

State of Utah
Department of Health
Division of Family Health & Preparedness
WIC Program
PO Box 141013
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-1013
www.wic.utah.gov
1-877-942-5437

### module

## OVERVIEW

The Cashier's Training Module has been developed for compliance with the annual vendor training requirements for cashiers. This module will cover the following areas:

- 1) The purpose of the WIC Program
- 2) WIC authorized foods
- 3) Transacting checks
- 4) WIC customer service
- 5) WIC Violations
- 6) What's new in WIC

### training

### **CREDIT**

Approximate working time is 30 minutes; 20 minutes reading time and 10 minutes post-test.

- Training Credit: completion of the <u>Training Module for Cashiers</u> and the post-test will satisfy the annual cashier training requirement.
- In addition, it is suggested to watch the Utah WIC Vendor Training Video. The video is available on DVD or on the WIC website, www.wic.utah.gov, by clicking on vendors tab and then training.
- Although the <u>Cashier Training Module</u> is designed with the cashier in mind, other managers and supervisors should complete this training, and in addition must read the Vendor Manual.
- Bookkeeping staff may benefit from completing this module, but **must also read the <u>Manual for</u> Bookkeeping and Cash-Office Staff**.
- In order for your store to receive credit for completion of the WIC annual training requirement, the
  post-test must be completed by all staff that handle WIC transactions. Completed tests must be
  submitted to the State WIC Office within the stated deadline for scoring. Post-tests that do not
  achieve a passing score of 75% will be returned to the vendor for the staff person to redo the
  training module.
- All newly hired staff who will be handling WIC transactions should complete this training module and the Vendor Training Video, but it is not required to submit post-tests to the State WIC Office.
- Once every three years a representative of the WIC program will provide face-to-face interactive training for each store.

### The

# **Purpose** of WIC



WIC is a special supplemental food program for pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to five years of age. Participants must meet specific income criteria and be determined to be at a nutritional risk by a qualified health professional. In order to prevent the occurrence of health problems, WIC participants are provided with foods high in iron, protein, calcium, and vitamins A, C and D. In addition to receiving food supplements, WIC participants receive nutrition education, and when appropriate, referrals to other health and social service programs. The WIC Program also supports mothers in breastfeeding and provides breastfeeding education and guidance.

The WIC program has 3 tiers, national, state and local. WIC is nationally funded and regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The WIC program in Utah is administered and regulated by the Utah Department of Health, Division of Family Health and Preparedness (UDOH). Local health departments operate the program with duties that include providing WIC participants with nutrition education and checks tailored specifically for individual nutritional needs.

### **FUN FACT:**

Studies have shown that WIC participation helps reduce Medicaid costs and medical expenses.

### THE RETAILER'S ROLE

The Utah WIC Program operates within the retail grocery system on a check issuance structure. Checks are issued to participants by local agencies every 3 months. Participants then take the checks to authorized grocery retailers to redeem. Authorized grocery retailers exchange the WIC check for the appropriate authorized WIC food items(s) in the quantities and sizes specified on the check.

The retailer's role in the program is to provide only those WIC foods indicated on the check in the quantities specified.

### FUN FACT:

The Utah WIC program is a major purchaser in the retail grocery system. Each year approximately 40 million dollars of food is purchased with Utah WIC checks.

## Authorized Foods



Every October the Utah WIC Program publishes a food booklet that outlines all the authorized

WIC foods for the year. The foods must be approved by USDA and the Utah WIC Program. There is typically a three month transition period, during which time the food booklet is distributed to WIC participants. Throughout the transition period the foods from both the new food booklet and the old food booklet should be honored at the vendor.

All cashiers are required to familiarize themselves with the current Utah WIC Authorized Food Booklet. Each check stand should have a food booklet for easy reference. Please take a few minutes to read through the food booklet to learn which items are approved. Ask your manager or contact the State WIC Office if you have any questions about WIC approved foods.

