposed shelf label and request can be submitted via email or regular mail:

Email: wic@adph.state.al.us

or

U.S. Mail: Alabama Department of Public Health
Bureau of Family Health Services – State WIC Office
The RSA Tower – Suite 1300
P.O. Box 303017
Montgomery, AL 36130-3017

- 🍎 Store personnel are responsible for monitoring the use of all posted shelf labels, regardless of the source, to ensure they accurately identify WIC approved foods.

Incentives

The Alabama WIC Program 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.

Incentives are defined as any item, service, or gimmick used to solicit the patronage of a WIC participant. Incentives or promotional activities include free or complimentary gifts

such as, but not limited to, diapers, free deli meals, and other free services, etc., offered exclusively to WIC participants. This includes conducting a raffle to encourage a WIC participant to shop in a particular store.

Offering incentive items solely to WIC participants is prohibited by USDA Federal Regulations.

Vendor Communications

- 🍌 **IMPORTANT:** Correspondence sent by the State WIC Office typically requires some type of follow up action to be taken by either the store owner or manager. The State WIC Office strongly encourages there be a system in place to ensure communication from the Alabama WIC Program is forwarded to the appropriate person and/or shared with store personnel.
- 🍌 It is the policy of the State WIC Office that any communication sent via certified mail may also be sent via first-class mail service. If the certified letter is returned by the post office as unclaimed or refused, then the vendor shall be deemed to have received the first-class letter three days after the letter was placed in the United States Postal Service mail.
- 🍌 Any correspondence to the State WIC Office should be sent to:

Alabama Department of Public Health
Bureau of Family Health Services – State WIC Office
The RSA Tower – Suite 1300
P.O. Box 303017
Montgomery, AL 36130-3017
- 🍌 You are encouraged to maintain a copy of any documentation sent to the State WIC Office.
- 🍌 When you call the State WIC Office at (334) 206-5673, ask to speak to a member of the Vendor Management staff, and always write down the name of the person you spoke to, along with date, time, guidance provided, and any other relevant information given in case further follow up is needed.

Vendor Information Publication

The Vendor Information Publication (VIP) is an e-newsletter for Alabama WIC Vendors. The VIP is an educational tool used to inform WIC vendors and other interested parties about WIC Program changes, compliance issues, eWIC information, cashier reminders, and alerts. The newsletter is published at least quarterly and is available on the Department's website at: <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/wic/vendors.html>.

Retailers are encouraged to take the following actions, after receiving the VIP:

1. Share a copy with store personnel, i.e., cashiers, bookkeepers, customer service managers.
2. Post a copy of the VIP in a central location for others to read.
3. Use the VIP as a resource when conducting cashier and store personnel training.

Confidentiality

In accordance with USDA Federal Regulations governing the WIC Program, 7 CFR §246.26 (e), the Alabama WIC Program may release for general information the name, address, authorization status, phone number, website, email address and store type (e.g. grocery store, chain store, independently owned store).

Information about a WIC participant, whether obtained from the participant or another source, that identifies a WIC participant individually or anyone authorized to act on behalf of the participant is confidential. Store personnel are not allowed to release any information regarding a WIC participant.

WIC COMPLIANCE



WIC Compliance

The Alabama WIC Program takes program fraud and abuse very seriously. In accordance with USDA Federal Regulations governing the WIC Program authorized WIC vendors found to be in violation of the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement or engaging in fraudulent activities shall be sanctioned accordingly. A complete sanction schedule can be found at the end of this handbook and in the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement.

There are two levels of sanctions: federally mandated sanctions and state sanctions. USDA Federal Regulations require mandatory sanctions be imposed for the violations outlined in section 7 CFR 246.12 of Federal Regulations governing the WIC Program. These two levels of violations are not all inclusive. The Department may sanction a vendor for a combination of violations or any other violation of the terms of the Agreement.

