

Thank you for having me today, I am extremely excited and honored to present on the Texas WIC Shopping Experience. Throughout the presentation today, I am going to highlight several tools and exercises that we use for vendor trainings and local agency staff trainings.



During this session, I will cover

Program Basics that include Vendor Training and Vendor Liaisons. And then into Approved Foods where we will walk through the shopping guide, Least Expensive Brands and Labeling.



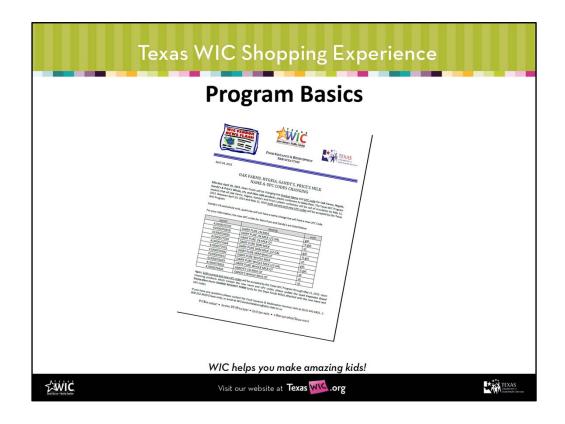
As most of you are aware Vendors must attend training at least once every 3 years and new vendors <u>must</u> attend within 1 year of initial authorization

Currently our contract agreements are reauthorized yearly.

All vendors must meet requirements on the following:

- Training
- Compliance
- Minimum \$750 Gross Food Sales

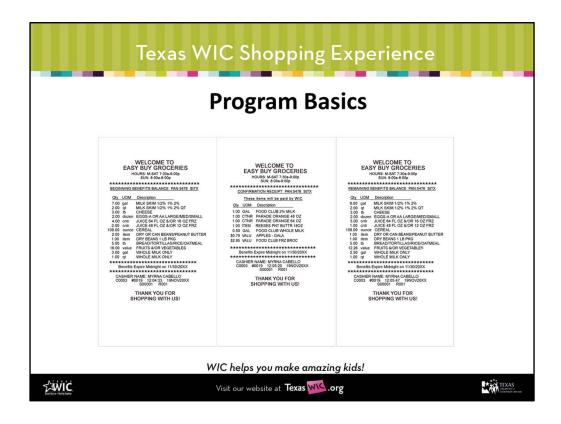
We are in the process of creating online interactive trainings for vendors after receiving feedback from vendors to incorporate this training in their new employee orientation. We are really looking forward to this exciting change in vendor training.



Communication is key when changes take place. We use the Vendor News Flash to communicate with all 2200 of our Vendors across the state via email. We use this to communicate new policies, revisions, new foods, etc. These are also posted on the website and the vendors can access them any time needed.

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Here is the Vendor Complaint form that participants and LA staff complete while also including store receipts. We use this to resolve issues at the state and local level.



Here is a Shopping Tip

Objective – overview of the EBT receipts and the breakdown of each.

- Beginning balance receipt

Redemption/Confirmation food purchased receipt

- Remaining/Ending balance receipt

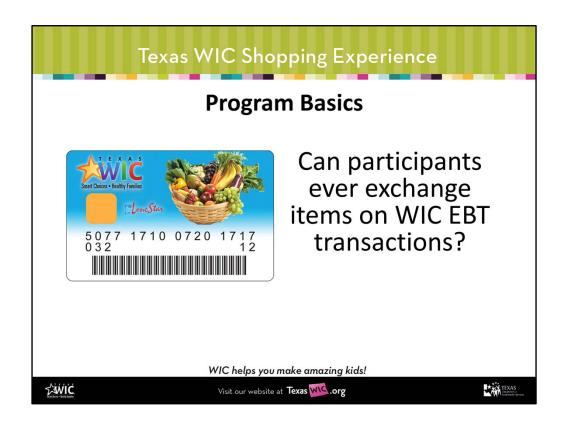
Some of the items we want to point out Gallon vs. Half Gallon.

If a participant is issued 2 gallons of whole milk, can they get 4 half gallons instead? Yes.

What is CVB and what foods are decremented by CVB? Fruits and Vegetables

For Cash Value Benefit, or CVB, can the participant go over the total allowed CVB and pay the difference in cash? No however, once implementation of new split tender/benefit reversal requirement in complete, the system will allow participants to pay the difference.

- We always remind the vendors that once the participant has accepted the transaction, the benefits will be decremented for their card.



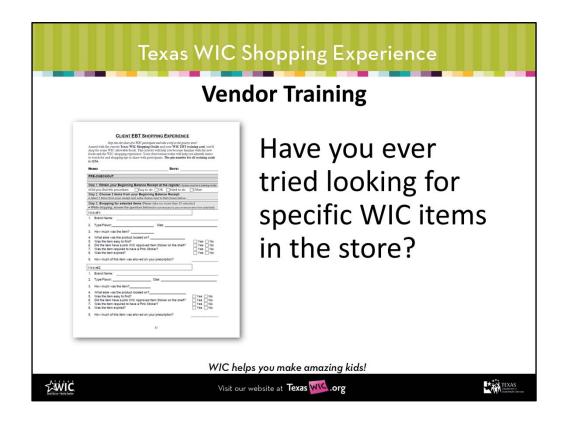
Another common question we receive is can you ever EXCHANGE items on WIC transactions?

