



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**



Connecticut WIC Program

**WIC VENDOR AGREEMENT
FY 2024**



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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

FY 24 CONNECTICUT WIC VENDOR AGREEMENT

The U.S. Department of Agriculture sponsors the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) authorized by the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. WIC is federally funded, and is administered by the State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health. The Connecticut WIC Program enters into an agreement with retail stores to provide specific nutritious foods through a retail food delivery system. Home deliveries are not permitted under the retail food delivery system used in Connecticut.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

All stores must be authorized by the WIC Program in order to accept WIC benefits. A vendor is authorized after receiving an executed copy of the WIC Vendor Application and Agreement Signature Page with the effective agreement period. The State will determine if an integrated register system is certified or direct the vendor in obtaining equipment to process transactions.

The Vendor Selection Criteria (Appendix A) must be met by all vendors at the time of authorization and must be maintained throughout the agreement period. The WIC Program may reassess any authorized vendor at any time during the vendor's agreement period using the vendor selection criteria in effect at the time of the reassessment. The WIC Program will terminate the authorization of vendors who fail to meet the criteria.

The vendor agreement does not constitute a license or a property interest. The WIC Vendor Agreement is in effect for the stated time period only. If the vendor wishes to continue to be authorized beyond the period of its current agreement, the vendor must reapply for authorization. If a vendor's agreement expires or is terminated and the vendor wishes to reapply, the vendor will be subject to the WIC Program's vendor selection criteria in effect at the time of the reapplication.

A WIC Vendor Agreement may cover more than one vendor if all stores are under the exact same ownership and a list of each store location is attached. When more than one vendor is specified in the agreement, the WIC Program may add or terminate an individual vendor without affecting the remaining vendors.

All vendors are subject to announced and unannounced on-site visits.

All vendors must maintain an active email account. Vendors must be capable of receiving electronic communications. This includes but is not limited to accessing the vendor portal, uploading documents, and receiving bulletins with program updates. Notify the WIC Program immediately of any changes to the email address. All WIC Program communications are electronic. Emails may be sent from program staff, the CT WIC vendor module portal, or a DPH/DAS Listserv.

Either the WIC Program or the vendor may terminate the agreement for cause after providing advance written notice of at least fifteen (15) days to ctwic@ct.gov.

The agreement will be terminated upon a change in vendor ownership, store location (over one mile), or cessation of operations. The WIC Program has the discretion to determine whether a change in business structure constitutes a change in ownership.

A vendor applicant that does not meet the minimum inventory requirements (Appendix B) will not be authorized, even if such denial of authorization would result in inadequate participant access.

The vendor may be monitored for compliance with program requirements. In addition to claims collection (Appendix F), the vendor may be sanctioned for vendor violations in accordance with the WIC Program's sanction schedule (Appendix E). Sanctions may include warnings, administrative fines, disqualification, and civil money penalties in lieu of disqualification.

Disqualification from the WIC Program may result in disqualification as a retailer in SNAP. Such disqualification may not be subject to administrative or judicial review under SNAP.

Adverse actions against a vendor associated with Federal mandatory sanction number one (1) (Appendix E) and denials of new authorizations shall be effective on the date of receipt of the WIC Program's written notice. All other adverse actions taken by the WIC Program against a vendor shall be effective fifteen (15) days from the date of the written notice.

A vendor may be entitled to an administrative review when notified of certain adverse actions taken by the WIC Program. See Appendix G for administrative review procedures.

A vendor who commits fraud or abuse in the Program is liable to prosecution under applicable federal, state or local laws.

Those who have willfully misapplied, stolen or fraudulently obtained program funds will be subject to a fine of not more than \$25,000 or imprisonment for not more than five years or both, if the value of the funds is \$100 or more. If the value is less than \$100, the penalties are a fine of not more than \$1,000 or imprisonment for not more than one year or both.

The agreement will be terminated if the WIC Program determines that the vendor has provided significant false information in connection with its application for authorization.

The agreement will be terminated if the WIC Program identifies a conflict of interest, as defined by applicable State laws, regulations, and policies, between the vendor and the WIC Program or its local agencies.

The agreement will be terminated if the vendor accepts and/or transacts WIC benefits anywhere other than the fixed location of the store(s) as covered by this agreement.

There can be no unauthorized use of the WIC logo or acronym in promoting the store's business. The logo and acronym may only be displayed on official WIC Program materials.

THE WIC VENDOR AGREES TO:

Comply with the WIC Vendor Agreement, Federal Regulations 7 CFR Part 246 <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/CFR-2013-title7-vol4/CFR-2013-title7-vol4-part246> and State statutes, policies, and procedures that govern the WIC Program, including any changes or amendments made during the agreement period.

Comply with the Operating rules, standards and technical requirements established by the WIC Program.
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-electronic-benefits-transfer-ebt-guidance>

Comply with, and be subject to, all the vendor selection criteria listed in Appendix A, including the minimum inventory requirements in Appendix B at the time of authorization and throughout the Agreement period, including any changes made during the Agreement period.

Never assign, subcontract or sublease any vendor duties or responsibilities under this agreement.

Accept written communications via postal service mail and/or electronic messages via email. Email communications will be considered received when the WIC Program sends a notice to the email address that the vendor has provided on their application, and is not returned undeliverable.

Provide the WIC Program with as much advanced written notice as possible of any change in vendor ownership, store location, or cessation of operations, including those lasting more than one week (i.e. renovations, fire, natural disaster).

Report to the State WIC Office within thirty (30) days of a conviction or civil judgement related to a lack of business integrity. Provide the name(s) of the person(s) charged or convicted, their relationship to the owner, their current position, and the court and docket number.

Within thirty (30) days of notice of WIC authorization, if applicable, set up POS stand beside equipment and be ready to accept WIC transactions.

Keep stand beside equipment accessible to WIC customers in order to enter their own PIN to perform balance inquiries and transactions.

Provide the capability for WIC customers to retrieve their currently available benefits balance upon request without requiring a purchase to be made.