Sanctions may include monetary claims, fines, termination of a WIC Vendor Agreement, disqualification of a vendor from the program, and civil money penalties. WIC Program violations can also result in criminal penalties and disqualification from SNAP. Vendor sanctions assigned in the preceding agreement period may impact a vendor's subsequent authorization. Violations of the WIC Program which occurred during the previous agreement period, if any, may be carried over and used as a basis for imposition of a sanction, termination, or disqualification under any subsequent agreements.

Methods of Investigation

WIC Program violations can be detected during routine monitoring visits, compliance investigations, inventory audits, and reviewing program reports. If a violation is detected the State WIC Office must impose the applicable sanction.

Routine monitoring is an overt, on-site monitoring visit during which program representatives identify themselves to vendor personnel.

- 🍎 Authorized WIC vendors are subject to routine monitoring visits at **any time** for compliance to WIC requirements.
- 🍎 During the monitoring visit, the WIC representative will verify minimum stock, check product expiration dates of all WIC approved foods, and verify shelf prices.
- 🍎 They will ask to see all infant formula invoices and interview employees to determine their knowledge of WIC Program requirements.
- 🍎 All records pertinent to this monitoring visit must be available for review by the representative upon request.
- 🍎 If the WIC representative documents any noncompliance during the monitoring visit, the vendor will receive the appropriate sanction for the violation.

- 🍎 Monitoring visits are a good time for store employees to ask the WIC representative any questions or express concerns that they may have regarding the WIC Program.

Compliance investigations are a series of undercover buys to detect noncompliance. 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. In cases where a pattern must be established to impose a sanction, the State WIC Office will notify the vendor, in writing, upon the first act of noncompliance. The vendor will not be notified when it is determined that such notification would jeopardize the investigation.

Inventory audit is the official examination and documentation of a WIC vendor's inventory, accounts, and records to determine whether the vendor has purchased sufficient quantities of supplemental foods to provide participants the quantities redeemed by the vendor during a given time period.

Reviews of program reports are conducted to identify vendors who are out of compliance with program rules and regulations.

Overcharging

Vendor overcharging is intentionally or unintentionally charging more for supplemental food provided to a WIC customer than a non-WIC customer or charging more than the current shelf price for supplemental food provided to a WIC customer.

Vendor overcharging is NOT charging more than the maximum allowable reimbursement level. A vendor can charge less than the maximum allowable reimbursement level and still overcharge the WIC customer.

Vendor overcharging is a serious federal violation that can lead to vendor disqualification.

Vendor Claims

When the Department determines that a vendor received payment for improperly processed transactions a claim will be assessed for repayment.

If a claim is assessed the vendor must reimburse the state WIC agency in full by the due date in the claim notification or the Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement will be terminated.

Vendor Disqualification

Disqualification periods are determined by the type of violation. Program violations are separated into categories by the seriousness of the violation. Each category lists the sanction that will be imposed for the corresponding violation. In the event of a

disqualification, it is unlawful to sell, assign or otherwise transfer ownership to the vendor's partners, members, owners, officers, directors, employees, relatives by blood or marriage, heirs or assigns to avoid disqualification.

- Disqualification from SNAP shall result in an automatic disqualification of the same duration from the WIC Program. When a vendor is disqualified from SNAP or another state's WIC Program, the Alabama WIC Program will disqualify the vendor for the same length of time. In accordance with federal regulations, the disqualification may begin at a later date. The disqualification is not subject to an administrative or judicial review under the WIC Program.
- Civil Money Penalties may be imposed in lieu of disqualification in cases where the Department determines that the disqualification shall result in inadequate participant access. The Department shall determine there is inadequate participant access if geographic barriers or other conditions make participant access unreasonably difficult and no authorized WIC vendors are within ten miles of the violative vendor.

Appeals

Upon receipt of notice for certain sanctions, the vendor may request a full administrative review before an impartial hearing officer. The said notification will detail the vendor's responsibility regarding the appeals process.