### STORE BRAND/PRIVATE LABELS

In order to maximize the WIC food budget it is policy that WIC participants purchase store brand/private labels for most food items. Since store brand/private labels are cheaper than name brands Utah WIC can maximize the number of participants to benefit from the program.

A store brand or a private label is defined as a brand owned by a retailer or supplier who gets its goods made by a contract manufacturer under the retailer or supplier label as opposed to a brand made under a manufacturer or producer brand.

In order to better understand the concept of store brand/private label, please review the following policy:

A store brand (also called a private label) must be purchased when indicated in the Utah Authorized WIC Foods booklet. Some examples of store brands/private labels include: Western Family, Kroger, Great Value, Albertsons/Signature Kitchens, Market Pantry, WinCo, (Malt-O-Meal cereals are authorized under this definition). Other store brands/private labels may be available. If a store carries more than one store brand/private label then either product may be purchased regardless of price. If the store does not carry a store brand/private label for the WIC food item, then the cheapest brand can be purchased.

When certain brands are specified in the Authorized WIC Foods booklet, only those brands listed may be purchased.

### FAQ'S:

- DOES ANY STORE BRAND/PRIVATE LABEL WORK?
   If a food item requires the purchase of a Store Brand/Private Label, any Store Brand/Private Label may be sold. Exceptions are cereal and juice; only the specific Store Brands/Private Labels listed in the authorized food booklet may be purchased.
- WHAT IF A NAME BRAND IS CHEAPER THAN A STORE BRAND/PRIVATE LABEL?
   According to the definition of "Store Brand/Private Label", the WIC customer cannot substitute
   a manufacturer's brand name item for a Store Brand/Private Label item even if the name
   brand item is on sale for less than or equal to the cost of the Store Brand/Private Label item.
   Nor can the WIC customer purchase a name brand item if the Store Brand/Private Label item
   is temporarily out of stock. The national brand cannot be purchased.
- CAN STORE BRAND/PRIVATE LABELS BE SUBSTITUTED FOR NAME BRANDS?
  If a food item is specifically listed by brand name on the check (for example, infant formula),
  then that specific brand item must be purchased. A Store Brand/Private Label brand CANNOT
  be substituted.
- WHEN DOES A WIC PARTICIPANT NEED A SPECIAL FOOD LETTER FROM THE STATE AGENCY OR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT?
   If there is an exception for a WIC client to purchase a name brand item instead of the required Store Brand/Private Label item, the WIC client must present a Special Food Letter printed on State Agency or Local Health Department letterhead stating what specific food item(s) can be purchased in the place of the Store Brand/Private Label.
- CAN YOU SUBSTITUTE COLD CEREAL OR JUICE IF STOCK IS DEPLETED?
   Substitutions of national brand name cold cereals or juices will not be permitted even if the
   store is temporarily out of stock. The Utah WIC Vendor Agreement lists inventory
   requirements for Store Brand/Private Label items. It is the responsibility of the retail facility to
   ensure their stock and ordering patterns falls within the minimum requirements.
- WHAT IF THERE ISN'T A STORE BRAND/PRIVATE LABEL EQUIVALENT TO A
  NATIONAL BRAND?
  Even if the customer wants a specific national brand name or type of cereal, but is not able to
  find an exact equivalent in the Store Brand/Private Label they must choose from the Store
  Brand/Private Label variety that is available on the shelf at the store.
- WHAT SHOULD THE STORE DO IF THEY CANNOT GET STORE BRANDS OR PRIVATE LABEL STOCK FROM THEIR SUPPLIER?
   The store must contact the State WIC Office at 877-942-5437. The WIC vendor cannot sell brand name juices or cold cereal to WIC customers without written authorization from the State WIC Office.
- WHAT CAN THE RETAILER EXCHANGE FOR WIC CHECKS?
   The retailer may provide only the authorized supplemental foods listed on the check. The retailer may not provide unauthorized food items, nonfood items, cash, or credit (including rain checks) in exchange for WIC checks.

 CAN THE STORE TRANSACT ANY REFUNDS/EXCHANGES AFTER THE INITIAL WIC PURCHASE?

