

Section 5

CASHING FOOD INSTRUMENTS

WIC Food Instrument Redemption Procedures

The Arizona WIC Program relies on its Vendors to ensure 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.

Vendors' 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 their WIC food instruments. 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 WIC 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 at an Arizona WIC Program authorized Vendor. Upon implementation and initial roll-out of WIC Electronic Benefits Transfer (eWIC), the Vendor must be able to process food instruments and eWIC cards. Also, Vendors must identify which registers are able to process and accept eWIC cards, if all registers are not equipped to accept eWIC transactions.

TRANSACTIONING WIC FOOD BENEFITS

When processing WIC food instruments, REMEMBER:

- 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
 - ➔ Actual dollar amount cannot exceed the \$200.00 maximum amount stated on the food instrument

- Cash Value Voucher:
 - ➔ Allow WIC customer to use multiple cash value vouchers towards a single purchase
 - ➔ Tender each one separately, when multiple cash value vouchers are used towards a single purchase
 - The amount written on the cash value voucher cannot exceed the maximum amount stated on the front of the food voucher.
 - ➔ 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 voucher**.
 - **NOTE:** The dollar amount written on each cash value voucher must be less than or equal to the maximum amount stated on the face of the cash value voucher. Do not include any amount over the maximum value in the total amount that is written on the cash value voucher.

- **DO NOT (regular and cash value vouchers):**
 - ➔ Accept any food instruments that are 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 the person(s) presenting altered food instruments.
 - ➔ Allow WIC customers to purchase items **not** included on the Arizona WIC Programs Food List or not listed on the food instrument.
 - ➔ For cash value vouchers only, prevent WIC customers from paying the difference between the maximum value on the cash value voucher and the total amount of their fruit and/or vegetable purchase.
 - ➔ Require WIC participants/authorized representatives to use multiple cash value vouchers in order to purchase their fruits and vegetables.
 - ➔ Except for infant formula, require WIC customers to purchase all the items listed on their food instrument.
 - ➔ Accept WIC food instruments from WIC customers using initials as their signature.
 - ➔ Require WIC customers with a valid WIC ID Folder to produce any ADDITIONAL ID or other documentation.
 - ➔ Accept food instruments if the actual cost of the WIC foods purchased exceeds the maximum stated on the food instruments (except as follows):
 - **For cash value vouchers 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 vouchers. For more information, see Cash Value Vouchers in this Manual.

When processing WIC food instruments:

The cashier shall:

- Identify the WIC Customer
 - ➔ The only acceptable identification will be:
 - The participant's/authorized representative's ID Folder, **OR**
 - Arizona state-issued Driver License/ID 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 instruments have 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 customer 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
 - ➔ Check the price of each item to avoid overcharges
 - ➔ No substitutions (including a different type of milk other than what is specified on the food instrument)
 - ➔ No rain checks
- 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. The dollar amount cannot exceed the \$200.00 maximum amount stated on the food instrument.

If the WIC customer is redeeming their **cash value voucher**, the purchase price shall be equal to the dollar amount of the food items that are being purchased. However, the dollar amount written in the "\$" box must be **less than or equal to and no more than** the maximum amount stated on the cash value voucher.

Note: The WIC customers may pay the difference when the total amount exceeds the maximum amount as specified on their cash value voucher.
- Correct any mistakes in writing the dollar amount by doing the following (cashier's responsibility):
 - ➔ Draw a **single** line through the incorrect dollar amount; (**amount may be corrected one time only**);
 - ➔ Write the corrected dollar amount in the "\$ CORRECTION ONLY" box; and
 - ➔ Initial the correction in the "CASHIER INITIAL" box.

When processing WIC food instruments:

The cashier shall:

- Witness customer signature
 - ➔ Verify that the signature on the food instrument matches the signature on the ID Folder, Arizona state-issued Driver License/ID 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, Arizona state-issued Driver License/ID 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, Arizona state- issued Driver License/ID Card (or Proxy Certification form).

NOTE: The WIC customer may not use initials as their signature, even if the Arizona state- issued Driver License/ID Card has initials. If the participant signs their food instruments using initials, please refer them back to their local WIC office.

Also remember, the ID Folder 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.

The WIC customer may re-sign the food instrument **one time only** in the presence of the cashier if:

1. The signature does not match their signature on the ID Folder, Arizona state- issued Driver License/ID Card or Proxy Certification form;
2. The food instrument presented was pre-signed.

Follow the procedures below when a food instrument need to be re-signed:

1. Draw a single line through the original signature.
2. Have the WIC customer re-sign above the original signature or to the left of the signature block.
3. Verify that the signature matches one of the signatures on the ID Folder, Arizona state- issued Driver License/ID Card or Proxy Certification form.

NOTE: Only the person who originally signed the food instrument can re-sign; the re-signed signature must be the same name as the first signature.

- Give WIC customer a clear, legible cash register receipt for all of their WIC purchases.
 - ➔ The receipt must reflect the store name, date, and quantities purchased and total dollar amount.
 - ➔ The receipt must identify the sale as a WIC transaction.

