



Maryland WIC

Better Nutrition Brighter Future

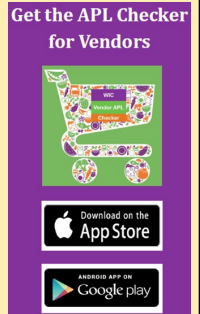
VENDOR UPDATE

Winter 2020



APL CHECKER FOR VENDORS

How many times have you tried to help a customer who didn't understand which items were WIC approved? Perhaps your store has started stocking some new items and you aren't sure if they are WIC approved. How do you find out? Download the Authorized Product List (APL) Checker for Vendors! This app has been developed for Maryland WIC vendors who want to check a food item's approval status. With the APL checker, you can scan the barcode on any food item to find out if it is in the Approved Products List. If you get a "Not in our APL" message and you think the item should be WIC approved, you can submit the UPC through the app for consideration. The APL Checker app is available for download in both the Google Play Store and the Apple Store. This tool will help you provide outstanding customer service! Check it out!



MINIMUM REQUIRED STOCK

All authorized Maryland WIC Vendors are required to maintain a minimum amount of WIC food items on the store premises during all hours the store is open for business. Some stores struggle with this requirement, especially the infant formula. Store staff that manage and order stock should be familiar with the WIC minimum stock requirements. Large stores, or stores that do a high volume of WIC business, should have more than the minimum stock to ensure that they are always in compliance.

The minimum stocking requirements are available to view or print in the Vendor Resource Library online at mdwic.org. If you have any questions, please contact a member of the vendor unit.



MAPPING PRODUCE

We continue to receive many questions regarding UPC and PLU mapping. The term "mapping" or "mapped" is for fresh produce and refers to the store's point-of-sale (POS) system recognizing the item as being WIC approved, as well as providing Maryland WIC/Solutran with the IFPS (International Federation for Produce Standards) PLU for that item. If a store uses a store generated PLU, the item needs to be mapped to the IFPS PLU, so it is recognized as a WIC approved item by the Maryland WIC/Solutran system.



UPCs that start with a 2, 4, or 9 are store generated (created) UPCs.

These are not unique UPC numbers and must be mapped within the store's POS system to a specific IFPS PLU, or the generic fresh produce PLU of 4469. We cannot put store generated UPCs in the Authorized Product List because they are not unique UPCs and do not represent the same product among stores.

We are relying on all Maryland stores, corporations, programmers, managers, etc. to know about mapping and the importance of keeping WIC approved products up-to-date in your systems. We have spoken to, and will continue to communicate with, store corporate office personnel about mapping since it is mostly performed at the corporate level. Please ensure that all store personnel are familiar with the mapping of fresh produce and know who to contact in your organization if an eligible fresh produce item is not scanning as WIC approved.

KEEP YOUR APL UP-TO-DATE

UPCs and PLUs are added and removed from the Maryland WIC APL often. We have found that stores have been updating their APL to include newly added UPCs but have not been deleting those that have been removed. This has been causing transactions to be rejected and confusing staff and customers at the register. It is imperative that your APL manager remove WIC approved flags on UPCs and PLUs that have been removed from the Maryland WIC APL.

STAND-BESIDE POS EQUIPMENT

Many stores that use a basic cash register system also use a stand-beside eWIC POS terminal to process WIC transactions. It is recommended that vendors print and keep a copy of purchase receipts for their records in case any transactional or accounting discrepancies occur. Sales reports can also be printed from the terminal at any time.

Occasionally the machine doesn't function properly. The first attempt to resolve the problem should be to unplug the machine for a minute to let it reset itself. If this doesn't correct the problem, call Solutran at 866-730-7746 or email ebtservices@solutran.com. The state WIC staff can help troubleshoot problems, but we cannot solve technical issues related to the machine; that would be handled by Solutran.



CASHIER'S CORNER

The 2020 Cashier Training Schedule was mailed to all authorized vendors early in December 2019. Cashier training sessions are offered at locations statewide to accommodate WIC vendors with staff training needs. Cashier training is not mandatory; however, we strongly encourage you to take advantage of these training opportunities. Regular cashier training can help keep vendor staff up-to-date on WIC program policies and procedures and WIC approved foods. Training can also reduce the likelihood of sanctions and lost revenue due to cashier error. Well-trained cashiers ensure a smooth WIC transaction and a happy customer. Happy customers are likely to return to your store if they had a pleasant experience. Additionally, in-store cashier trainings can be scheduled upon request. The schedule is available online at mdwic.org under Training Information on the Vendor page. Pre-registration is required.

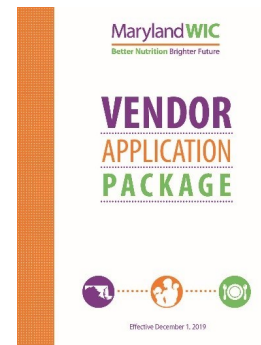


Helpful tips for a smooth transaction:

- ◆ Be sure that each checkout lane has a copy of the Authorized Foods List; you will refer to it frequently.
- ◆ Don't "police" for store brands, the APL determines what is allowed.
- ◆ If an item scans and is approved by the POS system, you MUST let the participant get that item.
- ◆ The eWIC card must always be the first form of payment.
- ◆ Do you have new cashiers? Incorporate the "Welcome to WIC Vendor Video" as part of their training or send them to WIC for cashier training.

RENEWING YOUR WIC AUTHORIZATION

Every authorized WIC vendor signs an agreement with the State to provide WIC approved foods to participants. The length of the agreement varies from one to three years. **Vendors are required to submit their application for re-authorization at least 60 days prior to the end date of their agreement.** Pursuant to Code of Maryland Regulation (COMAR) 10.54.03.09, the State Agency has 60 days to process a WIC vendor application. The expiration of a vendor's agreement cannot be appealed. Vendors that submit their renewal application at the last minute are at risk of having their authorization lapse while the application is being processed. Large chain stores are not immune. It is best practice to follow up with your corporate office to confirm that a renewal application has been submitted. If you are unsure when your authorization expires, please contact a member of the vendor unit.



VENDOR UNIT CUSTOMER SERVICE

If you need assistance from the WIC Program Vendor Unit, you must call to schedule an appointment. Visitors are required to report to the Health Department's security desk and be announced before proceeding to the WIC Program administrative offices. If you have any questions, or would like to schedule an appointment, please contact Terri Buckler at 410-767-5722, Andrea Tompkins at 410-767-5251, Debbie Earl at 410-767-5433 or Ashant'a Johnson at 410-767-5233. You may also reach us toll-free at 1-800-242-4WIC (4942).