The retailer may not provide refunds or permit exchanges for authorized supplemental foods obtained with checks, except for exchanges of an identical authorized supplemental food item when the original authorized food item is defective, spoiled, or out of date. An identical authorized food item means the exact brand and size as the original authorized supplemental food item.

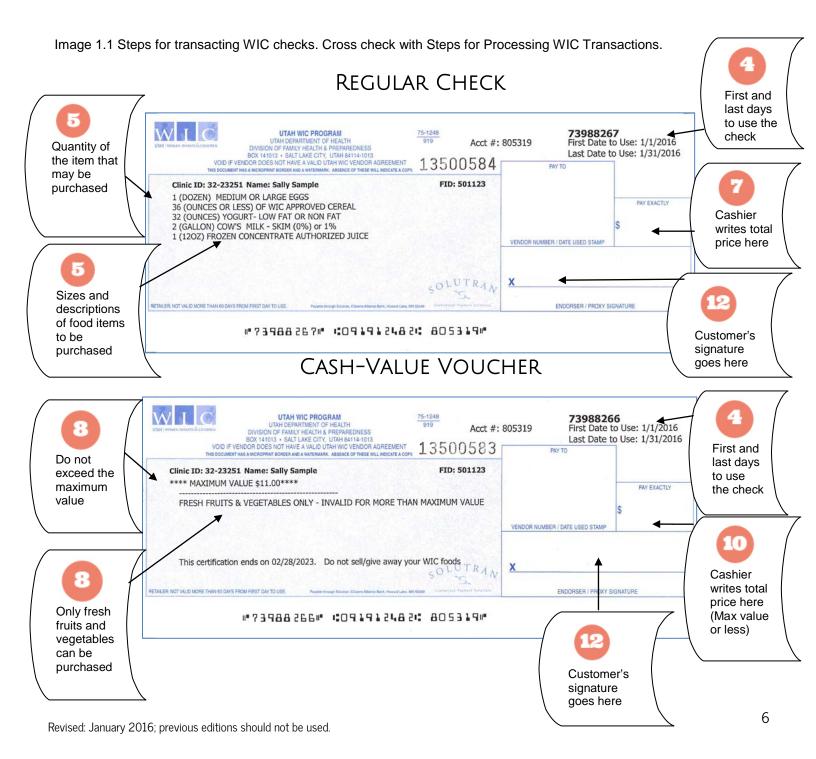
### **FUN FACT:**

Each retailer must stock a variety of WIC food items in the quantities and sizes specified in the Vendor Agreement in accordance with the vendor's peer group. Stores must acquire additional quantities or brands of infant formula in order to redeem checks within 72 hours of notification of need without causing participant inconvenience or hardship. Refer to the Food Inventory Requirements listed in the Vendor Manual or in the Vendor Agreement to determine the minimum inventory levels for your store's peer group.



Health professionals follow USDA regulations at the WIC clinic to determine which WIC foods and the quantities of those foods the WIC participant is allowed to receive.

There are two kinds of WIC checks: 1) Regular WIC checks list specific food items, including the quantity and the description; and 2) a cash-value voucher check (CVV) is used specifically for fresh fruits and vegetables. The cash-value voucher has a maximum dollar value printed on the check.



### **WIC TRANSACTIONS**

### Steps for Processing WIC Transactions

- 1. Check to see that the customer has a WIC ID Packet. If the customer does not have a WIC ID Packet the cashier cannot complete the transaction. Politely ask the participant to return with the packet so the process can be completed.
- Examine the check for alterations. DO NOT accept a check that has been altered in any
  way. WIC checks have a microprint border and a watermark. If the microprint border and
  watermark are not present the document is a fake. Ensure none of the numbers or
  descriptions have been changed. Check to make sure the dates of use have not been
  changed.
- 3. Determine the check has been issued from the Utah WIC Program and not any other state.
- Examine the "First Date to Use" and the "Last Date to Use." DO NOT accept any WIC checks prior to the "First Date to Use" or after the "Last Date to Use."

Each check is treated as a separate transaction.

