

wicvip

TRAINING EDITION ★ SEPTEMBER 2024

VENDOR INFORMATION PUBLICATION





TRAINING EDITION



An e-newsletter for Alabama WIC

September 2024



For 50 years, WIC has been at the center of positive public health outcomes, championing access to healthy food, breastfeeding support, health screenings, and referrals... And we couldn't have done that without you, our vendors!

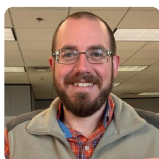
A Quick History Lesson:

- WIC was established by Congress in 1972 and the first WIC Clinic opened in 1974.
- In 1975, Alabama's annual WIC caseload grew from 5,780 to 10,494.
- In 1977, Alabama's number of WIC participants increased from 17,066 to 24,254.
- In 1980, Alabama's WIC Program became operational statewide.
- Today, Alabama WIC serves over 110,000 participants and has over 600 authorized WIC vendors statewide.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

We want to offer a sincere thank you to everyone who already responded to us with new or updated points of contact. Great job! For those that have not responded yet, Alabama WIC wants to keep you up to date with new information, updated procedures, and loop you in when updates or outages occur. Please be sure to update us with your best point of contact for your store.

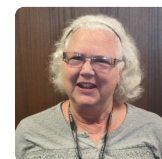
YOUR VENDOR TEAM



AUSTIN ATKINS



DAVID JOHNSON



DEBBIE FREE

WICVendorTraining@adph.state.al.us

Contact us via the email above or call us toll free at 334-206-5673 or 1-888-WIC-HOPE (1-888-942-4673).

THE WIC SHOPPER APP IS HERE!



A Useful Tool For Everyone!

We are so excited to launch a new app and even more excited for how much better it will serve both our participants and vendors. **We plan to disable our current Alabama WIC App on 10/31/2024 and fully transition to WIC Shopper at that time.**

Here are all the wonderful things the new app can do for you and participants. Download and start using it today!

- *Scan Barcodes*

Scan barcodes to check and see if a product is WIC approved.

- *Search Products*

Search products by name and UPC.

- *Check The Authorized Food List*

Use this as a quick reference to know what is or is not WIC Approved.

- *Suggest Products*

Submit items that you think should be WIC Approved.

- *Find WIC Stores*

Participants can use location services or search to find the nearest WIC Vendor.

- *Get The Most Out of Produce Benefits*

Participants can use guides that help them maximize their Cash Value Benefits for produce.

- *See Purchase History*

Participants can review past purchases and reference frequent purchases.

And SO Much More!

- *Find WIC Clinics*

- *Life Hacks*

- *WIC Health*

- *Browse Recipes*

- *Breastfeeding Support*

- *Produce and Cereal Calculators*

Use these handy calculators to maximize produce and cereal benefits.

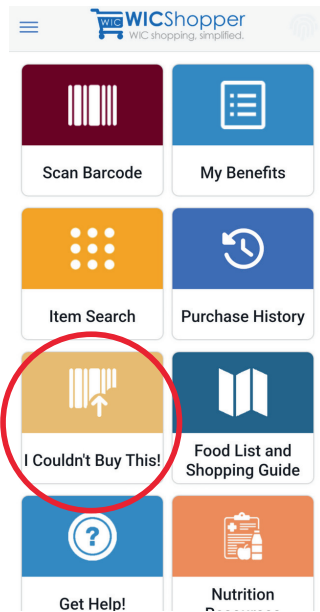
- *Check Benefits*

Participants can check their benefits in real time to see what they have available.

- *Parenting Tips and Milestones*

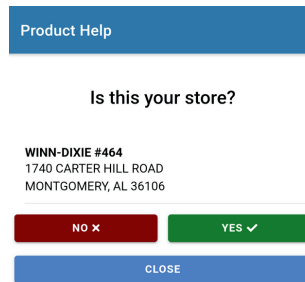
Features guides, articles, and ways to track the development of children as they grow.

