

6.1 Purpose of Vendor Training

Federal regulations require the State Agency to provide mandatory initial and annual trainings to all vendors. Vendor training is designed to provide information on the WIC Program, minimize program violations through preventing vendor errors and noncompliance, and to improve Program service. All vendors must attend mandatory training prior to initial authorization and mandatory annual interactive training sessions during the 3-year authorization period. The State Agency will also schedule corrective action training for noncompliant or problematic vendors on an as-needed basis, and offer technical assistance to supplement formal training opportunities.

What are the State Agency's Responsibilities?

- Provide interactive training prior to a vendor's authorization ("pre-authorization training")
- Designate the date, time, and location of the interactive trainings and the audience (managers, cashiers, etc.) for whom the training is directed
- Document the content of, and participation in, all vendor trainings
- Provide vendors with at least one alternative date on which to attend interactive trainings
- Provide Annual Training to at least one representative of each vendor
- Determine the method of vendor training used, regardless of reason for training
- Terminate any vendor that does not attend training, as scheduled

What are the Vendor's Responsibilities?

- Attend vendor trainings, as scheduled by the State Agency
- Train cashiers and other staff on Program requirements

DC WIC employs a "train the trainer" model. **Every authorized vendor is required to designate at least one person to serve as the designated trainer.** The designated trainer shall train all cashiers and other staff involved with WIC transactions on Program requirements. The vendor or its designated trainer will promptly inform employees of changes in the WIC Program, including changes to the Authorized Products List. A sign-in sheet is strongly encouraged to document training participation.

NOTE: The recipient of the training will be responsible to ensure that their store operates in compliance with the WIC Vendor Agreement, WIC Federal Regulations, and this Vendor Manual.

How does the State Agency Document the Content of and Vendor Participation in Vendor Trainings?

All vendors are required to sign in during in-person trainings, attendance will be taken for virtual trainings, and all vendor training materials will be posted to the DC WIC website www.dcwic.org under Vendors > Trainings for reference.

What are Acceptable Methods of Training?

Examples of acceptable methods of vendor training include:

- Off-site classroom-style train the trainer or manager training
- On-site cashier training
- Training videos
- Training newsletters
- Virtual web-conference style trainings

See table 6.1, below, for a quick reference on State Agency verse Vendor training responsibilities.

6.2 Pre-Authorization Training for New Stores

The State Agency will meet with the representative(s) responsible for managing a store's operations no earlier than two (2) weeks prior to the store's authorization date.

Topics covered during Pre-Authorization Training include, but may not be limited to:

- Description of the WIC Program
- Use of the Vendor Manual
- Review of Vendor and State Agency Responsibilities
- Approved Products List
- Minimum Stocking Requirements
- Infant Formula Purchasing
- Electronic Benefits Transfer for WIC (eWIC)
- eWIC Redemption Process
- eWIC Receipt Requirements
- Vendor Monitoring
- Violations and Sanctions
- Vendor Claims and Reimbursement
- Vendor Rights and Responsibilities
- Fair hearing procedures
- Incentive item policy
- Complaints Process

At the time of Pre-Authorization Training, the State Agency will provide the Vendor:

- DC WIC Vendor Manual (will be emailed to the store manager)
- DC WIC Formula Guide
- Accompanying assessments (See section 6.6)

NOTE: These documents are also available to vendors at all times on the DC WIC website at www.dcwic.org/vendor-training.

The State Agency may conduct follow-up trainings every six months (twice) during the first year of operations for a newly authorized vendor. Trainings will address problems that have been identified or areas in which a new vendor desires further instruction or clarification.

6.3 Training of Currently Authorized Vendors:

On-site training and technical assistance for vendors and cashiers is provided during vendor monitoring visits, or as-needed. The State Agency will use the following measures to ensure vendors are knowledgeable and competent in processing WIC transactions:

- Results from compliance buys and educational visits
- Results from announced and unannounced monitoring visits
- Monthly reports on overcharges

There are two types of training that occur during the three-year authorization cycle which are mandatory for authorized vendors to attend. Descriptions are as follows:

1. **Annual Mandatory Training** – The State Agency is responsible for providing Vendor training on an annual basis. These sessions are conducted for all vendors at the beginning of each fiscal year (October). At least one Vendor representative from each store must participate in annual training. All store attendees are required to sign-in and indicate their job position to verify attendance. The State Agency will designate the date, time, and location of all interactive training, and shall provide at least one alternative date for Annual Mandatory Training.