Have at least one representative participate in training annually and upon reauthorization. Annual training may be provided by the WIC Program through newsletters, videos, or interactive training.

Train new cashiers and other staff on program requirements before they handle WIC benefits. Inform and provide existing employees with annual and regular review of WIC policies and procedures, including bulletins, website content and all WIC vendor communications.

Provide documentation of employee WIC training upon request. Keep a copy of this WIC Vendor Agreement, bulletins and other WIC Program correspondence on the store premise at all times.

Transact only the WIC benefits allowed by the type of store. Food stores are allowed to transact all types of WIC benefits. Pharmacy vendors are only allowed to transact WIC benefits for formula and medical foods.

Stock and sell those items that are in good condition, undamaged, unspoiled and are not beyond the expiration date or has exceeded its "sell by," "best if used by," manufacturer suggested, or other date limiting the sale or use of the food item.

Only make exchanges of an identical approved WIC food item when the original WIC food item is defective, spoiled, or has exceeded its "sell by," "best if used by" or other date limiting the sale or use of the food item. An identical approved WIC food item means the exact brand and size as the original WIC food item purchased and returned by the participant.

Never provide cash or credit refunds or permit exchanges for non-WIC foods obtained with WIC benefits.

Comply with all of the procedures for transacting WIC benefits included in Appendix C. All procedures must be followed at all times, and normal transactions must be able to occur during times of renovations or alternate conditions of the store.

Allow the sale of all brands of food items according to the WIC Approved Food Guide. The vendor agrees to not promote or restrict the sale of WIC purchases to only the store's brand or the most expensive items.

Attempt to provide any WIC-approved food item that is not listed as a minimum inventory requirement, but printed on a WIC benefits list within 48 hours of the request (business days, not including holidays or weekends).

Do not have separate lines or checkout counters for only WIC customers. Do not identify customers using WIC benefits by calling out a WIC transaction.

Comply with all of the pricing requirements included in Appendix D. Sell all WIC foods at competitive prices consistent with those of the vendor's peer group at all times during the term of agreement.

Not request payment from the WIC Program or a WIC customer for the difference between the price charged and the maximum price paid for WIC food items.

Accept the WIC Program's sanction schedule for disqualifications, civil money penalties and fines found in Appendix E.

Pay all monetary claims established by the WIC Program in accordance with Appendix F.

Follow the administrative review procedures in Appendix G.

Cooperate with State or Federal officials when an on-site visit occurs and allow reasonable monitoring & inspection of the store premises, procedures, records and WIC transactions.

Make available all WIC transactions and all program-related records upon request to WIC Program representatives, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Comptroller General of the United States, at any reasonable time and place for inspection and audit.

Be accountable for its owners, officers, managers, agents, and employees, whether they are paid or unpaid, who commit vendor violations.

Retain all original inventory records used for tax reporting purposes including purchase invoices, purchase slips and receipts of delivery for WIC food items for the most recent three-year period. All such documents must indicate the quantity, unit price, description and container size of WIC food items purchased and must be provided when requested and available for inspection by federal and/or state agents. Cash register receipts without specific identification of the quantity, unit price, description, and container size of WIC food items purchased shall not be accepted as evidence of WIC food item purchases.

Comply with the nondiscrimination provisions of USDA regulations (7 CFR Parts 15, 15a and 15b of this title), <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/CFR-2010-title7-vol1/CFR-2010-title7-vol1-part15> provisions of Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/titlevii.cfm>, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 <https://www.dol.gov/oasam/regstatutes/sec504.htm>, and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities ACT of 1992 https://www.ada.gov/ada_title_i.htm.

Never discriminate against a person using WIC benefits (i.e. denying or delaying services or treating WIC customers differently from others).

Never breach WIC customer confidentiality. Any information about a WIC participant, whether obtained from the participant or another source, that identifies a WIC participant individually or anyone authorized to act on behalf of the participant is confidential regardless of its original source and exclusive of previously applicable confidentiality provided under Federal or State law. Such information shall not be made available to the public or to any person who does not have a direct relationship to the administration or enforcement of the WIC Program.

The use and disclosure of confidential participant information is restricted to persons directly connected with the administration, delivery or enforcement of the WIC Program, the Department and those the vendor designates as having a need to know for program operation and payment purposes.

Treat WIC customers courteously, with respect to issues, including but not limited to, language barriers between the participant and employees, limited understanding of Program rules by both the participant and/or the vendor, or in some cases, the additional time required for WIC transactions. The vendor agrees to instruct cashiers to involve a manager when an issue arises to ensure that the participant shopping experience is positive and store management is aware of a situation.

After a complaint has been filed regarding the mistreatment of a WIC customer and the vendor is found at fault, the vendor must provide proof of retraining the employee and the corrective action to prevent future occurrences.

Maintain WIC EBT capable equipment in accordance with minimum lane coverage provisions of Federal Regulations found at 246.12 (z)(2), and communicate directly with the EBT Contractor if there is an issue.

Be responsible for ongoing maintenance and operational costs for vendor systems and equipment used to support WIC EBT, unless using single-function Point-of-Sale (POS) stand beside machines provided to vendors prior to statewide eWIC implementation.

Incur all interchange fees related to WIC transactions. The Connecticut WIC Program shall not pay or reimburse the vendor for interchange fees related to WIC EBT transactions.

Comply with all requirements of the WIC EBT Contractor, in accordance with Vendor Agreement, including but not limited to, providing banking information, proper handling of the equipment, and if applicable the return of equipment when requested.

Report to the State WIC Office at ctwic@ct.gov any suspicious usage of the WIC card or requests for cash or credit. To file a complaint provide the last four digits of the card number found on the receipt, in addition to the date and time of the transaction.

Report to the State WIC Office at ctwic@ct.gov complaints of fraudulent activity by an unauthorized person, another authorized WIC vendor or a WIC customer attempting to defraud the WIC Program.

THE WIC PROGRAM AGREES TO:

Provide an executed copy of the WIC Vendor Agreement to authorized vendors.