When processing any WIC transaction (food instruments or eWIC cards):

The cashier shall not:

- Prevent or require the WIC participants/authorized representatives to use coupons, purchase of items on sale and take advantage of promotional specials such as:
 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 food benefits.
 - 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 in the food benefit. For example: An 18 ounce box of Kix cereal advertises four free additional ounces, making the box 22 ounces and is sold for the 18 ounce price.
 - b. The free ounces should not be counted towards the maximum number of ounces allowed by WIC. For example: A box of Kix cereal advertises four free additional ounces making the box 22 ounces. The four free ounces do not count against the quantity of 36 ounces specified in the food benefit.
 3. **Buy one get one free –**
 - a. Non-WIC approved foods or items are acceptable free items. For example: Buy a 14 ounce box of Cheerios, and get a 12 ounce box of Honey Nut Cheerios free.
 - b. The receipt must document that only WIC authorized foods were paid for with WIC food benefits.
 - 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 12 ounce box of Cream of Wheat Instant hot cereal and get a 12 ounce box free. The 12 ounces from the free box will not be counted against the quantity of 36 ounces specified in the WIC food benefit.
 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').
 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.
 6. **Employee discount cards –**

WIC customers who are also grocery store employees may use their employee discount card with any/all 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 Public Law Number 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 processing any WIC transaction:

The cashier shall NOT:

- Prevent WIC participants/authorized representatives from purchasing all of the items listed in their WIC food benefits.
- Require WIC participants/authorized representatives to purchase specific brands (excluding the store's declared brand of milk, cheese, and eggs) or limit the units of WIC foods (e.g.: allow only a certain brand, unless it is specifically stated on the food benefits 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.
- Provide WIC participants/authorized representatives rain checks for WIC foods that were included in the dollar amount of the WIC transaction.
- Provide WIC customers cash or credit for WIC food instruments or eWIC cards.
- Provide incentive items or other free merchandise to WIC Program customers. **Note:** This only applies to for-profit Above-50-Percent Vendors.
- Offer incentive items solely to WIC customers in an effort to encourage participants to redeem WIC food instruments or eWIC cards at the Vendor's location.
- Provide store credit or other free items to WIC customers for redeeming food benefits at the Vendor's location (i.e., providing a store credit of \$5.00 if a WIC customer spends \$20.00 or more in their store; providing WIC customer Tampico beverage for using their food benefits).
- Require WIC customers to purchase other items in order to redeem food instruments or eWIC transactions.
- Exchange WIC food instruments or eWIC cards 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 WIC customers for the value of unauthorized items purchased or for food instruments that are damaged or rejected for payment. Restitution shall not be requested even if the food instrument was not deposited.

When processing any WIC transactions,

The cashier shall not:

- Provide refunds or permit WIC customers to exchange foods purchased with WIC food benefits 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.
 - ➔ An identical authorized supplemental food item means the exact brand and size as the original authorized supplemental food item purchased and returned by the WIC customer. However, the following exception shall be made for WIC food items that are recalled:

Vendors are permitted to exchange the defective (recalled) food item for an identical food item. If the Vendor has removed all of the identical food items from the shelves, the Vendor can exchange the defective food for another authorized supplemental food of the same type (i.e., peanut butter for peanut butter, juice for juice, etc.) from the Arizona WIC Programs Food List.

For example:

If a jar of “X Brand” peanut butter is recalled and all “X Brand” is removed from the shelf, the Vendor may exchange the recalled peanut butter for another brand of authorized peanut butter from the Arizona WIC Programs Food List.

If the WIC customer returns with a recalled item and has a receipt, the Vendor shall provide the WIC customer with the same type of food item as referenced above. The replaced item shall be of equal or lesser value to the price paid by the WIC Program on the participant’s receipt.

If the WIC customer returns with a recalled item and does not have a receipt, the Vendor shall provide the WIC customer with the same type of food item as referenced above. The replaced item shall be of equal or lesser value to the current cost of the item at the time of the return.

WIC Food Instrument Redemption – Statewide Average Procedures

The Arizona WIC Program will provide, on a weekly basis, the statewide average amount(s) by food instrument type to all authorized Vendors. This information will be available to Vendors via the Arizona WIC Program Vendor website. The information will be posted to the Website each Friday to provide Vendors with at least three calendar days advance notice of the new statewide average. The new statewide average will become effective on the following Monday of each week. If Monday is a holiday, the new statewide average will become effective on the following Tuesday.

Above-50-Percent Vendors may use this information to avoid possible banking fees associated with food instruments that reject for payment for being over the maximum dollar amount. Above-50-Percent 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 customer on their food instrument and obtain the WIC customer's signature.
2. The Vendor may then compare the dollar amount written on the food instrument to the statewide average amount for that food instrument type provided by the WIC Program via its website.
3. If the statewide average 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 statewide average amount for the food instrument type is **greater than** the amount 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 (excluding the store's declared brand of milk, cheese, and eggs) or units of WIC food items (e.g., allow only a certain brand, unless it is specifically stated on the food instrument, the store's declared brand of milk, cheese, and eggs, or authorized food list, such as Kellogg's Corn Flakes or allow juice only in frozen concentrate containers).

→ **NOTE:** The Statewide Average Procedures do not apply to the cash value vouchers.