



VENDOR VIEWS

LA WIC's Authorized Vendor Newsletter



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ABBOTT FORMULA RECALL

In response to shortages due to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency and the Abbott formula recall, the USDA has granted several waivers to the Louisiana WIC Program (LA WIC) in an effort to allow the Program increased flexibility to respond to the recall. These waivers allowed LA WIC to add substitute infant formula options to the LA WIC Authorized Product List (APL), which will remain in effect through April 30, 2022. LA WIC's Infant Formula Substitutes due to Abbott Formula Recall Memo dated 3/9/22 outlines steps Vendors should take to help ensure

that Participants can continue to purchase infant formula with WIC Benefits.

The most up-to-date information concerning the recall and LA WIC's response, including a Standard Formula Substitution Chart, can be found on the LA WIC Authorized Vendor Hub.

COMPLIANCE INVESTIGATIONS REVIEW

LA WIC is required to conduct Compliance Investigations (Compliance Buys/Inventory Audits) on a minimum of 5% of Vendors each federal fiscal year (FFY). A Compliance Buy is a covert, on-site investigation in which a representative of LA WIC poses as a WIC Participant or proxy, transacts WIC Benefits, and does not reveal during the visit that he or she is an LA WIC representative. An Inventory Audit uses food invoices to determine if a Vendor has claimed reimbursement for the sale of a WIC Approved Food Item(s) that exceeds the store’s documented inventory of that WIC Approved Food Item(s) at the category level for a specific period of time. Below is a chart listing the most common violations cited during FFY21 Compliance Investigations and the actions Vendors can take to prevent them:

Most Common Violations Found in FFY 2021 Compliance Investigations

Violation	%	Preventative Action
Failing to comply with WIC Transaction processing and redemption procedures* *See the graph below for additional information on the specific issues noted by LA WIC during Compliance Buy Transactions	61%	Ensure all staff who conduct WIC Transactions are trained on the LA WIC Transaction Procedures (WIC-33) . In particular, Vendors should ensure staff are trained to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide copies of ALL receipts to WIC Participants • NOT accept benefits on behalf of WIC Participants
Federal Mandatory Sanction Violation – Vendor Overcharge	11%	Ensure the price charged at the register is equal to or less than the shelf price for that WIC Approved Food Item
Federal Mandatory Sanction Violation – Audit Deficiency	11%	Ensure all purchase invoices meet LA WIC’s invoice requirements
Failing to adhere to any other requirements of the Vendor Agreement or Vendor Guide	17%	Ensure that the WIC APL is being updated every 48 hours and that produce is mapped per the LA WIC Produce Mapping requirements

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The [LA WIC Transaction Procedures \(WIC-33\)](#) can always be accessed and printed directly from the [LA WIC Authorized Vendor Hub](#). Vendors can also request supplemental training on topics like Transaction Requirements, Cashier Best Practices, Compliance Investigations and/or Monitoring by completing the [LA WIC Vendor Supplemental Training Request Form](#).

Transaction Procedure Issues Identified during FFY21 Compliance Buys

Specific Transaction Issue	%
Failing to provide WIC Participant with ALL receipts	73%
Accepting WIC Benefits on behalf of the WIC Participant	18%
Transacting WIC prior to other form of payment	9%

A full list of instructions for processing WIC Transactions can be found on the [LA WIC Transaction Procedures \(WIC-33\)](#). All new hires are required to review the LA WIC Transaction Procedures (WIC-33) and sign the [LA WIC Transaction Procedures Training Log \(WIC-33L\)](#).

[Click here](#) or visit the [LA WIC Authorized Vendor Hub](#) for examples of LA WIC Transaction Receipts and an explanation of how to interpret the information printed on each one. This information will help your cashiers answer questions from Participants regarding their WIC Benefits.

Please note that your store is required to comply with all provisions of the [LA WIC Vendor Agreement](#) and [Vendor Guide](#) at all times.



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[Click here](#) or visit the [LA WIC Authorized Vendor Hub](#) for examples of acceptable and unacceptable invoices.

PEER GROUP SYSTEM UPDATE REMINDER

LA WIC updated its Peer Group system for Federal Fiscal Year 2022, with changes taking effect on November 1, 2021. LA WIC is required to organize Vendors into Peer Groups for cost containment purposes. As such, Peer Groups are designed to group together Vendors that are similar, in order to assess them as equitably as possible.

LA WIC's current Peer Group system is based on a Vendor's business model, as determined by the number of states the Vendor operates in and what type of supplier(s) it purchases from. The number of registers in the store no longer factors into LA WIC's Peer Group system.

Please see the [Peer Group System Updates for FFY22 Memo](#) dated 10/13/21 for more details, including detailed descriptions of LA WIC's current Peer Groups.