### REGULAR CHECK

- Verify the selected items. Using the check like a list, scan ONLY those foods on the check in the quantities selected. The amounts listed are maximums (the WIC client does not have to purchase all of the food items). No substitutions are allowed.
  - 6. If the store does not have all the food items listed on the check, the vendor should NOT accept the WIC check. Offer the participant the option of returning at a later time or shopping at another store. No "rain checks" are allowed with WIC checks.
- Total the sale for each check, DO NOT add sales tax to any WIC items. In black ink legibly write the total amount for the check in the "Pay Exactly" box. Write in the numerical total of all items purchased on that specific check. DO NOT write a "\$".

### CASH-VALUE VOUCHER

- CVV's are only used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. Each check has a fixed maximum amount printed on the front. The most common amounts are currently \$8.00 or \$11.00 but other amounts are possible such as \$4.00 or \$16.50.
  - 9. If the total cost of the fruit and vegetables selected is more than the maximum amount stated on the front, the participant can remove some of the items or they may choose to pay the difference.
- Total the sale for the CVV, DO NOT add sales tax to any WIC items. Do not write an amount higher than the maximum value on the check. Any amount that is paid by the customer with another form of tender should not be included in the price that is written on the CVV. Write only the amount of the transaction that is being charged to WIC. **DO NOT give cash back to the WIC customer if the total is less than the maximum amount.**

### COMPLETING THE TRANSACTION

11. After writing the amount of the check in the appropriate box in black ink, present the check to the customer for signature. Each check should be signed in the presence of the cashier only AFTER the amount is written in. If the check has been pre-signed, do not accept the check and politely send the participant back to the clinic to have a new check issued.



Witness the endorser's or proxy's signature on the WIC check, and then compare it to the signatures on the WIC ID Packet. The signature on the check must match one of the authorized signatures on the WIC ID Packet. DO NOT accept any WIC checks where the signatures do not match or the WIC participant fails to place their signature on the check. When comparing signatures, the purpose is to ensure the same person is signing the check at the store who signed the ID packet at the clinic. Signatures do not need to be exact, but the cashier should be confident that it is an authorized endorser or proxy. Do not accept any check with a signature that resembles an "x" "+" or "t". If the vendor fails to obtain the authorized signature or allows the signature to be written in a different location, the check will not be accepted.

### CHECK VERIFICATION

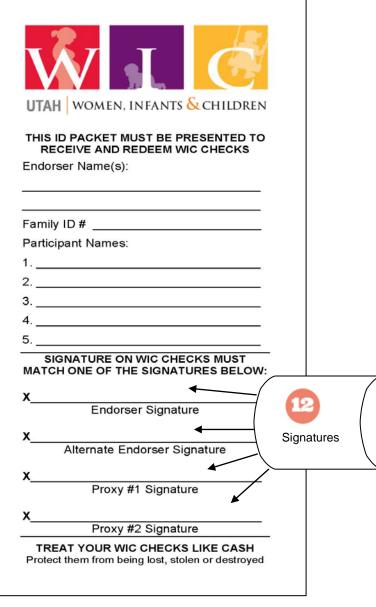
- 13. The Utah WIC ID Packet is used to verify the signature of the endorser or proxy. DO NOT ACCEPT any check without a Utah WIC ID Packet. The cashier CANNOT ask to see any other form of identification, such as a Driver's License, to redeem WIC checks. If the client did not bring the Utah WIC ID Packet, then the cashier must politely refuse the transaction.
- 14. After the transaction is complete, store bookkeeping staff will normally stamp the vendor number/date stamp on the front of the check before depositing it to the bank. There can be no handwriting in this box.

### **FUN FACT:**

Any ink other than black may not scan properly at the bank. To ensure your store gets all their WIC reimbursement please only use black ink on the WIC checks.

### **FUN FACT:**

WIC participants cannot utilize "self-checkout" lanes. Store associates must verify all WIC transactions.



