

Section 1

INTRODUCTION

What is WIC?

The Federal Government established the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) as a two-year pilot program in 1972. In 1974, the WIC program achieved permanent program status through Public Law 94-105 as an Amendment to the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. This cost-effective nutrition intervention program is designed to improve the nutritional status of income eligible pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants and children up to the age of five years who are determined nutritionally at risk. WIC is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and was first offered in Arizona in 1974. WIC program services are provided throughout the state by county, tribal health departments and non-profit health agencies.

Within the geographic boundaries of Arizona there are three (3) **separate** USDA funded WIC programs (Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc., Navajo Nation and Arizona WIC Programs). **This Manual relates solely to the Arizona WIC Program.**

Studies have shown that inadequate nutrition and health care represent a threat to the physical and mental well being of certain individuals. Proper nutrition at the beginning of life can help prevent serious health problems. Infants and preschoolers are going through a period of rapid growth, as well as intellectual and social development. Their nutrition status and the health care they receive may have a major impact on their ability to function as happy, healthy children.

WIC has three major components: nutrition education, referrals to health and social services, and supplemental foods. The foods supplied through the WIC program are not intended to serve as a complete diet, but to supplement the foods already being consumed by the participant. Participants are examined by health care professionals to determine the need for supplemental foods and are provided with nutrition guidance. In 1992, the USDA determined that every dollar spent on the prenatal component of WIC saved up to \$4.21 in medical costs for newborns and their mothers and up to \$4.75 for newborns alone.

Participants/authorized representatives receive negotiable food instruments for specific kinds and amounts of nutritious foods and cash value food instruments to purchase fruits and vegetables. Participants/authorized representatives redeem these food instruments at authorized grocery stores and pharmacies which meet certain criteria and who have signed a Vendor Contract to follow all WIC program rules and regulations. **NOTE:** WIC cash value food instruments may also be redeemed at authorized farmer/grower locations.

What Role Does the Vendor Play?

WIC Vendors (“Vendors”) play an important role in the health community. The WIC food instrument contains a food prescription designed to supplement the WIC participant’s nutritional needs. The Vendor fills the prescription, ensuring that the participant receives exactly what is prescribed on the food instrument. Vendors act as the final step in the WIC process. The Vendor’s role is vital to the success of the WIC program because the nutritious WIC foods are designed to promote the healthiest possible birth outcomes, as well as the growth and development of children.

The Vendor may also find that the WIC program makes a substantial contribution to overall food sales. The Arizona WIC Program allows participants/authorized representatives to choose their Vendors from an authorized Vendor list. Most participants/authorized representatives select a Vendor that can also meet the remainder of their shopping needs. Current studies show WIC participants/authorized representatives spend an additional 3 to 4 dollars in cash or SNAP benefits for every WIC dollar spent. During Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2009, the Arizona WIC Program served approximately 2,075,957 participants who redeemed 4,366,453 food instruments worth \$138,185,562.00. On October 1, 2009, the Arizona WIC Program initiated the issuance of a new cash value food instrument. For the first quarter of FFY 2010 (October 1 through December 31, 2009), the new cash value food instrument was issued to approximately 423,358 participants and used to purchase more than \$1,817,397.00 worth of fruits and vegetables in Arizona.

IMPORTANT NOTICE



The Arizona WIC Program sends out important information that can assist you (as a Vendor) in maintaining compliance with your Arizona WIC Program Vendor Contract. Therefore, it is essential that you accept/pick up all certified mail sent to you from the Department. Examples of items that may be sent to you via certified mail are replacement food instruments, contract related items (including some WIC Alerts), sanction, lost/stolen food instrument and training notices.

WIC Vendor Criteria

The criteria for the selection of WIC Vendors are found in detail in Appendix 3 of this Manual and are referenced below. An Applicant must meet **all** of the evaluation criteria. Failure to meet any of the criteria provides cause to deny the application.

- Maintain minimum WIC stock requirements
- Competitive price for WIC foods
- Location accessible to WIC participants
- Type of retail establishment
- Above-50-Percent Vendor
- Sanitation Compliance
- WIC and SNAP history*
- Training attendance
- Conflict of Interest
- Volume of WIC business
- Current SNAP status*
- Business Integrity
- Incentive Item Prohibition
- Service Mark Compliance

***SNAP is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program formerly known as the Food Stamps Program.**

Vendor Contract and Authorization

The Department ensures that all participating Vendors enter into a written Contract (“Vendor Contract”). The Vendor Contract must be signed by a representative who has the legal authority to obligate the Vendor. The Vendor Contract and this Manual explain the rights and responsibilities of the Vendor and the Arizona WIC Program. Neither the Vendor Contract nor this Manual constitutes a license or a property interest.

The term of the Vendor Contract is three (3) federal fiscal years or a portion thereof to be determined at the discretion of the Department, beginning October 1 and ending on September 30. Neither the Department nor the Vendor has an obligation to renew the Vendor Contract.

The purpose of the Contract and this Manual is to provide retail outlets for WIC participants and to provide guidelines for both the Vendor and the Department in transactions arising out of the Contract. It will be the responsibility of the Vendor to designate a person from each outlet who will be responsible to ensure Vendor compliance with the terms of the Contract and this Manual. You or your designated representative will also be responsible to accept in-store training; to provide training to all cashiers and other employees who handle WIC transactions; and to provide special or additional training to employees at the request of either the Department or local agency. The Vendor will be held accountable for the actions or inactions of its employees.

The WIC Decal

The purpose of the WIC decal is to allow WIC participants/authorized representatives to identify your store as an authorized Arizona WIC Program Vendor. The decal is available in English and Spanish and must be posted in a location that is visible to participants/authorized representatives. The Department will provide, at a minimum, one (1) English and one (1) Spanish decal at the beginning of each Contract period. An additional supply may be requested by completing and submitting the Arizona WIC Program Vendor Order Form found in Appendix 2.

Please note that Vendors must use the signage provided by the Department; Vendors are NOT allowed to create or use any other WIC signage.

An example of the English Version of the WIC decal is shown below.



Note: Available in Spanish

WIC ID Stamp

The Department will provide Applicants with two (2) Vendor ID stamps when authorized to become an Arizona WIC Program Vendor for the first time. The Vendor is responsible for maintaining the Vendor ID stamps and must store them in a secure location. If the stamps are lost, worn or stolen, contact the Department at 1-866-737-3935.

The Vendor ID stamp is the property of the Arizona WIC Program and must be returned to the Department within ten (10) calendar days if:

1. There is a change of ownership;
2. Bankruptcy is filed;
3. The business is sold;
4. The WIC Vendor Contract is not renewed or is terminated.

For a fee, the Vendor may order additional duplicate ID stamps from the Department.

Report of Changes

Upon ceasing operations, changing ownership or filing bankruptcy, the Vendor must notify the Department not less than thirty (30) calendar days prior to the date that the change will occur. The Vendor must return the Vendor ID stamp within ten (10) calendar days after the change occurs. (See Store Closure Notification and Change of Ownership Forms in Appendix 2 of this Manual.)

- **NOTE:** **WIC Vendor authorization is not transferable** and the Vendor Contract will be void. Therefore, if there is a change of ownership, the new owner must complete an application and meet all enrollment criteria to become an authorized WIC Vendor.

If the new owner would like to be authorized to accept Arizona WIC Program food instruments, please advise him/her to contact the Department at 1-866-737-3935.

Vendors must also report any change of store name, store address, telephone number or bank account to the Department in writing or through the Vendor website (<http://vendor.azwic.gov>), not less than thirty (30) calendar days before the change takes place.