The formal administrative hearing regarding adverse actions taken against WIC vendors must adhere to the Hearing of Contested Cases rules found in Chapter 420-1-3 of the Alabama Administrative Code unless those rules are contrary to this Chapter or Part 246, Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

A full administrative review includes the opportunity to be represented by legal counsel at your own expense, examine the evidence upon which the action is based prior to the administrative hearing, present evidence, and witnesses, and confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses.

During the appeal process the vendor is permitted to continue operations. This does not relieve the vendor from the responsibility of continued compliance with the terms of any written agreement with the Department.

The Alabama WIC Director shall allow a vendor to continue in the WIC Program while an administrative review is in process, except for a vendor disqualified due to a trafficking conviction and a vendor disqualified based upon a SNAP disqualification, which is not subject to an administrative or judicial review.

Complaint Process

At the State WIC Office, we are very concerned about program abuse and take all complaints seriously. WIC customers are not allowed to verbally abuse store employees or violate program requirements.

If you suspect a WIC customer or another vendor is abusing the Alabama WIC Program, contact the State WIC Office toll free at 1-888-942-4673 (1-888-WIC-HOPE).

Investigations are conducted on all complaints received. Due to the confidential nature of WIC investigations, no information can be released as to the outcome.

CATEGORIES OF VENDOR VIOLATIONS OF ALABAMA WIC PROGRAM SANCTION SCHEDULE

Program violations are separated into categories by the seriousness of the violation. Each category lists the period of disqualification or fine for the violations and specifies whether warnings are given. Civil money penalties may be imposed in lieu of disqualification in cases where the Department determines that disqualification shall result in inadequate participant access. Vendor may be subject without warning to sanctions, including fines, disqualifications, and civil money penalties in lieu of disqualification, in accordance with Department's sanction schedule.

For Category I through Category IV, the vendor will receive a monetary penalty or disqualification for a second or subsequent offense that occurs within two years of the notice of the first violation.

Category VIII MANDATORY PERMANENT DISQUALIFICATION

1. Convicted of trafficking in food instruments, cash-value vouchers, or eWIC cards or selling firearms, ammunition, explosives, or controlled substances as defined in Section 102 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 802) in exchange for food instruments, cash-value vouchers, or eWIC cards.
2. Permanent disqualification from SNAP.

Category VII MANDATORY DISQUALIFICATION FOR SIX YEARS

1. One incidence of buying or selling one or more food instruments, cash-value vouchers, or eWIC cards for cash (trafficking).
2. One incidence of selling firearms, ammunition, explosives, or controlled substances as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802, in exchange for one or more food instruments, cash-value vouchers, or eWIC cards.

Category VI MANDATORY DISQUALIFICATION FOR THREE YEARS

1. One incidence of the sale of alcohol or alcoholic beverages or tobacco products in exchange for one or more food instruments, cash-value vouchers, or eWIC cards.
2. *A pattern of claiming reimbursement for the sale of an amount of a specific WIC food item that exceeds the vendor's documented inventory of that WIC food item for a specific period of time.
3. **A pattern of vendor overcharges.

4. **A pattern of receiving, transacting and/or redeeming food instruments, cash value vouchers, or eWIC cards outside of authorized channels, including the use of an unauthorized vendor or an unauthorized person.
5. **A pattern of charging for supplemental food not received by the participant.
6. **A pattern of providing credit or non-food items, other than alcohol, alcohol beverages, tobacco products, cash, firearms, ammunition, explosives, or controlled substances as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802, in exchange for one or more food instruments, cash value vouchers or eWIC cards.

Category V MANDATORY DISQUALIFICATION FOR ONE YEAR

1. **A pattern of providing unauthorized food items in exchange for food instruments, cash value vouchers, or eWIC including charging for supplemental foods provided in excess of those listed on the food instrument, cash value voucher or listed on the eWIC account.
2. A pattern of an above-50-percent vendor providing prohibited incentive items to WIC participants.

Category IV Warning on First Offense; On Second or Subsequent Offense, Disqualification for One Year.