Interact with and provide training and technical assistance to vendors on issues related to redemptions, agreement violations, complaints, allegations of program abuse by either vendors or participants, and administrative hearings.

Provide training on the Vendor Agreement, Federal and State Statutes, regulations, and policies and procedures governing the WIC Program on an annual basis. The WIC Program has sole discretion to designate the date, time, and location of all interactive training, except that the WIC Program will provide the vendor with one alternative date on which to attend the training.

Assist newly authorized vendors with certification of integrated cash register systems or to obtain single function POS equipment.

Notify vendors of any Program changes, authorization renewals, sanctions, etc. only through electronic means (i.e. bulletins, emails, newsletters, website, etc.) with as much advanced notice as possible.

Post information on the website when offering enrollment periods for stores to apply for WIC authorization. Limited enrollment periods will be offered when the Program determines there will be inadequate participant access and additional stores are needed.

Notify WIC participants of vendors that are authorized to accept WIC. Lists are provided at the local agency and posted on the website.

Notify the vendor on WIC customer complaints and provide guidance.

Provide WIC participants and vendors with a WIC Food Guide describing approved food items and brands they are allowed to purchase.

Notify the vendor of WIC Program violation(s) and applicable warnings and sanction(s) imposed in accordance with the terms of the WIC Vendor Agreement.

Notify vendors within four (4) months of the expiration of their WIC Vendor Agreement for the need to re-apply for authorization in order to remain a WIC vendor.

Assist with issues brought to the attention of the State WIC Office by the vendor.

Only disclose the following vendor information: store name, address, authorization status, phone number, web site/e-mail address and store type.

Make available daily the most current Approved Product Listing (APL) which contains the current listing of food items that are approved for redemption by the WIC Program through its WIC card processor.

Reimburse the vendor for all approved WIC redemptions that are made in accordance with applicable state and federal requirements, and the WIC Vendor Agreement.

Incur monthly costs for single-function POS machines that were provided to vendors prior to statewide eWIC implementation in accordance with the minimum lane coverage provisions of Federal Regulations found at 246.12 (z)(2). The State agency may remove excess terminals if actual redemption activity warrants a reduction consistent with the redemption levels.

Incur monthly costs for single-function POS machines for vendors authorized after statewide eWIC implementation if the WIC Program determines the vendor is necessary for adequate participant access. POS machines will be supplied in accordance with the minimum provisions of Federal Regulations found at 246.12(z)(2).

Provide shelf labels to identify WIC approved foods.

FY24 WIC VENDOR AGREEMENT
APPENDIX A-VENDOR SELECTION CRITERIA

Authorized vendors must meet the selection criteria at all times throughout the authorization period. The Agreement will be terminated if any one of these criteria is not met. Applicant and renewing vendors who do not meet the following criteria will not be selected for authorization.

1. A vendor must submit an online application through the vendor portal within the time period provided by the due date. If incomplete at the time of the initial submission, a vendor will receive notification of the deficiency and will be given an additional fifteen (15) days to submit a completed application.
2. Falsification of any information.
3. A food store vendor, excluding pharmacies, must be currently authorized by SNAP and must provide its FNS number.
4. A vendor must not be currently disqualified from SNAP or must not have been assessed a SNAP civil money penalty for hardship, and the disqualification period that would otherwise have been imposed has not expired.
5. A vendor applicant or current owners, officers or managers must not have been convicted of nor had a civil judgment entered against them within the last six (6) years for any activity indicating a lack of business integrity. Activities include but are not limited to, fraud, antitrust violation, embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statement, receiving stolen property, making false claims, or obstruction of justice.
6. If the WIC Program determines that the store's previous owner sold the store in an attempt to circumvent a WIC sanction.
7. A vendor must purchase infant formula only from the WIC Program's list of wholesalers, distributors, retailers and manufacturers. This list is on our website and sent to authorized vendors on an annual basis.
8. A vendor must not be expected to derive more than 50% of its annual food sales revenue from acceptance of WIC benefits.
9. A vendor must not offer, or intend to offer, incentive items solely to WIC customers, and must offer WIC customers the same courtesies that are offered to non-WIC customers.
10. A vendor must attend all assigned mandatory training sessions.
11. Be an established business, open to the public for at least one year in the current location. This condition may be waived for a currently authorized vendor that is adding an additional location or to the new owner of a currently authorized store, either of which are not being disqualified from SNAP or the WIC Program.
12. A vendor must have and maintain the established WIC Program Minimum Inventory Requirements so that WIC customers may redeem their WIC benefits at any time that the vendor is open for business (Appendix B).
13. A vendor must post the prices that are charged for all WIC food items. Prices must be posted on the store shelf in front of the item, on the product itself or, in the case of chilled or frozen items, on a sign attached to the door of a cooler or freezer in front of the food item. When prices change, all signs must be updated, in addition to registers and all stand beside units.
14. A vendor must meet established competitive pricing criteria, which involve the ranking, by peer group, of the price index of all vendors. The price index is calculated by using each vendor's prices for WIC food items. Each vendor's price index is then compared to the average price index for the peer group with which it is associated.
15. A vendor with an integrated cash register system must be WIC EBT capable, meaning the vendor must demonstrate the Point-of-Sale (POS) system can accept WIC purchases, obtain a benefit balance, and complete a WIC transaction accurately and securely. Vendors must be able to exchange updated files with the state pursuant to State agency EBT system requirements.
16. A vendor who will use a single function stand beside machine must demonstrate WIC EBT capability and obtain equipment compatible with the EBT processor's host system.
17. A vendor must not have been assessed more than \$2,500 in fines or a monetary claim for State Agency-established sanctions in the last 3 years.
18. A vendor must not have fines that have not been paid by the due date or monetary claims or refunds that have been requested by the WIC Program and remain outstanding.
19. Vendors must maintain a minimum of \$25 per month in WIC redemptions within the most recent three-month period.
20. Not providing information as requested by the WIC Program within the time frame stated, including but not limited to proof of training staff, submitting questionnaires, surveys, invoices, sales and use tax documents for the time period stated.

