



MARYLAND

BETTER NUTRITION, BRIGHTER FUTURE

VENDOR NEWSLETTER

This vendor newsletter highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted WIC participants, vendors, and program staff.

WHAT IS COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a virus first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. COVID-19 is a new disease never seen in humans before that has infected thousands of people, causing illness and in some cases death. For the most up-to-date information about the Coronavirus, visit the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) website at coronavirus.maryland.gov.

On March 5 Governor Hogan declared a state of emergency and on March 30 he issued a stay-at-home order for all Marylanders unless travel is necessary for an essential job, to obtain food or medicine, or to seek urgent medical attention. This means that every Marylander has been forced to change how we accomplish day-to-day activities.



SERVING OUR WIC PARTICIPANTS

WIC participants can only buy foods prescribed to them and on the Approved Product List (APL). Due to panic buying, many families were unable to buy the foods or infant formula they needed. This was especially scary for families because there are no substitutions allowed for WIC foods or infant formula. Many stores set purchasing limits on certain foods, including infant formula, to combat food shortages.

To help with the shortage issues, the WIC Program temporarily added over 1,000 food items to the APL. Organics are now allowed in many categories and we expanded container and package sizes in categories such as bread, rice, beans, cheese, and juice. We also added cheese sticks, shredded cheese, jumbo and extra large eggs. Since low-fat and fat free milks were in short supply, the USDA granted a waiver to allow 2% milk to be purchased in this category. Expanding the APL has been a tremendous help to our participants and vendors. For a complete list of the temporary foods, visit our website at mdwic.org.

OUR HARDWORKING WIC VENDORS

There are over 550 authorized WIC vendors in Maryland. Our vendors are incredible people who are working tirelessly to meet the needs of all Marylanders. These are difficult times for everyone, and no one is immune. More than ever, our vendors play a vital role in meeting the nutritional needs of our participants. The Maryland WIC Program extends our most heartfelt gratitude for your hard work! (cont. on page 2)

OUR HARDWORKING WIC VENDORS (CONT.)

Vendors have faced many challenges keeping their stores stocked with essential products due to panic buying and freight truck delays. The Maryland WIC Program has done our best to lighten the load for participants and vendors. Our goal was to meet the needs of participants, while helping to reduce stocking issues for vendors.

Under normal conditions, authorized vendors are required to maintain the minimum required stock in their stores at all times. We understand that we are not living in normal conditions; therefore, we do not expect the stocking requirements to return to normal until the current threat has passed. Vendors must continue to obtain infant formula and medical foods only from a manufacturer, distributor, or wholesaler listed on the Authorized Infant Formula and Medical Foods Supplier Directory. All routine vendor monitoring visits have been suspended until normal operations are resumed.

Unfortunately, there are a few stores that have taken advantage by raising their prices to unreasonable amounts. We ask that you refrain from drastic price increases. Although we are not physically visiting stores, we continue to monitor WIC pricing remotely.

OUR DEDICATED WIC STAFF

The State WIC office and all WIC clinics have been temporarily closed to the public, but this does not mean we have stopped serving our vendors and participants. We are working remotely. If you are trying to reach the vendor unit, it is best to send an email for immediate assistance. If we need to call you back, the caller ID might say "unknown caller." Answer the phone! It could be WIC calling!

Clinic staff are taking appointments by phone instead of in person. Many people have lost their jobs due to the pandemic and now need help feeding their families. WIC is here to help our most vulnerable population. If you know a family in need of help, encourage them to call us at 1-800-242-4942. Because clinic phone lines are overloaded, callers may experience wait times or have to leave a voicemail.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website MDWIC.org

Follow us @MDH.WIC



HOW TO CONTACT US

Vendor Unit Contact Information:

Terri Buckler
Vendor Training Specialist
410-767-5722
terri.buckler@maryland.gov

Andrea Tompkins
Vendor Authorization and
Compliance Supervisor
410-767-5251
andrea.tompkins@maryland.gov

Debbie Earl
Vendor Authorization and
Compliance Specialist
410-767-5433
debbie.earl@maryland.gov

Ashant'a Johnson
Vendor Authorization and
Compliance Specialist
410-767-5233
ashanta.johnson2@maryland.gov

Maryland eWIC Processor Contact
Information:

Solutran eWIC Services Helpdesk
1-866-730-7746
EBTServices@solutran.com