1. Requiring a participant to make a cash purchase in order to conduct an eWIC transaction.
2. Failure to scan and enter all sold UPC items, directly from the product being sold into the redemption system.
3. Using a “scan book” or similar device in which a UPC label(s) in such book or other device are used in place of scanning the product UPC directly from the product being sold.
4. Failure to comply with the eWIC operating rules, standards and technical requirements established in the current Operating Rules, and the Technical Implementation Guide (TIG).
5. Attempting to seek restitution from a participant for a rejected eWIC transaction.
6. Accepting eWIC card or cards in promise of providing foods at a future date or at a different location.
7. Contacting a WIC participant regarding an improperly processed or rejected eWIC transaction.

Category III Warning on First Offense; On Second Offense, \$400.00 Fine and Vendor Submits a Written Corrective Action Plan and Attends Mandatory Training as Defined by the Department; On Third or Subsequent Offense, Disqualification for 12 Months.

1. Failing to properly process eWIC or accepting an eWIC transaction outside of the valid dates to use.
2. Issuing a rain-check or IOU when unable to fill a WIC.
3. Failing to mark the price of a WIC-approved food on the shelf or item.
4. Stocking a WIC-approved food outside of the manufacturer's expiration date.
5. Failing to provide the quantity or type of infant formula specified on the eWIC account.
6. Requiring a separate check-out lane for WIC participants.
7. Failure to offer a WIC participant any courtesy offered to other customers, including, but not limited to, a buy one get one promotional opportunity or the use of a store loyalty card, manufacturer and/or store coupon.
8. Threatening or abusing, either verbally or physically, WIC participant or WIC personnel in the conduct of official WIC business.

Category II Warning on First Offense; On Second Offense, \$300.00 Fine and Vendor Submits a Written Corrective Action Plan and Attends Mandatory Training as Defined by the Department; On Third or Subsequent Offense, Disqualification for 9 Months.

1. Requiring additional ID besides the Personal Identification Number (PIN), in order to process an eWIC transaction.
2. Allowing the purchase of a WIC food in an unauthorized container size.

Category I Warning on First Offense; On Second Offense, \$200.00 Fine and Vendor Submits a Written Corrective Action Plan and Attends Mandatory Training as Defined by the Department; On Third or Subsequent Offense, Disqualification for 6 Months.

1. Allowing the exchange of a WIC food item obtained with eWIC cards other than items that are defective, spoiled, or outside their sell/use date at time of redemption.
2. Allowing a refund for a returned food item.

3. Requiring the purchase of a specific brand if more than one WIC-approved food brand is available and allowed by the State WIC Program.
4. Failure to provide employee training on WIC procedures.
5. Vendor making or keeping a record of a participant's name or WIC identification number after an eWIC card is transacted by or on behalf of a participant for which payment has been denied by the WIC Program.
6. Requiring WIC customers to purchase all items in the eWIC account.
7. Failure to provide a WIC participant an itemized cash register receipt with each eWIC transaction.

*A pattern for this violation can be established during a single review where a vendor's records indicate that the vendor's redemptions for a specific food item exceeds the documented inventory for a two-month audit period.

**A pattern for compliance investigations is defined as committing the same violation two (2) or more times during a compliance investigation which consists of at least three (3) buys.

**ALABAMA WIC PROGRAM
MINIMUM INVENTORY REQUIREMENTS
EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 2023 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2026**

Note: Minimum stock criteria for infant formula may continue to be verified by invoices until all effects to the national formula shortage are resolved.