If the WIC Program determines that authorization of the vendor is necessary in order to provide adequate participant access, an exception may be made to the selection criteria. However, vendors must meet the Minimum Inventory Requirements to become authorized and at all times throughout the authorization period to remain authorized.

FY24 WIC VENDOR AGREEMENT
APPENDIX B- MINIMUM INVENTORY REQUIREMENTS

For food stores, all food items below are required of vendor applicants awaiting pre-authorization visits and all currently authorized food stores. For pharmacies, only infant formula is required of vendor applicants awaiting pre-authorization visits and all currently authorized pharmacies.

At all times, the vendor must maintain each of the following WIC approved foods in the quantities stated with future expiration dates on the shelves or store premises. To ensure constant availability of WIC approved foods to WIC customers, a vendor may have to stock these food items in larger quantities than is required. See the WIC Approved Food Guide for specific products and brand names allowed. This minimum inventory serves 2-3 WIC participants.

FOOD ITEM	CONTAINER SIZE	MINIMUM QUANTITIES AND REQUIRED NUMBER OF KIND/TYPE/VARIETIES
Milk-1%/Low-fat/Light, or Skim/ Fat Free/Nonfat	Gallons and/or Half gallons	6 Gallons-Any combination of gallons and/or half gallons (12 half gallons=6 gallons)
Milk-Whole	Gallons and/or Half gallons	3 Gallons-Any combination of gallons and/or half gallons (6 half gallons = 3 gallons)
Evaporated Milk	12 oz. cans	12 cans
Cheese	8 or 16 oz., packages	4 pounds-2 varieties and 2 pounds of each
Eggs White <u>or</u> Brown	1 dozen carton	4 dozen, Medium, Large, Extra Large, and Jumbo
Fluid Juice-Plastic Bottles	64 oz. plastic bottles	3 varieties 12 bottles
Fruits-Fresh, Frozen, Canned	Pounds, pieces, cans, bags, boxes	\$25 worth fresh, frozen or canned 2 different kinds must be fresh fruits
Vegetables Fresh, Frozen, Canned	Pounds, pieces, cans, bags, boxes	\$25 worth fresh, frozen or canned 2 different kinds must be fresh vegetables
Bread Whole Wheat/Whole Grain Tortillas Whole Wheat/Soft Corn Brown Rice/Whole Wheat Pasta	1 pound (lb.) loaves or packages 14-16 oz./1 lb.packages of rice only	6 packages
Legumes–Dry/Beans, Peas, Lentils	1 pound (lb.) bags	2 varieties 4 bags of dry beans, peas or lentils
Legumes-Canned Beans/Peas	15-16 oz. cans	8 cans of beans or peas (black eye, chick, pigeon)
Canned Fish-Chunk Light Tuna, Salmon or Sardines	3.75 oz. sardines, 5 oz. tuna, 6-15 oz. salmon	6 cans
Cold Cereal	12 oz. or larger bags, boxes	3 varieties of cold cereal and 3 boxes of each variety. 1 variety must be whole grain
Peanut Butter	16-18 oz. jars	3 jars
Baby Food–Fruits	4 or 8 oz. jars or packages Any Brand	2 varieties 36 jars or packages
Baby Food–Vegetables	4 or 8 oz. jars or packages Any Brand	2 varieties 36 jars or packages
Infant Cereal (Plain)	8 oz. containers or boxes	2 varieties 3 containers or boxes of each variety
Infant Formula	13 oz. metal cans of concentrate <u>AND/OR</u> 12.4 oz. cans of powder	24 units of Similac Advance, in any combination of 13 oz. concentrate or 12.4 oz. cans of powder

For any requested WIC approved food item that is not a minimum inventory requirement, but on a participant’s benefit, an attempt must be made to make the product available to the WIC customer within 48 hours of the request, excluding holidays and weekends.

Only those items that are in good condition (fresh/undamaged) and are not beyond the expiration date or have not exceeded its “sell by”, “best if used by”, “manufacturer suggested”, or other date limiting the sale or use of the food item shall be considered. Refer to the WIC Program Food Guide for the approved WIC foods <http://www.portal.ct.gov/DPH/WIC/Approved-Food-Guide>.

FY24 WIC VENDOR AGREEMENT, APPENDIX C-REQUIREMENTS FOR WIC TRANSACTIONS

The entire WIC transaction must occur at the vendor's location listed on the WIC Vendor Application.