### UTAH WIC PROGRAM ID PACKET

The WIC ID Packet is provided to the participant at the time of certification at their local clinic. The clinic goes through all the steps of verifying identification upon certification; therefore, you do not have to request additional identification from the participant. The endorser name(s) are the names of the people who are authorized to sign the check. The Family ID# is unique to the family holding the packet. Each participant on the program in that family is listed. These are the names of the people that should be using the food being purchased. Below that are the signature(s) cashiers need to verify against the check.

If any ID Packets or checks are left at your store, please return them to the clinic address which is stamped on the back of the WIC ID Packet as soon as possible.

### COMMON REASONS WHY CHECKS ARE REJECTED BY THE BANK

- Checks redeemed prior to the first date to use.
- Checks redeemed after the last date to use.
- Checks missing the total amount in the 'Pay Exactly' box.
- Total amount written in the 'Pay Exactly' box is unreadable.



- Checks have been altered.
- Unauthorized food items have been sold.
- The total price written on the check is higher than is expected for the food items listed.

### CORRECTING THE TOTAL PURCHASE PRICE

If a mistake is made and an inappropriate total amount is written on the front of the check use the following steps to correct it:

- 1. The cashier draws a line through the incorrect amount, and writes in the corrected amount in the "Pay Exactly" box.
- 2. Make sure the new amount is READABLE. No initials are necessary to show a correction has been made.
- 3. If there is not room to make a correction, cover the incorrect amount with a white label or sticker and write the correct amount on the sticker.

### **FUN FACT:**

If white out is used to correct the total amount on a check the bank may determine the check as fraudulent.



### **COUPONS & DISCOUNTS**

Program regulations require that WIC vendors treat program participants the same as other customers with respect to both food prices and services.

### COUPONS

Vendors are not permitted to deny WIC customers the opportunity to use any in-store or manufacturer's coupons when using their WIC checks. WIC customers may choose whether or not they wish to use one of these coupons.



Coupons can be accepted that offer a few free ounces of a WIC-eligible food in a larger container for the same price; or coupons that allow the client a free item when purchasing one item at regular price. Please note that the additional quantity is not counted against the total quantity listed on the check.

WIC clients may also benefit from "cents off" coupons for WIC foods and coupons that offer free additional non-WIC items with the purchase of a specific WIC food. In accordance with the WIC redemption policy, the credit from the "cents-off" coupons must be deducted from the total amount on the WIC check and not be given to the WIC participant as cash.

All WIC transactions are tax exempt, even if a coupon is used. Please see the Utah State Tax Commission administrative rule R865-19S-68(D),

"...WIC purchases are exempt, whether or not a manufacturer's coupon is used and no sales tax is due on the purchase or on the subsequent receipt by the retailer of reimbursement from the manufacturer coupon."

### LOYALTY CARDS

Grocery loyalty cards can be utilized with WIC transactions as long as the amount of discount is subtracted from the total purchase price and no money is given to the WIC customer.

### WIC FOOD ITEMS ON SALE

If a WIC eligible food item is on sale, the vendor must allow the purchase of that food item at the sale price.

### **FUN FACT:**

Good customer service encourages and reinforces wise food purchasing, a desirable WIC educational goal.

# WIC PARTICIPANTS

On occasion, a Utah WIC participant might violate WIC Program requirements such as using foul language, making threats, causing physical abuse, asking the cashier to allow non-WIC approved items to be sold, or attempting to return WIC foods for cash or credit. Many vendors do not like reporting WIC participants because they feel they will lose a customer. However, once the vendor allows the inappropriate behavior, that behavior will likely continue at other WIC vendors as well. It