FOOD ITEM	DETAILS		MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS	
			Store Type 1 – 3	Store Type 4
INFANT FORMULA Enfamil Infant (Milk Based)	12.5 oz. Powder		18 Cans	12 Cans
Enfamil Gentlease	12.4 oz. Powder		12 Cans	6 Cans
Enfamil AR	12.9 oz. Powder		6 Cans	6 Cans
Enfamil ProSobee (Soy Based)	12.9 oz. Powder		6 Cans	Must supply upon request.
DRY INFANT CEREAL	8 oz. or 16 oz. Container; Gerber or Beech-Nut Barley, Rice, Whole Wheat, Oatmeal, or Multigrain Not allowed: Organic, DHA, Fruit or other additives, or sensitive. Any 1 st and 2 nd stage fruits and vegetables, these sizes and brands: Beech-Nut 4 oz. jar: Nothing Artificial Added and Naturals. OR Gerber 2 oz. 2-packs, 4 oz. 2-Packs, and 4 oz. jars of Naturals. See Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure for information on items not allowed. Whole Milk including Lactose Free / Lactose Reduced / Calcium Enriched		10 Containers (2 varieties, 4 must be rice)	8 Containers (2 varieties, 4 must be rice)
INFANT FRUITS & VEGETABLES			64 – (4oz. Jars) OR 32 – (8 oz. Packages)	32 – (4 oz. Jars) OR 16 – (8 oz. Packages)
MILK, Whole			4 Gallons	2 Gallons
Least Expensive Brand	Not allowed: buttermilk, flavored, acidophilus treated, condensed, chocolate drink, or organic.			
MILK, Fat Free or 1% Low Fat	Fat Free or 1% Low Fat including Lactose Free / Lactose Reduced / Calcium Enriched		12 Gallons	8 Gallons
Least Expensive Brand	Not allowed: buttermilk, flavored (other than chocolate), acidophilus treated, condensed, chocolate drink, or organic.			
YOGURT, Low Fat or Non-Fat or Low Fat or Non-Fat Greek	16 oz. (1 lb.) or 32 oz. (2 lb.) Yogurt. See the Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure for the approved products, flavors, and combinations allowed.		192 oz. (6 – 32 oz. tubs or equivalent). May be any combination of approved products and flavors.	Must supply upon request.
EGGS	Any size white eggs (small - jumbo) in 6 count, 12 count, or 18 count cartons. Not allowed: brown, hard boiled, organic, specialty eggs such as cage free, grain fed hen, omega 3, or low cholesterol.		6 Dozen	4 Dozen

*See Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure for Additional Details and Pictures

**ALABAMA WIC PROGRAM
MINIMUM INVENTORY REQUIREMENTS
EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 2023 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2026**

Note: Minimum stock criteria for infant formula may continue to be verified by invoices until all effects to the national formula shortage are resolved.

FOOD ITEM		DETAILS		MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS	
		Store Type 1 – 3	Store Type 4		
CHEESE Least Expensive Brand		6 – (16 oz. Packages) OR 12 – (8 oz. Packages) (Must stock 2 of the 6 varieties)	4 – (16 oz. Packages) OR 8 – (8 oz. Packages) (Must stock 2 of the 6 varieties)		
CEREAL 8.9 to 36 oz. Boxes or Bags only. **Whole Grain Cereals	8 oz. or 16 oz. Package. Domestic only. Block, sliced, string, or shredded of the following varieties: Cheddar, Colby, Monterey Jack, Mozzarella, Muenster, Processed American, Provolone, and Swiss. Any combination of the approved types. (Not allowed: cheese food, spread, product, imitation, cubes, sticks, crumbles, cheese from deli, peppers or other added ingredients). General Mills Cheerios**, Multi-Grain Cheerios**, Rice Chex, Corn Chex, Berry Berry Kix**, Honey Kix**, Kix** Kashi Honey Toasted** and Warm Cinnamon** Kellogg's Corn Flakes, Frosted Mini Wheats Original **, Blueberry**, Strawberry**, Frosted Mini Wheats Little Bites Chocolate**, Original**, Rice Krispies, Special K Original Post Honey Bunches of Oats with Almonds, Honey Bunches of Oats, Honey Roasted, Honey Bunches of Oats with Vanilla Bunches **, Great Grains Banana Nut Crunch**, Great Grains Crunchy Pecan** Malt-O-Meal Strawberry Cream Mini Spooners** Quaker Instant Oatmeal (Original) **, Instant Grits (Original)	18 Boxes (Must stock 6 different varieties and 3 of the varieties must be whole grain)	9 Boxes (Must stock 3 different varieties and 1 of the varieties must be whole grain)		
BROWN RICE	14 – 16 oz. Bag or Box. Any brand regular, instant, or boil-in-bag. Not allowed: seasoned, white, frozen, gourmet blends, or organic.	6 – (14 – 16 oz.)	4 – (14 – 16 oz.)		
48 oz. or 96 oz. JUICE All brands must be 100% juice and contain no added sweetener. Must have 72 mg (80%) Vitamin C per 8 fl. oz. or 120% Vitamin C (when mg not listed on the label).	Juicy Juice – all flavors (Not allowed: Teasers and Organic); Any brand in 48 oz. or 96 oz. shelf stable containers in the following flavors (Apple, Cranberry, Grape, Grapefruit, Orange, Pineapple, White Grape). See the Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure for the approved products and flavors.	8 Containers	6 Containers		
64 oz. or 128 oz. JUICE All brands must be 100% juice and contain no added sweetener. Must have 72 mg (80%) Vitamin C per 8 fl. oz. or 120% Vitamin C (when mg not listed on the label).	Juicy Juice – all flavors (Not allowed: Teasers and Organic), Northland Cranberry Juice, Welch's, and Ocean Spray. Any brand in 64 oz. or 128 oz. shelf stable containers in the following flavors (Apple, Cranberry, Grape, Grapefruit, Orange, Pineapple, White Grape). See the Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure for the approved products and flavors.	10 Containers	8 Containers		
64 oz. or 128 oz. Refrigerated Container	100% orange juice only. May contain calcium.				

