



MARYLAND

BETTER NUTRITION, BRIGHTER FUTURE

VENDOR NEWSLETTER

2020 ANNUAL VENDOR TRAINING

Annual Vendor Training is held in August every year. Training for 2020 was offered virtually due to COVID-19 and vendors were able to attend a session that was convenient for them. All attendees were required to take a quiz and complete an evaluation. All 500+ authorized food vendors participated, and many had multiple employees attend as well.

We learned a lot from the training quiz and evaluation responses. The quiz responses revealed that there are certain areas where we need to refocus our training efforts. The evaluations told us that most participants preferred the virtual platform and not having to travel for training. Attendees also liked the ability to take the training at a time most convenient for them. Many said that they would like to see more in-depth training on specific topics. We will be dedicating some time to refining the 2021 Annual Training sessions as we consider all the suggestions and feedback to make 2021 better than ever. Stay tuned!



ONGOING VENDOR TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Did you know that WIC offers ongoing cashier training as well as store specific training upon request?

Well trained cashiers are essential to the success of the WIC Program. When training new cashiers, consider including the *Welcome to WIC for Vendors* video as part of their training. The link to the video is on our website under the Vendor Resource Library. Hard copies are also available upon request. Well trained cashiers:

- have fewer errors, which can cost your store money;
- typically provide excellent customer service, ensuring that your customers come back to your store; and
- are knowledgeable about handling a WIC transition and can help resolve an issue if it should arise.

All training classes are available virtually which is ideal for stores that have tight training budgets. Store staff can log-in from anywhere and participate in the class. Classes are interactive and WIC staff are available to answer questions. The 2021 training schedules are posted under the vendor section of our website, mdwic.org. Registration is required for cashier training. If you have any questions or require additional information, email terri.buckler@maryland.gov.

FOOD FLEXIBILITIES AND APL DOWNLOADS

This last year has been a challenge for everyone. In the early months of the pandemic, WIC participants had difficulty finding WIC approved foods and formulas. To address this, the Maryland WIC Program applied for Interim Food Waivers from the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) and expanded some of the allowed foods in most categories to give participants more flexibility. Those waivers will be in place through the end of the public health emergency and perhaps even longer. As we find new food items that meet the criteria to be a WIC approved food, they are being added to the APL (Authorized Product List). It is crucial that your APL is downloaded every night to capture all the changes. Visit our website at mdwic.org for the list of temporary foods.

PRODUCE MAPPING

Many stores cut up produce for grab and go sales. It could be a watermelon cut in half or a container of carrot sticks ready for a picnic. The store weighs the items and creates a label for scanning at the checkout. These are not unique UPCs (Universal Product Code); therefore, store created UPCs cannot be put into the APL. Store created UPCs must be "mapped" within the store's point-of-sale system to the specific IFPS (International Federation for Produce Standards) PLU (Price Lookup Code) for that item or to the generic fresh produce PLU of 4469. Unless this mapping occurs, your customer may not be able to purchase fresh cut produce. Sometimes, this causes delays and frustration at checkout.

Likewise, many farmers use unique UPCs purchased from GS1 US, but a farmer may use the UPC for blueberries this year and apple butter next year. For this reason, farmer UPCs must also be mapped to the appropriate IFPS PLU or the generic fresh produce PLU of 4469.

OPEN SUBMISSION FOR THE 2021 AUTHORIZED FOODS LIST

The Maryland WIC Program is revising the WIC Authorized Foods List. There will be an open submission period for manufacturers and vendors to upload UPCs from February 22 - March 26, 2021. An announcement on the specific food items requiring submission is posted to the vendor section of our website. If you have any questions about the 2021 Authorized Foods List, please contact us at WIC.foodslist@maryland.gov.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website MDWIC.org

Follow us @MDH.WIC



HOW TO CONTACT US

The State Office is still closed due to COVID and we are teleworking. Please use the following email address to contact the Vendor Operations Unit:
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