HOW TO SUBMIT A PRODUCT ON THE ALABAMA WIC SHOPPER APP



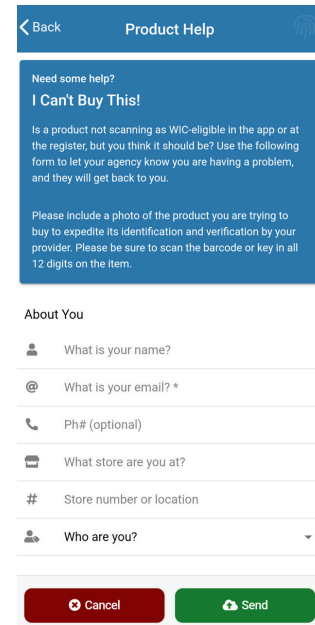
Step 1

Select the “I Couldn’t Buy This” option.



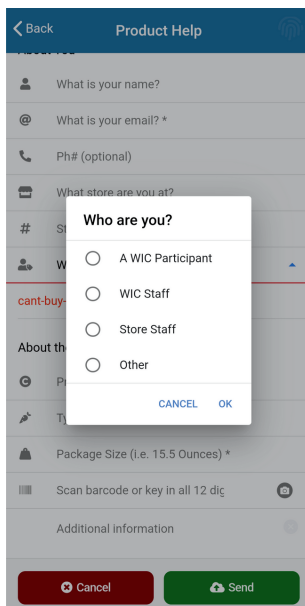
Step 2

The app will try to suggest the closest store, select yes or no.



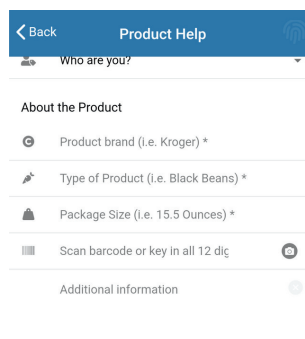
Step 3

Provide all of the required information.



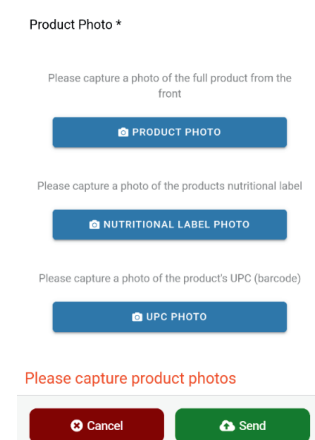
Step 4

Select “Store Staff”.



Step 5

Complete the submission by entering the product information.



Step 6

Submit a photo of the product, nutrition label, and the UPC.

THINGS TO REMEMBER AS AN AUTHORIZED ALABAMA WIC VENDOR

Providing Incentive Items Is Strictly Prohibited



The Alabama WIC Program prohibits the use of incentives to entice WIC participants to shop at 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.

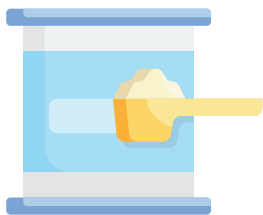
Incentives are defined as any item, service, or gimmick used to solicit the patronage of a WIC participant. Incentives include free or complimentary gifts such as diapers, free deli meals, other services, etc. offered exclusively to WIC participants.

Do You Know If Your Store Is Violating The Vendor Sanction Schedule?

It is important to be familiar with the vendor sanction schedule to ensure your store is in compliance. Program violations are separated into categories by the seriousness of the violation. Refer to the [Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook](#) or WIC vendor agreement for a complete list of violations.



Do You Purchase Your Infant Formula From An Approved Source?



All Alabama authorized WIC vendors and those applying to be an Alabama authorized WIC vendor must purchase infant formula from approved sources. You can access the Alabama WIC approved formula supplier list on our website:

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

Let's Talk About Bread

Alabama WIC would like to remind you that bread waivers allowing for 20 oz. bread redemptions are expired. All vendors should ensure they are [meeting the minimum stock requirements](#) for 16 oz. bread options so that WIC participants can find the appropriate size for their benefits.



16 oz ✓



20 oz ✗

PROGRAM INTEGRITY, ROUTINE MONITORING, AND OPPORTUNITIES

WIC Program Integrity

To maintain the integrity of the Alabama WIC Program, routine monitoring visits, inventory audits, and undercover compliance buys are conducted at authorized vendors across the state. These are used to detect noncompliance and fraud.