***See Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure for Additional Details and Pictures**

**ALABAMA WIC PROGRAM
MINIMUM INVENTORY REQUIREMENTS
EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 2023 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2026**

Note: Minimum stock criteria for infant formula may continue to be verified by invoices until all effects to the national formula shortage are resolved.

FOOD ITEM	DETAILS	MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS	
		Store Type 1 – 3	Store Type 4
PEANUT BUTTER	16 – 18 oz. Container. Any brand. May be chunky, creamy, crunchy, or low sodium. Not allowed: whipped, spreads, omega 3, reduced fat, organic, combinations with jelly, honey, etc.	8 Containers	6 Containers
WHOLE WHEAT AND WHOLE GRAIN BREADS	16 oz. Package. Nature's Own 100% Whole Grain Sugar Free, Nature's Own 100% Whole Wheat w/ Honey, Sara Lee 100% Whole Wheat, Lewis 100% Whole Wheat, Bunny 100% Whole Wheat, Kroger 100% Whole Wheat, Wonder 100% Whole Wheat, Arnold's Hamburger Buns 100% Whole Wheat, and Arnold's Hotdog Buns 100% Whole Wheat.	12 – (16 oz. Packages)	6 – (16 oz. Packages)
FRUITS AND VEGETABLES	See Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure for information on approved fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables.	Must stock a total of \$48 retail value; including 4 varieties of fresh or frozen fruits and 4 varieties of fresh or frozen vegetables.	Must stock a total of \$36 retail value; including 3 varieties of fresh or frozen fruits and 3 varieties of fresh or frozen vegetables.

The items listed below are not part of the required minimum stock; however, as an Alabama authorized WIC vendor, if a customer requests an item below, you are required to supply the item(s) upon request.

FOOD ITEM	DETAILS	SUPPLY UPON REQUEST
INFANT MEAT	2.5 oz. Container; Gerber or Beech-Nut plain meat with broth or gravy. Not allowed: meat sticks, DHA, or organic.	SUPPLY UPON REQUEST
SPECIAL MILK	Chocolate Milk low fat or fat-free (1% or skim), half or whole gallons. Lactose free (half gallons or 96 oz.) Whole Milk, 1 quart. Evaporated (Canned Milk), 12 oz. Can. Carnation and Pet brands only. Dry Milk (Powdered), 9.6 oz. or 25.6 oz. container. Ultra High Temperature, 32 oz. Not allowed: buttermilk, flavored (other than chocolate), acidophilus treated, condensed, organic, chocolate drink, and 2% milk.	SUPPLY UPON REQUEST

***See Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure for Additional Details and Pictures**

**ALABAMA WIC PROGRAM
MINIMUM INVENTORY REQUIREMENTS
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Note: Minimum stock criteria for infant formula may continue to be verified by invoices until all effects to the national formula shortage are resolved.