1. Maintain a certified automation in-store system to accept and process the WIC Card benefits using either stand beside or integrated solutions that perform online WIC Card transactions in accordance with the published rules, policies, specifications, procedures, WIC EBT Operating Rules and WIC EBT Technical Implementation Guide.
2. Update software as required by changes to the WIC EBT Operating Rules and Technical Implementation Guide.
3. Accept responsibility for any transaction of WIC benefits when an approval has been received from the Connecticut WIC Program host processor or for the incorrect transaction of WIC benefits.
4. Ensure the most current Connecticut WIC Program APL is installed in the store's POS system and is being used for processing WIC transactions.
5. Never ask the WIC customer for identification. The PIN, along with a valid WIC card, is the only identification needed.
6. Never mandate the WIC customer to provide store personnel with the benefit balance receipt prior to purchase.
7. Scan the actual item's Universal Product Code (UPC) that is affixed to the item, unless the item being purchased is a fresh fruit or vegetable. The retailer must never scan codes from UPC codebooks, other products, or reference sheets. The retailer is prohibited from scanning any UPC as a substitute, replacement or otherwise that is not actually affixed to the actual item being purchased by the WIC customer using a WIC card.
8. Provide only currently authorized WIC food in exchange for valid benefits issued by the WIC Program. Sell only WIC foods to WIC customers that are available in their current benefit balance AND that are approved on the CT WIC Program APL.
9. WIC customers must receive the food item that corresponds specifically to the UPC code scanned by the vendor during the WIC card transaction.
10. The WIC card must be present and swiped by the customer to perform the transaction. If the swipe is not successful, the WIC card number can be entered manually, but the card must be present.
11. Provide the WIC customer with a receipt at the end of the WIC transaction, which at a minimum, shows the date of the transaction, product(s) purchased, and the remaining balance of available WIC benefits.
12. Provide the capability for WIC customers to retrieve their currently available benefits balance upon request without requiring a purchase to be made.
13. Do not charge the WIC customer any fee, either directly or indirectly, arising out of or associated with operating, maintaining, or processing WIC transactions.
14. Keep all WIC customer information confidential, do not confiscate the WIC card, or ask for or enter the cardholder's PIN.
15. Allow the purchase of the WIC foods printed in the WIC Approved Food Guide. A WIC customer may purchase any of the approved brands on the WIC Approved Food Guide. A WIC Approved Food Guide must be kept at the checkout lane or cash register. The store must not restrict WIC purchases to only their store brands.
16. WIC participants do not have to purchase all of their benefits in one shopping trip. A WIC customer is allowed to purchase as much or as little food from their remaining benefit throughout the month.
17. Do not allow store credit or IOU's in exchange for items not taken at the time of the transaction.
18. Allow participants to pay the difference between the purchase price and the maximum amount of the fruits and vegetables benefits. The difference may be paid with cash, credit/debit card, SNAP, or other forms of payment that your store allows.
19. All food that was purchased must be taken at the time of the transaction.
20. Do not have checkout lane designated for WIC transactions only.
21. Never claim reimbursement for the sale of an amount of a specific WIC product that exceeds the store's documented inventory of that WIC product for a specific period of time.

FY24 WIC VENDOR AGREEMENT
APPENDIX D-REQUIREMENTS FOR PRICING AND PAYMENT

1. The State WIC Office collects prices through vendor redemptions. Charge prices that are fair and competitive for your store type. Charge prices that are comparable to the fair market value across peer groups. Prices charged by a vendor that are higher than the peer group average will be reduced to the not-to-exceed (NTE) amount during the WIC transaction.
2. All vendor prices must meet the WIC Program's price limitations. Vendors may not increase prices incrementally in order to find the maximum price.
3. Vendors with POS machines must update prices as appropriate. This includes but is not limited to sale prices, and price increases or decreases. Prices displayed on items, signs, and store shelves must match those in each stand beside POS machine in use at the vendor location.
4. Vendors must allow manufacturer's coupons, store promotions, savings cards, "buy one, get one free" offers, and any other types of sales from a WIC customer if offered to non-WIC customers. The savings must be deducted before completing the WIC transaction.
5. Never charge the WIC Program any commercial transaction processing costs and fees imposed by a third-party processor that the vendor elects to use to connect to the WIC EBT processor's host system. Per Federal Regulation 246.12(h)(3)(xxviii), the vendor shall not charge to the State agency any third-party commercial processing costs and fees incurred by the vendor from EBT multi-function equipment. Commercial transaction processing costs and fees imposed by a third-party processor that the vendor elects to use to connect to the EBT system of the State shall be borne by the vendor.
6. Never charge the WIC Program for products not actually purchased and received by the WIC customer.
7. Never charge WIC customers more for WIC products than non-WIC customers.
8. Never collect sales tax on WIC products purchased.
9. Never charge WIC customers a surcharge or a fee for making purchases with the WIC card.
10. Never charge a WIC customer money for approved WIC foods obtained with a WIC benefits, except when the purchase price for fruits and vegetables exceeds the maximum benefit allowed.
11. Never seek restitution from WIC customers for benefits not paid by the Connecticut WIC Program.
12. WIC transactions must be made through the store's business bank account that is reported to the equipment provider or the store's third party processor. Report any change of bank or bank account to the equipment provider or the third party processor.
13. Price increases on WIC foods are only accepted upon documentation of an increase in the wholesale price or a documented increase in the cost of doing business.

FY24 WIC VENDOR AGREEMENT
APPENDIX E-DISQUALIFICATIONS, CIVIL MONEY PENALTIES AND FINES

WIC Program violations shall be determined by investigation, which includes on-site monitoring, transaction audits, inventory audits and undercover compliance buys conducted by the WIC Program, USDA staff, or their designees. The intent to commit a violation versus inadvertent human error is not a distinction that the WIC Program must establish in order to impose sanctions. Sanctions are imposed in order to protect the integrity and the nutritional goals of the WIC Program.

FEDERAL MANDATORY SANCTIONS

#	Description of Violation	Number of Incidences, Occurrences, or Pattern	Length of Disqualification
1.	Judicial conviction of trafficking in WIC benefits or selling firearms, ammunition, explosives or controlled substances in exchange for WIC benefits.	One	Permanent
2.	Administrative finding of buying or selling WIC benefits for cash (trafficking) or selling firearms, ammunition, explosives or controlled substances in exchange for WIC benefits.	One	6 Years
3.	Sale of alcohol or alcoholic beverages or tobacco products in exchange for WIC benefits.	One	3 Years
4.	Claiming reimbursement for the sale of an amount of a specific WIC food that exceeds the store's documented inventory of that WIC food for a specific period of time.	Shortfall of one WIC food in three consecutive months or shortfall of three or more WIC foods in one month.	3 Years
5.	Overcharging on WIC benefits.	Three or more	3 Years
6.	Receiving, transacting and/or redeeming WIC benefits outside of authorized channels, including the use of an unauthorized vendor and/or unauthorized person.	Three or more	3 Years
7.	Charging for WIC food not received by the WIC customer.	Three or more	3 Years
8.	Providing credit or non-food items, other than alcohol, alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, cash, firearms, ammunition, explosives or controlled substances in exchange for WIC benefits.	Three or more	3 Years
9.	Providing unauthorized food items in exchange for WIC benefits, including charging for WIC food provided in excess of those listed on the WIC benefits.	Three or more	1 Year
10.	Disqualification from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or a civil money penalty in lieu of a SNAP disqualification when adequate WIC participant access exists.	One	Same as the SNAP disqualification, but does not need to be concurrent.