suggestions you have for making the program work better. If you have a problem or suggestion, please fill out this card and mail it to us.  Store Name	
Signature	The Utah WIC Program is very interested in knowing about specific problems you have with WIC participants or with WIC vouchers you redeem. We would also like any suggestions you have for making the program work better. If you have a problem or suggestion, please fill out this card and mail it to us.
Signature	Store Name WIC ID#
Signature	Address
Check one or more boxes and provide details below:  Participant tried to buy unauthorized items with WIC vouchers What unauthorized food items did they try to buy?  Participant tried to request cash in redemption of WIC vouchers or in addition to foods  Participant tried to return items purchased with WIC vouchers for cash or credit  Participant was verbally or physically abusive to store employees  Proxy tried to sign for participant and/or signatures did not match  Other problems:  Please supply the following information from the voucher  FID (Family ID Number - printed below large black number)  Clinic ID (upper left in front of name)  Voucher Number (top right above First Day to Use)  Name (upper left after Clinic ID)  Date and Time of the incident  Details of the incident	
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Voucher Number (top right above First Day to Use)  Name (upper left after Clinic ID)  Date and Time of the incident  Details of the incident	
Name (upper left after Clinic ID)	Clinic ID (upper left in front of name)
Date and Time of the incident  Details of the incident	Voucher Number (top right above First Day to Use)
Details of the incident	
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Places secure here and return to the State WIC Office	Details of the incident
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Flease secure fiele and return to the State Wic Office	Please secure here and return to the State WIC Office

is recommended that the vendor report the incident as soon as possible after it happens.

If the vendor cannot resolve a conflict with a WIC participant by just informing the participant of the proper WIC procedures, then the vendor needs to report the incident. State WIC office have a participant complaint form designed as a business reply card. Please complete the card with all relevant information. In addition, provide as many details of the incident as possible as this will aid in the discussion with the participant at the clinic. Contact the State WIC Office if more reply cards are needed.

A copy of the business reply card with the information you provided is sent to the applicable local WIC agency. The local agency will discuss the alleged violation with the participant. Names of those initiating the complaint will not be given to the participant. The only time this information is released is during a Fair Hearing.

When in doubt about how to report or what to report, the vendor should contact their local agency vendor coordinator or the State WIC Office at 1-877-942-5437.

### DISCOURTEOUS TREATMENT

Problems with discourteous treatment of a WIC client can occur in several areas. Some of these include:

- Inappropriate verbal communication regarding the correction of a wrong food item being purchased or error in check transaction;
- Using inappropriate or foul language in front of the WIC participant;

Belittling or intimidating the WIC client.

Other types of discourteous treatment and/or discrimination include:

- Requiring the WIC clients to go to one specific check stand.
- Telling a WIC client, "I wish I could get free food for not working like you".
- Posting a returned WIC check in public or with a "bad check list".
- Referring to WIC clients as "welfare" people.
- Announcing over a loud speaker system that a WIC transaction needs approval.
- Making any unwanted or un-welcomed advances to a WIC client.

In accordance with the Utah WIC Vendor Agreement, the vendor must treat the WIC customer with the same respect and offer WIC participants the same courtesies as offered to other (non-WIC) customers. If the WIC client has made a mistake, be polite in your explanation of the correct food item or policy. Contact the store manager if that is your store policy, and allow management to handle the problem.

### CIVIL RIGHTS

Discrimination of a WIC client is a serious violation of the Utah WIC Vendor Agreement and may result in State Agency violation points, sanctions, suspension or disqualification. The civil rights of WIC customers must be protected. Discrimination is prohibited on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

All Civil Rights complaints are handled by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, not the Utah State WIC Office. If the vendor is found in violation of Federal Civil Rights discrimination, the vendor may be disqualified.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

The Utah WIC Program, whether it is the State WIC Office or Local WIC Clinic CANNOT give out WIC participant status or identity to a vendor. The vendor is only allowed to see the WIC ID Packet upon presentation of WIC checks for transaction. Any further requirement by the vendor during transaction is a breach of confidentiality and may be either discourteous treatment or a civil rights violation of the WIC client.



### VIOLATIONS & SANCTIONS

The vendor CANNOT contact the WIC participant to correct a WIC check problem or require payment from the WIC client because a WIC check has been rejected and not paid.

To maintain the integrity of the WIC Program, participants and vendors alike can have penalties assessed against them for violating the policies and procedures related to the WIC Program. For participants, sanctions include warnings, suspension of benefits, repayment of benefits and disqualification. For vendors, sanctions include civil money penalties, and disqualification from the WIC Program. The store can be held accountable for all actions of its owners, managers, and employees who commit WIC violations.