FOOD ITEM		DETAILS	
YOGURT, Whole Milk		32 oz. (2 lb.) Whole Milk Yogurt. Any brand plain or vanilla. Stonyfield Organic all flavors.	SUPPLY UPON REQUEST
DRY PEAS OR BEANS		Not allowed: Greek or organic (other than Stonyfield) 16 oz. Bag. Any brand. Not allowed: added flavorings or organic.	SUPPLY UPON REQUEST
CANNED PEAS OR BEANS		15 -16 oz. Canned peas/beans. Any brand and must be a mature legume. (Ex. Blackeye Peas, Black, Pinto, Garbanzo, Red, Navy, White, Lima, Butter, and Kidney Beans). Not allowed: vegetables, organic, added fats, meats, seasonings, oils, sauces, organic, or creamed style.	SUPPLY UPON REQUEST
11.5 oz. - 12 oz. FROZEN JUICE		Dole Pineapple; Seneca Apple; Old Orchard – All flavors with green lids allowed. Orange Juice 12 oz. (may contain calcium). Any Brand. Any size, can or foil pouch, up to a total of 30 oz.	SUPPLY UPON REQUEST
FISH		TUNA Any brand light tuna, chunk style packed in water. SALMON Any brand pink salmon. Not allowed: Packed in oil. White, albacore or yellow fin tuna. Sockeye or red salmon. Fresh or frozen fish. Lunch packs, kits or tuna salad.	SUPPLY UPON REQUEST
100 % WHOLE WHEAT OR WHOLE GRAIN PASTA		16 oz. Package. 100% whole wheat/grain pasta, any shape, any brand. Not allowed: Organic, added seasonings, sugars, fats, oils, salt, egg noodles, gluten free, veggie, or brown rice pasta.	SUPPLY UPON REQUEST
WHOLE GRAIN TORTILLA (WHEAT AND CORN)		16 oz. Package. See Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure for approved brands.	SUPPLY UPON REQUEST

***See Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure for Additional Details and Pictures**

eWIC DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Automated Clearing House (ACH): An electronic network for financial transactions in the United States. ACH processes large volumes of credit and debit transactions in batches.

Approved Product List (APL): The list of Universal Product Codes (UPCs) and Price Look-Up (PLU) codes for WIC approved foods, fruits, and vegetables that are authorized for purchase by WIC customers.

Benefit Balance: The unspent food benefits which are available for purchase by a cardholder.

Cash Value Benefits (CVB): A fixed dollar amount on the electronic benefit transfer card used by a participant to obtain authorized fruits and vegetables.

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT): A WIC benefit access method that permits electronic access to WIC food benefits using a plastic card. **EBT for the Alabama WIC Program is referred to as eWIC.**

eWIC Capable: The WIC vendor demonstrates their cash register system or payment device can accurately and securely obtain WIC food balances associated with an eWIC card, maintain the necessary files such as the APL, and successfully complete eWIC purchases.

eWIC Processor: The entity contracted with the Alabama WIC Program for the implementation, maintenance, and operation of the Alabama WIC Program's eWIC system that acts as the agent of the Program to process and settle eWIC transactions.

Food Benefit: The individual WIC approved foods a participant receives for a selected month.

Integrated Vendor: The WIC software is part of the store's cash register system. Integrating WIC into the Point-of-Sale (POS) system and normal business processes is the preferred solution as it allows grocers to manage inventory, payment, and settlement for WIC items within the same system that manages transactions for cash and other payment tenders.

International Federation of Produce Standards (IFPS): The federation maintains and manages an international database for Price Look-Up (PLU) numbers. The long-term objective of the federation is to improve the supply chain efficiency of the fresh produce

industry through developing, implementing, and managing harmonized international standards.