REMINDER ABOUT Highbond Notifications

LA WIC has begun in-store Routine Monitoring Reviews and Compliance Investigations for Federal Fiscal Year 2022. As a reminder, in an effort to improve communication with Vendors, LA WIC will again be using a software program called HighBond to send and receive information from Vendors via email. Vendors receiving Routine Monitoring Reviews and Compliance Investigations will receive emails from notifications@highbond.com on behalf of LAWICVendor@la.gov (see the preview below). You may need to check your spam filter to ensure you receive these notifications from LA WIC. [Click here](#) or visit the [LA WIC Authorized Vendor Hub](#) for complete instructions.



HighBond Notifications <notifications@highbond.com> on behalf of Louisiana WIC Program

<LAWICVendor@la.gov>

Recipient Name

Monday, July 27, 2020 10:55 AM

TEMPORARY ALTERNATIVE MSR REMINDER

LA WIC recently updated its Minimum Stock Requirements (MSR) policy. This policy update allows LA WIC to establish temporary alternative MSR in response to statewide shortages and/or an Emergency-Disaster.

In response to challenges related to maintaining an adequate supply of WIC Approved Food Items and other issues reported by our Vendors as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, **LA WIC implemented temporary alternative MSR, which became effective February 16, 2022 and will remain in effect through September 30, 2022.** LA WIC will use the temporary MSR when assessing Vendors for compliance with LA WIC Vendor Rules and Regulations beginning February 16, 2022.

LA WIC has made temporary changes to the following documents to reflect these updates:

- LA WIC Vendor Guide (the “Guide”), effective as of February 16, 2022. The Guide replaces the Louisiana WIC Vendor Guide, revised 01/2022. The temporary MSR has been added as an appendix to the Guide.
- LA WIC Vendor Policy Manual, effective as of February 16, 2022. The Manual replaces the Louisiana WIC Vendor Policy Manual, effective 12/2021.
- LA WIC Approved Food List (WIC-23), effective as of February 16, 2022. The Food List replaces the LA WIC Approved Food List (WIC-23), effective 01/2022. The temporary MSR has been added to the WIC-23 on page 1.
- LA WIC Vendor Self Assessment Form, effective as of February 16, 2022. The Form replaces the Vendor Self Assessment Form, effective 01/2022.

UPCOMING DATES:

April 15 – State Offices Closed

April 30 – Infant Formula Substitutes Approval Expires

Please keep in mind that LA WIC Vendor Operations staff continue to work remotely during the pandemic. As such, email remains our most reliable form of communication.

VENDOR ANNUAL TRAINING PRESENTATION

On March 16 and 17, 2022, LA WIC conducted interactive Annual Vendor Training sessions via Zoom. LA WIC would like to thank everyone who participated in the training, which is a mandatory federal requirement. The training presentation can be found on the [LA WIC Authorized Vendor Hub](#). Please feel free to share the presentation with anyone who may benefit from it.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Q: Do items in stock, but not on the shelves (for example in the back of the store or behind the counter), count towards meeting Minimum Stock Requirements (MSR)?

A: Yes. All WIC Approved Food Items that are within the physical structure of the store (including in storage areas, behind the counter and/or on store shelves), count toward meeting MSR. If, during the course of assessing a Vendor for MSR, LA WIC determines that MSR has not been met for a particular item, LA WIC will ask the Vendor representative to view any stock of that item that may be present in the store but in a location other than on the shelves. If LA WIC can verify that such stock exists, it will be counted toward the MSR for that item.

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Q: Who do I contact if I have a question about WIC Vendor operations?

A: Much of the information you may be looking for can be found on the [LA WIC Authorized Vendor Hub](http://ldh.la.gov/wicvendor) at ldh.la.gov/wicvendor. If you need to reach out to someone in the LA WIC Vendor Management Unit, you can always email us at LAWICVendor@la.gov or call us at (225) 342-0725. An LA WIC Program Monitor is also assigned to every Vendor, based on their Parish. A list of LA WIC Program Monitors, their contact information, and the Parishes they represent can be found on the [LA WIC Authorized Vendor Hub](http://ldh.la.gov/wicvendor).

Q: Where can I find information on Price Look Up (PLU) codes for fruits and vegetables?

A: LA WIC provides a list of PLU codes for WIC Approved Food Items on the [LA WIC Authorized Vendor Hub](http://ldh.la.gov/wicvendor), under the “LA WIC Authorized Product List and UPC Information” section.



JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

This newsletter will automatically be sent to the official corporate email address your store has on file with LA WIC, but you can [click here](#) to register additional email addresses to receive this newsletter directly.

CONTACT US

Phone: (225) 342-0725

Fax: (225) 376-4674

Email: LAWICVendor@la.gov

LA WIC Authorized Vendor Hub:

<http://ldh.la.gov/wicvendor>

(Open the link and press CTRL+D to bookmark the page on your internet browser)

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

What did you like about this newsletter? What didn't you like? What topics would you like to see covered in future issues? Please [click here](#) to let us know how we're doing by filling out a short survey.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.