

Section 5

CASHING FOOD INSTRUMENTS

WIC Food Instrument Redemption Procedures

The Arizona WIC Program relies on its Vendors to see that only WIC authorized foods are purchased. When proper checkout procedures are followed, WIC participants receive the nutrients they need to improve their health status. The cashiers play an important role as part of the Vendor's responsibility to the WIC program.

Vendor's employees must offer WIC participants/authorized representatives and proxies the same courtesies as offered to other customers. **Separate lines or checkout counters may not be established for only WIC customers.**

To take less time during check out, local agency employees instruct participants/authorized representatives or proxies to separate WIC foods from their other purchases. Sometimes it may be necessary for the cashier to assist a participant/authorized representative or proxy in separating the WIC foods from their other items. Also, the cashier should check the items before starting the transaction to ensure that the participant/authorized representative or proxy has the proper items that are listed on the WIC food instrument. Therefore, WIC participants/authorized representatives or proxies may not utilize a Vendor's self checkout lanes.

Cashiers must be familiar with the Arizona WIC Programs Food List to ensure that the participant receives the proper foods. Also, to reduce the number of rejected food instruments, cashiers must be familiar with the food instrument redemption procedures outlined on the following pages.

- **NOTE:** Arizona WIC Program food instruments may be redeemed anywhere in Arizona as long as they are redeemed by an Arizona WIC Program authorized Vendor.

For example: WIC food instruments that are issued to a participant in Maricopa County may be redeemed in Apache County.

Before ringing up the WIC transaction, the Cashier

SHALL:

- Identify the WIC Customer
 - ➔ The only acceptable identification will be:
 - ➔ The participant's/authorized representative's ID Folder/Transfer Card, **OR**
 - ➔ The completed and signed Proxy Certification form.
- Check the dates
 - ➔ Do not accept before the date shown in the box marked "FIRST DATE TO USE" or after the "LAST DATE TO USE"
- Check to make sure that the food instrument has not been reported to you (in writing) by the Department as either lost or stolen
- Enter the date the food instrument is used (cashier's responsibility) in the "DATE OF USE" box
 - ➔ The date can be corrected one (1) time only and in the presence of the WIC participant/authorized representative by drawing a single line through the incorrect date, writing in the correct date and initialing the correction.
- Check that the selected items, quantities and units being purchased are as specified on the food instrument
 - ➔ All infant formula must be purchased
 - ➔ No substitutions
 - ➔ No rainchecks
 - ➔ Check the price of each item to avoid overcharges
- For Regular Food Instruments:
 - ➔ Keep each WIC transaction separate
 - ➔ Allow WIC customer to redeem more than one food instrument per visit
 - ➔ Do not combine the total purchase amounts from two or three food instruments into one
 - ➔ Food instrument cannot exceed the maximum amount stated on the food instrument
- For Cash Value Food Instruments:
 - ➔ Allow WIC customer to use multiple cash value food instruments towards a single purchase
 - ➔ Tender each food instrument separately, when multiple cash value food instruments are used towards a single purchase
 - ➔ Amount written on the cash value food instrument cannot exceed the maximum amount stated on the food instrument
 - ➔ Allow the WIC customer to pay the difference for all fruits and/or vegetables being purchased that exceed the maximum value as stated on the face of the **cash value food instrument only**.
 - ➔ **NOTE:** The dollar amount written on each cash value food instrument must be less than or equal to the maximum amount stated on the face of the food instrument. Do not include any amount over the maximum value in the total amount that is written on the cash value food instrument.

SHALL NOT:

- Accept a food instrument that is altered, including alterations of the participant's name, first date to use, date of use or last date to use, signature, or type, quantities and units of food items authorized for purchase.
 - **NOTE:** The use of correction fluid (white-out) is considered an alteration. However, food items crossed out, highlighted or circled are not considered alterations. The Vendor shall immediately notify the Department of person(s) presenting food instrument(s) which have been altered.
- Require WIC participants/authorized representatives to purchase other items in order to redeem a food instrument.
- Allow WIC participants/authorized representatives to purchase items **not** included on the Arizona WIC Programs Food List with a WIC food instrument.
- For cash value food instruments only, prevent WIC participants/authorized representatives from paying the difference between the maximum value as stated on the food instrument and the total amount of their fruit and/or vegetable purchase.
- Require WIC participants/authorized representatives to use multiple cash value food instruments in order to purchase their fruits and vegetables.