Common reasons for warnings include failure to maintain the minimum stock, missing training acknowledgement forms, stocking and selling expired food items, and failure to properly map fresh fruits/vegetables. Should you have any questions, please consult your WIC vendor guidelines and the [Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook](#) or call the State WIC Office toll free at 1-888-WIC-HOPE (1-888-942-4673).



Checklist For Routine Monitoring Visits

As a currently authorized WIC vendor, you are subject to a routine monitoring visit at any time. A routine monitoring visit is an overt, onsite monitoring visit in which a program representative identifies themselves. In order to be prepared, please keep the information below in an easily accessible place because it will be requested during the monitoring visit. Failure to provide any of these will result in the applicable sanction.



- [Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook](#)
- [Vendor Information Publication \(VIP\) eNewsletter](#).
- Documentation/Invoices showing you are receiving infant formula only from approved sources.
- A Valid Food Permit.
- Documentation on employee WIC training (Training Acknowledgement Form).

An Opportunity For A Conversation

When a WIC representative conducts a routine monitoring, this is an opportunity for us to have a conversation. It is a perfect time to ask questions about the program, discuss issues you have encountered, bring problems to our attention, etc. We are here for you and want to build a relationship with all of our vendors!



APPROVED PRODUCT LIST, SELF-CHECKOUT, AND STORE CHANGES

Downloading The Alabama WIC Approved Product List (A P L)

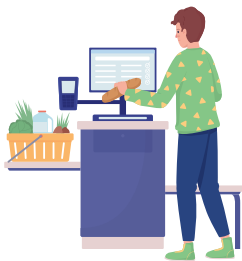
This is a friendly reminder to update your APL at least once within a 24 hour period. If APL modifications are made, **newly approved** products may not process as WIC approved and **newly removed** products may cause transaction issues. Your bottom line may be impacted by the inability to process eWIC transactions.



Per the agreement, it is required that all authorized WIC vendors connect to the eWIC processor's system to receive updates from the APL at least once every 24 hours.

Self-Checkout

Alabama eWIC can be used at self-checkout for stores that have gained approval. For a list of WIC vendors approved for self checkout, visit the Alabama eWIC website.



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

If you are interested in accepting eWIC at self-checkouts in your store(s), please contact the State WIC Office to discuss requirements and setup a Level III certification of your self-checkout register's software.

What To Do If Your Store Closes, Is Sold, Or Has Other Business Structure Changes

Vendor agreements are **NOT** transferrable from one owner to another.

The State WIC Office must be notified in writing no less than **15 days** prior to any changes in information such as: change in store name, ownership, management, business structure, store sale, or closing. The effective date must be specified in the letter. Review your Alabama WIC Vendor Agreement or your [Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook](#) for additional information.



UPC SUBMISSIONS, MINIMUM STOCK REQUIREMENTS, AND PROGRAM FRAUD

UPC Submission Process

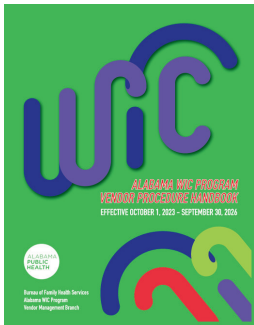
If you have items that are not scanning and you believe they are WIC eligible based on the current Alabama WIC Foods Brochure, submit these items for consideration. Complete the Alabama UPC Submission Form and email to: alwicupc@adph.state.al.us. The form must be completed in its entirety for the submission to be considered. Remember, you can also submit using the WIC Shopper app, demonstrated on a previous page.



Note: Submissions are not a guarantee of placement on the Alabama APL.

Know The Minimum Stock Requirements

As part of the authorization process to become a vendor in the Alabama WIC Program, a vendor must meet the criteria for participation which includes having the minimum stock.



Once authorized, your store must continue to maintain the minimum stock. This allows multiple participants to come into your store on the same day and purchase all the items available on their eWIC card without depleting your stock. The [minimum stock requirements](#) are based on your store's assigned peer group. Vendors are placed in peer groups based on store type and number of cash registers.

