



WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit
Wisconsin WIC Program

Local WIC Agency Guidance: Vendor Complaint Process

Wisconsin Department of Health Services
Division of Public Health

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1. PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDANCE

The WIC Program is required to have a process in place to record and respond to complaints from participants, vendors, and other sources. When a complaint is made against a vendor, the local WIC agency is required to complete the Vendor/Participant Complaint form (F-44322) and submit it to the state WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit.

The purpose of the Vendor/Participant Complaint form is to collect information and provide documentation regarding the vendor complaint. The complaint and actions taken are entered into ROSIE by the WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit. The WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit maintain vendor files and will document complaints in the vendor file when appropriate. Local agencies are not required to maintain a vendor complaint file, but may do so if desired.

2. COMPLAINTS VS eWIC TRANSACTION ISSUES

Complaints are related to the participant's shopping experience and interpersonal interactions at the store, while eWIC transaction issues are related to technical issues that arise during the transaction.

- Complaints are reported using the [Vendor/Participant Complaint](#) form (F-44322).
- eWIC transaction issues are reported using the [eWIC Transaction Issue](#) form (F-01835).

2.1. Complaint Examples

Common types of vendor complaints include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Staff was rude to the participant or treated the participant differently than non-WIC customers.
- WIC approved food items that are **minimum stock requirements** are not available.
- Store has expired food for sale.
- Store has unsanitary conditions.
- Store does not maintain regular hours of operation.
- Store does not post prices on WIC approved food items.
- WIC shelf talkers are posted under non WIC approved foods.
- Store does not allow participant to use coupons or promotions that are available to non WIC customers.
- Staff requested to take possession of participant's eWIC card and/or requested the participant's PIN.
- Store is suspected of committing fraud, including: providing cash, alcohol, tobacco, or firearms in exchange for WIC benefits.

The following are examples of situations that would **not** be considered complaints and for which the local WIC agency should instead provide additional education to the participant:

- Participant is confused or frustrated about which foods are WIC approved.
- Participant is confused about their benefit balance.
- Store did not take the time to help the participant determine or shop for WIC approved foods.
- Store did not have WIC approved foods that are **not** minimum stock requirements.

2.2. eWIC Transaction Issue Examples

Common types of eWIC transaction issues include, but are not limited to:

- WIC approved foods that are not being recognized by the cash register.
- Issues with packaged fruit and vegetables not being recognized at the cash register.
- Discrepancies between a participant's benefit balance and what is being allowed by the cash register.

3. COMPLAINT PROCESS

1. The local WIC agency receives a complaint either verbally or in writing by a participant, vendor, or other source.
2. The local agency determines if the issue is a complaint, eWIC transaction issue, and/or a participant education opportunity.
3. The local agency obtains as much information as possible regarding the issue and completes the Vendor/Participant Complaint form.
4. The local WIC agency provides appropriate participant education and notates what education was provided on the Vendor/Participant Complaint form.
5. The local WIC agency sends the completed Vendor/Participant Complaint form to the WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit for review.
6. The WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit receives and investigates the complaint, including researching past complaints to determine trends.
7. The WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit will contact the local WIC agency with any follow-up questions.
8. The WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit will follow up with the vendor when necessary. In some cases the WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit may request additional assistance or action from the local WIC agency.
9. The WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit will provide follow-up to the local WIC agency regarding resolution of the complaint. To ensure the integrity of investigations in cases of suspected compliance violations and fraud, the local WIC agency may only be provided confirmation the complaint was received.

3.1. Role of the Local WIC Agency

- Be person-centered (BePC).
- Obtain as much information as possible from the participant, including:
 - Transaction receipt(s).
 - Date and time of visit.
 - Name(s) of store personnel involved.
 - Description and photo of food items, including photos of UPCs.
- Fill out the Vendor/Participant Complaint form as completely as possible.
- Forward complaints to the WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit for review.
- Provide participant education when appropriate about:
 - WIC approved foods.
 - Downloading and using the Wisconsin MyWIC cell phone app.
 - How to check the benefit balance.
 - Splitting large mixed-basket transactions into WIC and non-WIC transactions to reduce confusion over which items were approved.
- Provide assistance when requested by the WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit, including:
 - Contacting the participant for clarifying information.
 - Conducting a store visit.

3.2. Role of the WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit

- BePC.
- Maintain the original vendor files and records of complaints.
- Track and monitor complaints statewide.
- Address corporate issues with corporate offices.
- Follow up with vendor complaints appropriately and consistency statewide.
- Delegate actions to the local WIC agency, when appropriate.
- Enter complaints into ROSIE.

4. VENDOR EXPECTATIONS

Ultimately it is the participant's responsibility to know how to obtain and read their benefit balance and to determine which foods are WIC approved. However, it is expected vendors will do the following:

- Provide polite and courteous customer service.
- Be knowledgeable on how to complete a benefit balance inquiry, purchase, and void.
- Contact store management to assist with complex WIC issues.
- Refer the participant to the local WIC agency if they are unable to help resolve the issue.
- Contact the WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit and/or the store's WIC payment processor about eWIC transaction issues.

While not required, we do suggest vendors assist participants in the following ways when they have the time and ability to do so:

- Use the WIC approved foods booklet to assist participants in determining why a food item is not approved.
- Offer to run a benefit balance inquiry to determine if the participant has the food item in their benefit balance and, if so, if there is enough remaining quantity to purchase the item.
- Suggest another approved item or brand if a food is not recognized as WIC approved.
- Report unrecognized WIC food items to management for UPC submission.

5. VENDOR/PARTICIPANT COMPLAINT FORM

The Vendor/Participant Complaint form can be accessed using the **Vendor** tab of the WICShare website, under the **Complaints** icon.

5.1. Submitting the Vendor/Participant Complaint Form

1. The Vendor/Participant Complaint form is completed by either filling it out electronically and saving it, or by printing a blank copy and filling it out by hand.
2. Include receipts and/or photos when available. Note: Photos do not show up well when submitted via fax machine.
3. The completed form, receipts, and photo(s) should be mailed, faxed, or emailed to the WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit:

MAIL

WIC Vendor and Integrity Unit
Attn: Vendor Complaint Coordinator
PO Box 2659
Madison, WI 53701-2659

EMAIL

DHSWICvendor@wisconsin.gov

FAX

608-266-1514



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