### VENDOR VIOLATION POINTS AND SANCTIONS

State Agency violation points can be assigned to stores for each violation which is documented through redemption analysis, a monitoring visit, an inventory audit, or any other objective means. Warnings and violation points are often issued for:

- Excessive errors and check rejections,
- Improper or overcharged WIC checks,
- Discourteous treatment of WIC customers.
- Failure to maintain adequate stock of WIC foods,
- Failure to complete required training,
- Failure to provide current pricing of WIC foods,
- Violations discovered during compliance purchases (mystery shopper).



All State Agency violation points accrue for two (2) years for each violation. After two (2) years from the date of the violation points are removed.

State Agency sanctions are based on the number of points accumulated for one or more violations and may result in vendor disqualification or monetary penalties.

See the Utah WIC Vendor Agreement, or Vendor Manual for list of violations and point values.

### MANDATORY DISQUALIFICATION FROM THE WIC PROGRAM

Stores can be disqualified from accepting WIC checks for the following violations:

- Buying or selling checks for cash (trafficking).
- Selling firearms, ammunition, explosives, or controlled substances in exchange for checks.
- Selling of alcohol or tobacco in exchange for WIC checks.
- Being disqualified from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/Food Stamp Program).
- A pattern of providing unauthorized food items in exchange for WIC checks, including charging for supplemental foods provided in excess of those listed on the check.
- A pattern of claiming reimbursement for the sale of food which exceeds the store's documented inventory of that food.
- A pattern of vendor overcharges (intentional or unintentional).
- A pattern of receiving, transacting and/or redeeming WIC checks outside of authorized channels, including the use of an unauthorized vendor and/or an unauthorized person.
- A pattern of charging for supplemental food not received by the participant.
- A pattern of providing credit or non-food items in exchange for WIC checks (no returns or exchanges of WIC foods allowed).

### COMPLIANCE PURCHASES

The State Agency is required to conduct Compliance Purchases (secret shopper). Investigators posing as WIC participants will check to see if stores allow WIC violations to occur. Stores may be chosen at random or based on high risk criteria including excessive redemption errors. A pattern of violations may result in disqualification.



The Utah WIC Program is in the planning phase of electronic benefits transfer (EBT) also known as "e-WIC." When this system is ready for roll-out, the familiar WIC check will be replaced by a smart card system.

Benefits will be loaded onto a card similar to a debit card at the WIC clinic. The card will contain the WIC shopping list for the WIC client. The customer will go to the store and select her WIC items in addition to her personal purchases. At check-out, the card will be inserted into the card reader. The store's point-of-sale system will be able to see what items the client is allowed to purchase with her WIC benefits. The cashier will be able to scan all of the customer's items, all WIC items will automatically be charged to the smart card. The customer can then pay for all remaining items with another form of payment. At the end of the transaction the cashier will provide the customer a receipt with all remaining WIC items listed for the remainder of the month.

Though this change will require significant planning and cooperation between the state and the grocery vendors, it will result in a system that is much easier to use and with fewer possibilities to make mistakes. We look forward to this new technology.

### **COMPLETION INSTRUCTIONS**

**Training Credit**: Completion of this training manual and the post-test can satisfy the **Annual Vendor Training** requirement. In order for your store to receive training credit for this module, the comprehensive Post-Test must be completed and forwarded to the State WIC Office. A passing score of 75% is required.

### This is a learning experience!

It is best to complete the Test without looking at the module, but if you are unsure of an answer, please refer back to the module or the food booklet.

STORE MANAGEMENT:
Submit completed tests as a group to:

UTAH WIC PROGRAM
VENDOR MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR
PO BOX 141013
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84114-1013

The State WIC Office may be contacted by calling in-state toll free at 1-877-942-5437. UTAH WIC PROGRAM WEBSITE: www.wic.utah.gov

### NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint or discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at:

http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\_filing\_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter 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;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email:program.intake@usda.gov.

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