Topics to be covered during Annual Mandatory Training include, but may not be limited to:

- Description of the WIC Program
- Vendor and State Agency responsibilities
- Approved Products List
- Minimum Stocking Requirements
- Infant Formula Purchasing
- Electronic Benefits Transfer for WIC (eWIC)
- eWIC Redemption Process
- eWIC Receipt Requirements
- Violations and Sanctions
- Vendor Rights and Responsibilities
- Fair Hearings Procedures
- Vendor Claims and Reimbursement
- Incentive Items Policy
- Vendor Complaint Process
- Program Updates

The following are used to evaluate the effectiveness of vendor training and monitoring:

- Evaluation forms with training materials
- Pre/post-tests regarding vendor policies, procedures, and practices
- Statistical indicators, such as those on overcharges, redemption, and other high risk indicators addressed in Chapter 5.
- Informal feedback from vendors, local agencies, and participants

- 2. Reauthorization Training** – The State Agency is responsible for providing Vendor training to vendors who are re-authorized in the Program at the beginning of the new authorization cycle. This training will take place in lieu of that year's Annual Training in the month of October. Reauthorization training may be conducted in combination with site visits to individual stores, or as group training for store managers. The State Agency will determine which approach would be best to meet the needs of the WIC Program.

Topics to be covered during Reauthorization Training include, but may not be limited to:

- Description of the WIC Program
- Vendor's Performance and Problem Areas*
- Corrective Action Results*
- Review Approved Products List
- Minimum Stocking Requirements
- Infant Formula Purchasing
- Processing eWIC transactions
- Vendor Monitoring
- Violations and Sanctions
- Vendor Rights and Responsibilities
- Fair Hearings Procedures
- Vendor Claims and Reimbursements
- Incentive Items Policy
- Vendor Complaint Process
- Program Updates

*Note: Information on individual vendors will only be foreclosed when that vendor has been scheduled for an individual reauthorization training. Trainings with more than one vendor in attendance will focus on general performance information and Program requirements.

6.4 Consequences for Missing a Training Session

What happens if a vendor fails to attend a training session?

If it is a...	... Then the State Agency will...
Pre-authorization training Or Mandatory annual training Or Corrective action training	Allow the vendor to attend training on an alternative date
An alternative date for Pre-authorization training	Deny the vendor WIC authorization for failure to meet vendor eligibility criteria
An alternative date for Mandatory annual training	Terminate the vendor for failure to remain in compliance with the Vendor Agreement
An alternative date for Corrective action training	Terminate the vendor for failure to remain in compliance with the Vendor Agreement

6.5 Mandatory Cashier Training:

State Agency staff will conduct mandatory cashier trainings if a store exhibits:

- Two (2) or more customer-service related complaints from WIC customers about the same authorized vendor in the same Federal Fiscal Year
- Designation as a high-risk store for two consecutive quarters within a fiscal year

Prior to being authorized for a new contract period, stores that have been designated high risk for three or more quarters (out of ten quarters) will be required to receive cashier training for all staff responsible for processing WIC transactions.

6.6 Assessments:

Currently, only cashiers who receive individual corrective-action training from store managers, or store-wide cashier training from the State Agency, are subject to training assessments. Assessments are open-book style. Trainees are encouraged to fill out paper versions of the assessments during training before taking the quiz on-line at www.dcwic.org/vendor-training.

- **Quiz 1: WIC Foods and Standard Infant Formulas**
 - To be administered to all store personnel responsible for processing DC WIC benefits
 - This quiz will reinforce information regarding WIC Foods and Formulas
- **Quiz 2: Processing WIC Transactions / Customer Service**
 - To be administered to all store personnel responsible for processing DC WIC transactions
 - This quiz will reinforce information on providing excellent customer service to WIC customers and test understanding of processing WIC transactions

The online quiz scores will immediately be routed to the State Agency. The passing score for each quiz is 85%. Store managers must keep a log of cashier's scores. Cashiers who do not pass each quiz will have seven (7) days in which to take the quiz(es) again and must receive a passing score.

Table 6.1 Training Quick Reference

State Agency Provided Training	Vendor's Responsibility Training
<u>Annual Training:</u> • October • Mandatory <u>Reauthorization Training:</u> • October of first year in authorization cycle • Mandatory <u>As-needed trainings:</u> • Pre-authorization training ○ Before a new store may start to accept WIC benefits • Follow-up training ○ 6 months after pre-authorization training • Cashier trainings ○ When a store has been designated high-risk ≥ 3 of 10 quarters ○ State Agency will hold mandatory training for all store cashiers	<u>New-hire training for cashiers:</u> • Cashiers should be trained on WIC program policies and procedures during their onboarding staff training <u>As-needed trainings:</u> • Training all store personnel who interact with WIC customers after store manager or responsible trainer receives training on updated policies and procedures ○ Includes communications from State Agency such as memos, quarterly newsletters, "office hours", etc. • Training individual cashiers who have been identified as needing additional training through monitoring visits and/or participant complaints