Multi-function Equipment: POS equipment obtained by a WIC vendor through commercial suppliers, which can support WIC EBT and other payment tender types. This is also known as an integrated system.

Personal Identification Number (PIN): A numeric password used by a WIC participant to authenticate the participant to the eWIC system.

Point of Sale (POS) Terminal: An electronic device used to process eWIC card payments at authorized vendor locations.

Primary Account Number (PAN): The 16-digit number on the front of an eWIC card.

Price Look-Up (PLU) code: An identification number placed on produce sold at authorized vendor locations.

Stand-Beside Vendor: The eWIC software is on a WIC only stand-beside POS device and can support only WIC payments.

Single-function Equipment: POS equipment such as barcode scanners, card readers, PIN pads, and printers provided to an authorized WIC vendor solely for use with the WIC Program.

Statewide eWIC: When the state agency has converted all WIC clinics to eWIC, and all authorized WIC vendors are capable of transacting eWIC purchases.

Third Party Processor (TPP): A contracted company that routes transactions and makes consolidated settlement and payments to the WIC vendor.

Universal Product Code (UPC): A barcode printed on the packaging of foods to aid in identifying an item. The purpose of UPCs is to make it easy to identify product features, such as the brand name, item, size, and color, when an item is scanned at checkout.

Value Added Reseller: A company that adds features or services to an existing product, then resells it (usually to end-users) as an integrated product or complete “turn-key” solution.

AVAILABLE WIC MATERIALS

The items below can be ordered directly from the State WIC Office:

Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook – The Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook ensures that vendors are in compliance with regulations and procedures.

Alabama WIC Approved Foods Brochure – This detailed food brochure includes pictures and descriptions of Alabama WIC approved food items. A copy of this brochure must be available for store personnel. Each participant is given a brochure during their local clinic visit.

Alabama WIC Window Clings – A window cling identifying the vendor as an authorized WIC vendor.

Alabama WIC Shelf Labels – Shelf labels are used to identify products as Alabama WIC approved. Utilizing shelf labels assists participants in easily identifying Alabama WIC approved products. In accordance with federal regulations shelf labels are never to be affixed directly on a WIC approved product.

Cashier: eWIC Essentials – The Alabama WIC Program Cashier: eWIC Essentials is specifically designed for use in training new cashiers regarding eWIC program requirements.

STATE WIC OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION

State WIC Office Vendor Management staff are available to assist vendors when questions or problems arise.

Contact Information:

State WIC Office:

Telephone: 334-206-5673
Toll free: 1-888-942-4673 (1-888-WIC-HOPE)
Fax: 334-206-2914

Mailing Address:

Alabama Department of Public Health
Bureau of Family Health Services – State WIC Office
The RSA Tower – Suite 1300
P.O. Box 303017
Montgomery, AL 36130-3017

Note: If you are sending via UPS or FEDEX, Send to the address below:

Alabama Department of Public Health
Bureau of Family Health Services – State WIC Office
201 Monroe Street, Suite 1300
Montgomery, AL 36104

Website: <http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/WIC>

USDA NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation)¹, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf> from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
- (2) fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: Program.Intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

¹ *The Alabama Department of Public Health makes no concessions as to the scope of the terms "sex" or "discrimination" as they appear in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Food and Nutrition Act or implementing regulations.*

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION CLAUSE

Vendor will comply with Titles VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title II and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 2022 as amended by the ADA Amendment Act of 2008, and all applicable Federal and State laws, rules and regulations implementing the foregoing statutes with respect to nondiscrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation)¹, or disability, as defined in the above laws and regulations. Sub-Recipient shall not discriminate against any otherwise qualified disabled applicant for, or recipient of aid, benefits, or services or any employee or person on the basis of physical or mental disability in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or the Americans With Disabilities Act of 2022.

¹ *The Alabama Department of Public Health makes no concessions as to the scope of the terms “sex” or “discrimination” as they appear in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Food and Nutrition Act or implementing regulations.*