When ringing up the WIC transaction, the Cashier

SHALL:

- Allow the use of coupons, the purchase of items on sale and to take advantage of promotional specials, for example:
 - ➔ Cents off coupons
 - ➔ Free additional ounces
 - ➔ Buy one, get one free
 - ➔ In-store or manufacturer promotions
 - ➔ Store membership discount cards
- 1. **Cents off coupons –**
 - a. Single, double, triple, quadruple and other store coupons (if applicable to the purchase) are acceptable.
 - b. The receipt must document that the value of the coupon was deducted from the total sales price of the WIC foods purchased with the food instrument.
 - c. Do not give the reduced dollar amount to the WIC participant/authorized representative in the form of cash, credit or other valuable goods.
- 2. **Free additional ounces –**
 - a. The free additional ounces should cost the same as the ounces specified on the food instrument. For example: Four additional ounces of peanut butter sold in a special 22 ounce jar for the same cost as the 18 ounce jar.
- 3. **Buy one, get one free –**
 - a. Non-WIC approved foods or items are acceptable free items. For example: Buy a 15 ounce box of Cheerios, and get a 15 ounce box of Honey Nut Cheerios free.
 - b. The receipt must document that only WIC authorized foods were paid for with the food instrument.
 - c. The number of ounces of free additional product should not be counted towards the maximum number of ounces allowed by WIC. For example: Buy one 28 ounce box of Nabisco Cream of Wheat hot cereal and get a 14 ounce box free. The 14 ounces from the free box will not be counted against the quantity of 36 ounces specified on the food instrument.
- 4. **In-store or manufacturer promotions –**

WIC customers may take advantage of any/all in-store and/or manufacturer's promotions. Some examples are: Store manager's specials of the day or week or manufacturers marketing their product in a larger size package/container which will cost the consumer the same price as the regular size package/container. (It may say something like 20% more free).

 - ➔ **Note: The above-mentioned does not include infant formula promotions.**
- 5. **Store membership discount cards –**

The store's discount cards also known as "clipless coupons" may be used by all WIC customers and with any/all purchases, **INCLUDING WIC infant formula purchases.**
- 6. **Employee discount cards –**

WIC customers, who are also grocery store employees, may use their employee discount card with any/all purchases, **INCLUDING WIC infant formula purchases.**

Note: Vendors for which more than 50 percent of annual food sales result from WIC sales, also referred to as Above-50-Percent Vendors (per WIC Vendor Provisions of P.L. 108-265), are exempt from the above-mentioned savings policies (item numbers 1 through 5) and may not provide incentive items* or other free merchandise to WIC Program participants. Failure to comply with this policy may result in termination of the Vendor Contract and a one year disqualification.

*Incentive items or other free merchandise are defined as: Free or reduced price food or other items, cash, lottery tickets, buy one, get one free, buy one, get one at a reduced price, free amounts added to an item by a manufacturer, manufacturer coupons, store loyalty cards, sales and specials for supplemental food, free or reduced price services except for the minimal customary courtesies of the retail food trade, such as bagging supplemental food for the participant and assisting the participant with loading the supplemental food into his/her vehicle.

When ringing up the WIC transaction, the Cashier

SHALL NOT:

- Except for infant formula, require WIC participants/authorized representatives to purchase all the items listed on the food instrument.
- Prevent WIC participants/authorized representatives from purchasing all of the items listed on the food instrument.
- Require WIC participants/authorized representatives to purchase specific brands or limit the units of WIC foods (e.g.: allow only a certain brand, unless it is specifically stated on the food instrument or food list, such as Kellogg's Corn Flakes or gallons of milk only).
- Charge more than the current shelf price.
- Charge for items not purchased.
- Sell WIC infant formula after the manufacturer's expiration date printed on the package/container.
- Charge sales tax or other tax for WIC foods purchased.
- Give WIC participants/authorized representatives rainchecks for WIC foods that were included in the dollar amount of the sale written on the food instrument.
- Give WIC participants/authorized representatives cash or credit for WIC food instruments redeemed.
- Provide incentive items* or other free merchandise to WIC Program participants. **Note:** This **only** applies to for-profit Vendors for which more than 50 percent of the annual revenue of the Vendor from the sale of food items consists of revenue from the sale of supplemental foods that are obtained with WIC food instruments.

After ringing up the WIC transaction, the Cashier

SHALL:

- Enter the purchase price (cashier's responsibility) in the "\$" box.
 - ➔ The purchase price shall be equal to the dollar amount of the food items listed **and** purchased on the food instrument and cannot exceed the maximum dollar amount stated on the food instrument.
If the participant/authorized representative is redeeming a **cash value food instrument**, the purchase price shall be equal to the dollar amount of the food items that the WIC participant is purchasing. However, the dollar amount written in the \$ box must be less than or equal to the maximum amount stated on the cash value food instrument. Note: The WIC participant/authorized representative may pay the difference when the total amount exceeds the maximum amount as specified on the cash value food instrument. However, do not include any amount exceeding the maximum in the amount that is written on the food instrument.

 - Correct any mistakes in writing the dollar amount on the food instrument by doing the following (cashier's responsibility):
 - ➔ Draw a single line through the incorrect dollar amount;
 - ➔ Write the corrected dollar amount in the "\$ CORRECTION ONLY" box; and
 - ➔ Initial the correction in the "CASHIER INITIAL" box.