STATE AGENCY-ESTABLISHED SANCTIONS

#	Description of Violation	Administrative Action
1.	Substitution of a WIC food item for another WIC food item	Two incidents = pattern 1 year disqualification
2.	Allowing a refund or an exchange for WIC or non-WIC food items	Two incidents = pattern 1 year disqualification
3.	Scanning any UPC as a substitute, replacement or otherwise not actually affixed to the actual item being purchased. Scanning a UPC codebook or reference sheet.	Two incidents = pattern 1 year disqualification
4.	Not allowing the WIC customer to enter their own PIN on the PIN pad.	Two incidents = pattern 1 year disqualification
5.	Limiting WIC customers in their choice of WIC products, (i.e. forcing a WIC customer to purchase only least expensive or store brands or the most expensive products).	\$500 fine second occurrence within consecutive 12 month period
6.	Offering store credit or IOU to a WIC customer.	\$500 fine, second occurrence within consecutive 12 month period
7.	Allowing the sale of a WIC food item that is spoiled or is sold to WIC customers after the expiration date, “sell by”, “best if used by”, “manufacturer suggested”, or other date limiting the sale or use of the food item.	\$250 fine, second occurrence within consecutive 12 month period
8.	Allowing the return of any WIC purchases other than for identical WIC food items that are damaged, spoiled, or has exceeded its “sell by”, “best if used by”, “manufacturer suggested”, or other date limiting the sale or use of the food.	\$250 fine, second occurrence within consecutive 12 month period
9.	Not providing savings to WIC customers through coupons, store offered promotions or savings card.	\$125 fine, second occurrence within consecutive 12 month period
10.	Failure to attempt to provide any requested WIC approved food item within forty-eight (48) hours that is on the participant’s benefits list	\$125 fine, second occurrence within consecutive 12 month period
11.	Failure to provide a receipt at the end of the transaction showing the date of the transaction, product(s) purchased, and the remaining balance of available benefits.	\$125 fine, second occurrence within consecutive 12 month period
12.	Failure to cooperate with Federal, State, and Local WIC Program personnel during announced and unannounced on-site vendor monitoring.	\$125 fine, second occurrence within consecutive 12 month period

The WIC Program will determine if a warning for the initial occurrence of Federal Mandatory sanctions numbered 5 through 9 and all State Agency Established sanctions will be issued prior to documenting another violation. This determination will be made on a case-by-case basis when the WIC Program determines that issuing a warning would compromise the investigation.

When a completed investigation determines that a pattern of violations was not established, a warning notice may be issued to the vendor.

The WIC Program shall not accept voluntary withdrawal or use non-renewal of the vendor agreement as an alternative to disqualification for Federal Mandatory or state-agency established sanctions.

Prior to imposing a disqualification for Federal Mandatory Sanctions numbered 2 through 10, the WIC Program shall determine, and document in the vendor file, whether the disqualification would result in inadequate participant access.

If the WIC Program determines that a disqualification would result in inadequate participant access, then a civil money penalty shall be assessed in lieu of disqualification for Federal Mandatory Sanctions numbered 2 through 10. The amount of the civil money penalty shall equal the average monthly WIC redemptions for the six-month period ending with the month immediately preceding the month during which the notice of sanction is dated, multiplied times ten percent (.10), and then multiplied times the number of months for which the vendor would have been disqualified. The civil money penalty shall not exceed eighteen thousand one hundred seventy one dollars (\$18,171) for each violation. If multiple violations are revealed by a single investigation, the total civil money penalty shall not exceed seventy two thousand six hundred eighty six dollars (\$72,686). These amounts are subject to change based on Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Improvements Act of 2015.

When during the course of a single investigation, the WIC Program determines that the vendor has committed multiple violations (which may include violations subject to state agency-established sanctions); the WIC Program shall disqualify the vendor for the period corresponding to the most serious mandatory violation. However, the WIC Program shall include all violations in the notice of sanction. If a mandatory sanction is not upheld on appeal, then the WIC Program may impose state agency-established sanctions.

When a vendor who had previously been assessed a Federal Mandatory Sanction numbered 2 through 10 receives the same or another mandatory sanction, the WIC Program shall double the sanction for the second violation. Civil money penalties may also be doubled, but only to the extent of eighteen thousand one hundred seventy one dollars (\$18,171) per violation up to the maximum of seventy two thousand six hundred eighty six dollars (\$72,686) for multiple violations. These amounts are subject to change based on Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Improvements Act of 2015. When a vendor who had previously been assessed two Federal Mandatory Sanctions numbered 2 through 10 receives a third or subsequent mandatory sanction for the same or other Federal Mandatory Sanction, the WIC Program shall double the sanction for the violation. The WIC Program shall not impose a civil money penalty in lieu of disqualification for the third and subsequent mandatory violations.

If a vendor does not pay, only partially pays, or fails to timely pay a civil money penalty either within fifteen (15) days of the notice of the sanction or within the terms of an installment plan, the WIC Program shall disqualify the vendor. The length of the disqualification shall correspond to the violation for which the civil money penalty was assessed or, in cases where a mandatory sanction included the imposition of multiple civil money penalties, for a period corresponding to the most serious violation.

The WIC Program shall determine and document in the vendor file whether a disqualification based on state agency established sanctions would result in inadequate participant access. If the WIC Program determines that there shall be undue hardship for WIC participants (i.e. inadequate participant access) if a vendor is disqualified based on a State Agency Established Sanction, the store shall be allowed to remain on the program until such time that undue hardship (i.e. inadequate participant access) no longer exists. A fine of two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00) shall be paid by the vendor to continue to accept WIC benefits. A review may be requested to determine if the disqualification is warranted. At such time that the WIC Program determines that undue hardship for WIC participants (i.e. inadequate participant access) no longer exists, the vendor shall be notified that the original disqualification shall be effective fifteen (15) days after the date of the notice.