For a complete list of peer groups with descriptions and a detailed listing of the Alabama WIC Program [minimum stock requirements](#), refer to the [Alabama WIC Program Vendor Procedure Handbook](#).

WIC Program Fraud Or Abuse... What Should You Do?

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-WIC-HOPE (1-888-942-4673). We take all complaints about the program seriously.



TO ENTER OR NOT TO ENTER MANUALLY...?

We would like to remind our vendors that it is against procedure to enter WIC card numbers manually. If a participant does not have their card, please inform them to **contact their local WIC clinic** about getting a new card. **Under no circumstances** should a vendor enter the number manually be it from a photo of the card or the information written down on paper. It is against the program rules to enter eWIC card numbers manually **unless** the card is physically present and the issue involves the inability to swipe the card for the transaction. Below are situations that may arise where manual entry is and is not allowed:



Manual Entry Is Allowed:

- The participant has their card physically present but the swipe is not registering.



Manual Entry Not Allowed:

- The participant says they forgot their card at home or in the car, but they have a photo of the card on their phone.
- The participant says they lost their card but they have the number written down on a piece of paper.

Exchanging Expired or Damaged Products

Let's take a moment to discuss exchanges. Exchanges can be made for expired or damaged items as long as it is the exact same product. Below are some examples of when it is and isn't ok to do an exchange:



This is ok!

A customer purchased an 8oz block of cheddar cheese only to get home and discover it is molded. They may **exchange** it for another 8oz block of WIC Approved cheese.



This is ok!

A customer purchased Enfacare Infant formula only to get home and discover it was already open. They may **exchange** it for another container of Enfacare Infant formula.



NOT ok!

They cannot exchange it for an 8oz block of non-WIC Approved cheese or a 16oz block of cheddar cheese. The exchange has to be one-to-one items.



NOT ok!

They cannot exchange it for a different formula. If the customer wants a different formula, please refer them to their local WIC clinic.

MATERIALS WE PROVIDE

Here at Alabama WIC, we want to make sure that you have everything you need to succeed, from materials to educate customers and staff to signage that lets people know you offer WIC and which items are WIC approved. Here are some of the materials we provide and suggested uses for them:

eWIC Essentials Sheet:

A quick reference guide for cashiers on eWIC and how to troubleshoot transactions.



WIC Shelf Labels:

Lets customers know which foods are WIC approved. We provide 150 - 200 shelf labels upon joining the WIC program and more are available as needed.



Window Clings:

Lets customers know that you accept WIC.



WIC Vendor Procedure Handbook:

Contains rules, procedures, and guidelines. It is a great reference tool and reminder of what we require of our WIC Vendors.



Approved Foods Brochure:

Designed to be a quick reference for staff and customers on which foods are WIC approved.



PRODUCT MAPPING (LINKING)

The Alabama WIC Program requires retailers to map (link) produce to an Alabama WIC-approved Price Look-Up (PLU) code. All fresh fruits and vegetables are WIC-approved. However, only correctly mapped produce will be recognized and approved during WIC transactions. This means that any fresh fruit or vegetable without an International Federation of Produce Standards (IFPS)-approved PLU code will not be recognized and approved. Participants continue to experience barriers redeeming cash value benefits (CVBs)

due to incorrect mapping of fresh fruits and/or vegetables. Mixed bags of different produce items are frequently affected (e.g., bag of apples and oranges). Bulk bags of the same produce item have also been affected (e.g., bag of apples). This results in WIC participants not being able to redeem CVBs and lost sales to your store. Please ensure all produce is correctly mapped to the exact or most closely related PLU code. Alabama WIC is in favor of utilizing the generic 4469 PLU to ensure WIC participants are able to purchase fresh produce that is incorrectly mapped.

Store Responsibility:

- Map/link all fresh fruits and vegetables to an IFPS-approved PLU code.
- Contact your Electronic Cash Register (ECR) Provider for specific instructions as every ECR is different.
- Ensure store personnel are trained to address issues that may occur.

Additional mapping information can be found by visiting the IFPS website at:

<https://www.ifpsglobal.com/>

Or the Alabama eWIC for Vendors page at:

<http://alabamapublichealth.gov/wic/vendors.html>





This institution is an equal opportunity provider.