 - Witness customer signature.
 - ➔ Verify that the signature on the food instrument matches the signature on the ID Folder/Transfer Card (or Proxy Certification form) before finalizing the WIC transaction. The signature at the store does not need to be a carbon copy of the signature on the ID Folder/Transfer Card (or Proxy Certification form). It must be the same first and last names (in that order) and have the same characteristics as the signature on the ID Folder/Transfer Card (or Proxy Certification form). Remember, the ID Folder/Transfer Card may have one (1) or two (2) signatures in the signature boxes. The signature obtained at the end of the transaction needs to match **one** of the signatures on the ID Folder/Transfer Card.
- The WIC customer may re-sign the WIC food instrument **one time only** in the presence of the cashier if:
1. The signature on the food instrument does not match their signature on the ID Folder/Transfer Card or Proxy Certification form;
 2. The food instrument presented was pre-signed.
- Follow the procedures below when a food instrument needs to be re-signed:
1. Draw a single line through the original signature.
 2. Have the WIC customer re-sign the food instrument above the original signature.
 3. Verify that the signature matches one of the signatures on the ID Folder/Transfer Card or Proxy Certification form.
- Give WIC customer a clear, legible cash register receipt for each of their WIC purchases.
 - ➔ The receipt must reflect the store name, date, and quantities purchased and total dollar amount.
 - ➔ The receipt must identify sale as a "WIC" transaction.

SHALL NOT:

- Accept the food instrument, if the actual cost of the WIC foods purchased exceeds the maximum stated on the food instrument (except as follows):
 - ➔ **For cash value food instruments only:** Vendors may allow the WIC Customer to pay the difference between the actual cost of the fruits and/or vegetables purchased and the maximum value that is printed on the cash value food instruments. For more information, see Cash Value Food Instrument in this Manual.

After ringing up the WIC transaction, the Cashier

- Provide refunds or permit WIC participants/authorized representatives to exchange WIC foods purchased with a food instrument for unauthorized foods, non-WIC type foods or other items, cash or credit, except for exchanges of an identical authorized supplemental food item when the original authorized supplemental 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.
 - ➔ **Note:** An identical authorized supplemental food item means the exact brand and size as the original authorized supplemental food item obtained and returned by the WIC participant/authorized representative.
- Exchange WIC food instruments for non-WIC foods, non-food items, alcohol or tobacco products, lottery tickets, cash or credit.
- Charge WIC participants/authorized representatives the difference in value if the cost of food specified exceeds the maximum value of the food instrument.
- Request full or partial payment from participants/authorized representatives for the value of unauthorized items purchased, food instruments rejected for payment or damaged food instruments. Restitution shall not be requested even if the food instrument was not deposited.

WIC Food Instrument Redemption – Not To Exceed (NTE) Procedures

The Arizona WIC Program will provide, on a weekly basis, the not to exceed (NTE) dollar amount(s) by food instrument type and peer group to all authorized Vendors. This information will be available to Vendors via the Arizona WIC Program Vendor Website. Each Vendor/Owner will only have access to their individual information. The information will be posted to the Website each Friday to provide Vendors with at least three calendar days advance notice of the new NTE. The new NTE will become effective on the following Monday of each week. If Monday is a holiday, the new NTE will become effective on the following Tuesday.

Vendors may use this information to avoid possible banking fees associated with WIC food instruments that are rejected for being over the NTE dollar amount. Vendors who elect to use this information must do the following:

1. The cashier must enter the total purchase price of the food items actually purchased by the WIC participant/authorized representative on the food instrument and the WIC participant/authorized representative must sign the food instrument.
2. The Vendor may then compare the dollar amount written on the food instrument to the NTE amount for that food instrument type provided by the WIC Program via its Website.
3. If the NTE dollar amount for the food instrument type is **less than** the amount written on the food instrument, the Vendor **may do** the following:
 - a. Draw a single line through the higher dollar amount on the food instrument and write the lesser dollar amount in the “\$ correction only” box.
 - b. Initial the change in the “cashier initial” box.
 - c. Endorse and deposit the food instrument in its financial institution for payment.
4. If the NTE dollar amount for the food instrument type is **greater than** the amount written on the food instrument, the Vendor **may not** write in the greater amount on the food instrument.

UNDER THE ARIZONA WIC PROGRAM VENDOR CONTRACT VENDORS MAY NOT:

1. Charge the WIC Program more than the current shelf price for supplemental foods.
 2. Prevent a WIC participant/authorized representative from purchasing all of the items the participant/authorized representative would be entitled to purchase with their food instrument.
 3. Require a WIC participant/authorized representative to purchase specific brands or units of WIC food items (e.g., allow only a certain brand, unless it is specifically stated on the food instrument or authorized food list, such as Kellogg’s Corn Flakes or allow juice only in frozen concentrate containers).
- ➔ **NOTE:** The NTE Procedures do not apply to the cash value food instrument.