A fine is payable fifteen (15) days from the date of the notice. If payment of the fine is not paid, only partially paid, or not timely paid, the WIC Program shall disqualify the vendor for the length of the disqualification corresponding to the violation(s) documented in the notice up to a maximum of one (1) year.

If a vendor is assessed a settlement fine, or any other monetary penalty or fee relating to a disqualification from SNAP, a WIC civil money penalty shall be assessed the vendor equal to the FNS penalty.

State agency-established sanctions do not apply to vendors that do not meet selection criteria during an authorization, re-authorization or reassessment process.

Warnings shall remain active for three (3) years from the date of the violation for the entire term of the store's ownership.

FY24 WIC VENDOR AGREEMENT
APPENDIX F-MONETARY CLAIMS

The Connecticut WIC Program may make monetary claims against vendors that have committed certain types of redemption abuse *in addition to any other sanctions applied against such vendors*. Those include but are not limited to:

- Inventory audits when a vendor cannot support all of its redemptions
- Any overcharges or errors made on WIC transactions discovered during undercover compliance buys.
- Transaction audit means a review of a vendor's redemptions to determine if the vendor has overcharged the WIC Program.

Payment of monetary claims does not preclude the WIC Program from assessing sanctions associated with the violations. Payment plans may be requested for an amount of \$500 or more on a case by case basis determined by the WIC Program.

All monetary claims must be paid within fifteen (15) days of the date of the notice. All remittances must be made with a certified bank check or money order and payable to Treasurer – State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health.

Send to:

Connecticut Department of Public Health
410 Capitol Avenue, MS# 11WIC
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

The WIC Program may nonselect a vendor for failure to pay a monetary claim within the required period of time.

Actions subject to an Administrative Review:

1. Denial of authorization based on vendor selection criteria or on a determination that the vendor is attempting to circumvent a sanction.
2. Termination of the WIC Vendor Agreement.
3. Disqualification of the vendor except when it is based on a SNAP disqualification.
4. Imposition of a fine or civil money penalty in lieu of disqualification.

Actions not subject to Administrative Review:

1. Disqualification of a vendor as a result of a disqualification or a CMP in lieu of disqualification from SNAP
 2. The expiration of a WIC Vendor Agreement.
 3. Validity or appropriateness of the WIC Program's vendor selection criteria.
 4. Validity or appropriateness of the WIC Program's participant access criteria and the Program's access determinations.
 5. Validity or appropriateness of the WIC Program's criteria for determining whether a vendor applicant is expected to meet the more than 50% criterion. (Appendix A)
 6. Disputes regarding WIC benefits payments, monetary claims, and associated administrative fees.
- Vendors will be provided with written notification whenever an adverse action is taken. The notification will include the procedure to follow to obtain an administrative review, the time period in which to appeal, and the cause for and the effective date of the action. When a vendor is disqualified due in whole or in part to a Federal Mandatory Sanction violation numbered 1 through 9 in Appendix E, such notification shall include the following statement: "This disqualification from WIC may result in disqualification as a retailer in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program." Such disqualification is not subject to administrative or judicial review under SNAP."
 - Requests for review must be received by the department within seven (7) days of the date of the adverse action notice.
 - A vendor that appeals an adverse action for non-selection or disqualification will not be permitted to continue Program operations (will not be allowed to accept WIC benefits) while its appeal is in process.
 - The vendor will be provided with adequate advance notice of the time and location of the administrative review to provide all parties involved sufficient time to prepare.
 - The vendor will have an opportunity to reschedule the administrative review date upon written request.
 - The vendor will have the opportunity to present its case and to cross-examine adverse witnesses. To protect the identity of WIC Program investigators, such examination will be conducted behind a protective screen or other means.
 - The vendor will have the opportunity to be represented by counsel at any review proceeding.
 - Prior to the review, the vendor will have an opportunity to examine the evidence upon which the WIC Program's action is based. The review record will be sent to the vendor at least ten (10) days prior to the review date.
 - An impartial decision-maker will be assigned to the appeal. The decision-maker's determination is based solely on whether the WIC Program has correctly applied Federal and State statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures governing the Program, according to the evidence presented at the review. The State agency may appoint a reviewing official, such as a chief hearing officer or judicial officer, to review appeal decisions to ensure that they conform to approved policies and procedures.
 - Notification of the review decision, including the basis for the decision, will be issued within ninety (90) days from the date of receipt of a vendor's request for an administrative review. This timeframe is only an administrative requirement for the State agency and does not provide a basis for overturning the WIC Program's adverse action if a decision is not made within the specified timeframe.
 - If the adverse action under review has not already taken effect, the State agency shall make the action effective on the date of notice of the final decision.
 - If the final decision upholds the adverse action against the vendor, the State agency shall inform the vendor that it may be able to pursue judicial review of the decision.

Adverse action means a denial of authorization, termination, disqualification or imposition of a fine or civil money penalty against a vendor for any violation found during monitoring, compliance investigation, inventory audit or reassessment.

APL means the approved product listing that contains all WIC approved products allowed to be purchased with WIC benefits.

Change of ownership means a transfer of more than 50% of the interest in a vendor's business entity within a one-year period or a change in business entities except for a change from sole proprietorship to a single-member limited liability company or single-shareholder corporation where the sole proprietor is the member or shareholder and when there is a change from one entity to another, e.g., a corporation to a limited liability company when the business retains the same federal tax identification number.

Change of location means an authorized WIC vendor, under the same ownership and same tax ID number, relocates the business. If the distance moved is greater than one mile, the agreement will be terminated.

Competitive Price means a price that is comparable to the vendor's peer group prices using the most frequently redeemed food item prices collected from authorized WIC vendors and/or redemptions.

Compliance buy means a covert, on-site investigation in which a representative of the Program poses as a WIC customer and transacts one or more WIC benefits, and does not reveal during the visit that he or she is a Program representative.

Days mean calendar days. If a "due date" falls on a State holiday or weekend, the due date is the next business day.

Disqualification means the act of ending the authorization of a vendor, whether as a punitive sanction or for administrative reasons.

EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) means a method that permits electronic access to WIC food benefits using a card.

EBT Capable means the WIC vendor demonstrates their cash register system or payment equipment can accurately and securely obtain WIC food balances associated with a WIC card, maintain the necessary files such as the authorized product list, hot card file and claim file and successfully complete WIC EBT purchases.

Equipment

Multi-function equipment (Integrated cash register systems) means Point-of Sale equipment obtained by a WIC vendor through commercial suppliers, which is capable of supporting WIC EBT and other payment tender types.

Single-function equipment means Point-of-Sale equipment, such as barcode scanners, card readers, PIN pads and printers, provided to an authorized WIC vendor solely for use with the WIC Program.

Food sales means sales of all foods, based on all payment methods that are eligible items under SNAP. These include breads and cereals, dairy products, fruits and vegetables, meat, fish, and poultry, as well as non- alcoholic beverages, snack foods, soft drinks, candy, ice, and seeds and plants intended to grow food.

High risk vendor means a vendor identified as having a high probability of committing a vendor violation through application of the criteria established in federal or state regulations.

Incidences or occurrences means the number of same or different individual WIC items that result in a violation(s) from a transaction during an investigation except for Federal Mandatory Sanction violation number 4 in Appendix E.

Inventory audit means the examination of food invoices or other proofs of purchase to determine whether a vendor has purchased sufficient quantities of WIC food items to provide participants the quantities specified on WIC benefits that have been redeemed by the vendor during a given period of time.

Investigation means the use of on-site monitoring, transaction audits, inventory audits, and undercover compliance buys to determine if a vendor is committing Program violations. An undercover compliance investigation is considered complete when the WIC Program determines that a sufficient number of compliance buys have been conducted to provide evidence of Program noncompliance or when two consecutive compliance buys have been conducted in which no Federal Mandatory Sanction violations are found.

Lack of business integrity means fraud, antitrust violation, embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statement, receiving stolen property, making false claims, or obstruction of justice. Examples include but are not limited to liquor, cigarette or tax violations, falsifying invoices, etc.

Maximum not to exceed (NTE) price means the highest price at which the vendor may be paid for a food item. The maximum not to exceed prices are based on average vendor prices for WIC food items within a peer group and are used by the WIC Program to determine the reimbursement level for each food item.

Monetary claim means the charge to the vendor for the cost of items for redemptions that could not be supported in an inventory audit or overcharges on WIC food purchases.

Multiple store under the same ownership policy means that stores owned by an entity currently authorized by the WIC Program may submit an application package outside of enrollment periods. All selection criteria must be met in order to be authorized under the multiple store under the same ownership and agreement policy.

On-site monitoring means a visit from a WIC Program representative to determine compliance with program rules and procedures. Monitoring includes but is not limited to checking the types and quantities of minimum inventory items, reviewing records, observing transactions, follow up on complaints, etc.

Participant Access means the ability of WIC participants to purchase authorized WIC foods, with considerations made to factors including, but not limited to, geography, population density and participant dietary needs, as determined by the department.

Pattern is defined as two or more incidences of a violation. All violations documented during the investigation will count toward the establishment of a pattern of noncompliance.

Peer group means a category of vendors that are assigned based on population density in the ZIP code area of the store and the number of checkout lanes or cash registers in the store. There are three population density groups (population density of 1-1500 people per square mile, 1501-3000 people per square mile, and over 3001 people per square mile). There are three cash register groups (1-3 registers, 4-9 registers, and 10 or more registers). Vendors that are in the same population density and cash register groups are placed in a peer group. There are a total of 9 basic peer groups, as described above. Pharmacies are divided into two peer groups: large chain pharmacies and small chain/independent pharmacies.

Prepackaged means packaged at the manufacturer.

Redemption means the act of payment of WIC transactions according to WIC regulations and banking standards.

Retail food delivery system means a system in which WIC customers exchange WIC benefits for approved WIC foods at the vendor's fixed location that is covered by the WIC Vendor Agreement.

SNAP means The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Transaction is a single purchase made up of individual items redeemed using the WIC card.

Transaction audit means a review of a vendor's redemptions to determine if the vendor has overcharged the WIC Program.

Unauthorized food means any food items or package sizes not included in the Approved Food Guide or not printed on a WIC benefit. Unauthorized food may be a WIC approved food that is substituted for a different food item that is printed on a WIC benefits list.

Vendor means a sole proprietorship, partnership, cooperative association, corporation, or other business entity operating one or more stores authorized by the WIC Program to provide authorized WIC foods to participants under a retail food delivery system. Each store operated by a business entity constitutes a separate vendor and must be authorized separately from other stores operated by the business entity. Each store must have a single, fixed location. A vendor may be a food store, pharmacy or farmer.

Vendor authorization means the process by which the WIC Program assesses, selects, and enters into agreements with stores that apply or subsequently reapply to be authorized as vendors.

Vendor overcharge means intentionally or unintentionally charging the WIC Program more for authorized WIC foods than is permitted under the vendor agreement.

Vendor selection criteria means the criteria established by the WIC Program to select individual vendors for authorization consistent with the requirements in §246.12(g)(3) and (g)(4).

Vendor violation means any intentional or unintentional action of a vendor's current owners, officers, managers, agent, or employees (with or without the knowledge of management) that violates the vendor agreement or Federal or State statutes, regulations, policies, or procedures governing the Program.

WIC benefits for fruits and vegetables means a WIC benefit that has a stated dollar value and is the equivalent to the cash value benefits (CVV) in the Federal Regulations that allows the purchase of all allowable fruits and vegetables.

WIC Approved Foods means all foods, which are approved by the WIC Program and provided to a WIC participant. Each participant's approved foods in the specific sizes allowed are listed in the CT Approved Food Guide or printed on a WIC benefit list.

WIC customer means anyone using a WIC card as payment for a WIC transaction.

Non-discrimination statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD- 3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>,

from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or
- 2) **fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- 3) **email:** program.intake@usda.gov

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