The only time a store can exchange an item, is when it is damaged, or expired. You can still only exchange same for same.

If a store does not know if it was a WIC purchase, they must follow the store's policy on exchanges.



We offer a wide variety of exercises and include many Frequently Asked Questions on the shopping experience for Vendors and WIC staff. Some of which I am going to share with you today.



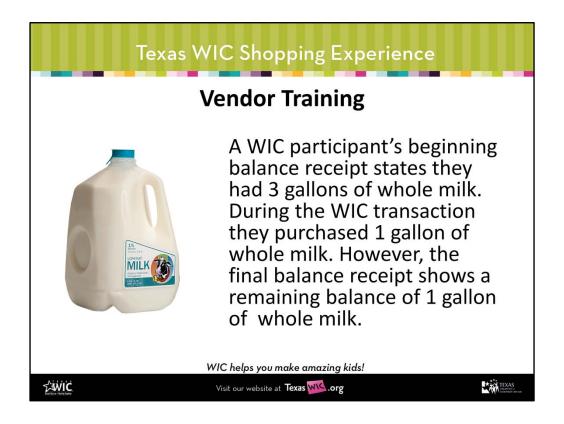
We use this as a tool in training staff to walk in the shoes participants!

Our LA staff training includes a shopping experience. This is a great exercise and experience in which the staff can then take back and share shopping tips with participants.



WHICH is WHICH? This is an exercise that the Vendor trainers include in a workbook which is used in the vendor trainings and for vendors and local staff as well.

This is used to review the WIC Approved Foods and authorized sizes while using the Texas WIC Shopping Guide.



During our Vendor Trainings we incorporate questions like these that we receive from Complaints or through the Vendor Liaison Site Review.

If all benefits are removed from card then instruct customer to return to clinic to have benefits reloaded. This is considered a Card Wipe and must be done in the clinic with State Agency approval.

The participant must return to the clinic to have their benefits reloaded.

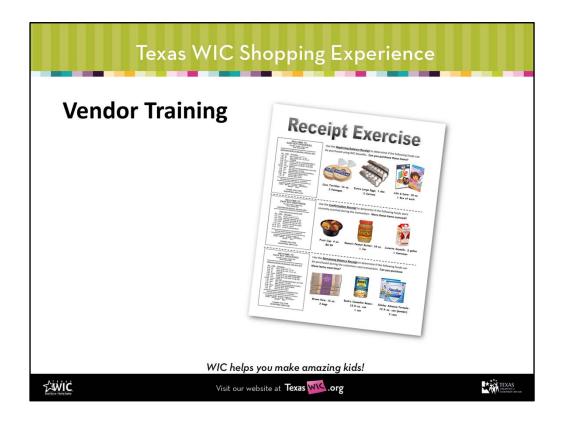


During the shopping experience we run across many questions about accepting coupons.

However, if a store does not accept coupons from cash paying customers, they do not have to accept them from WIC participants

Participants are allowed:

- BOGO
- ☐ Reduced price items/quick sale
- Store loyalty cards



This receipt exercise is used in our trainings. By using the receipts we walk in the participant's shoes on whether or not the items can be purchased.

During our local agency trainings we also include the shopping experience with a preloaded EBT card and shopping guide.

Any questions about our Vendor Trainings?

Let's talk about how we partner with our Local Agencies while working with Vendor Liaisons.



The Vendor Training team at the State WIC office work together with the Vendors and the local agency vendor liaisons on proper labeling, stocking, training and coordinating site visits in addition to, new store evaluations.

Our team has created a tool called the Vendor Liaison Site Review form. This is to be used as a mechanism along with providing the store's LEB form to resolve issues in the stores. On a yearly basis, Vendor liaisons schedule all site visits in their area.

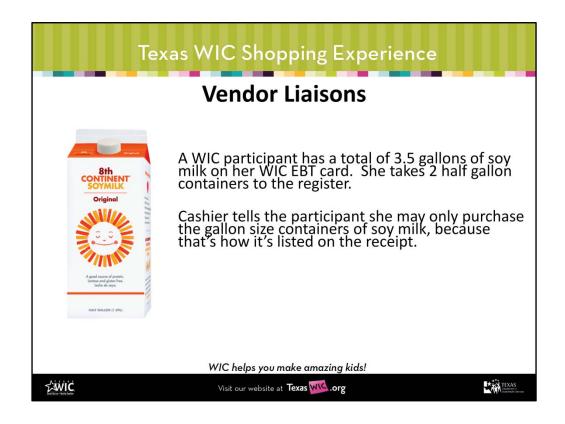
What I have on the slide is an sample of the a type of complaint that we receive through our 1800 line. In this situation, the Vendor Training team contacts the Vendor Liaison in that area and asks them to complete a site visit. The vendor liaisons will complete the Vendor Liaison Site Review Form and check for "WIC Approved" pink stickers and perform a test buy. Our unit sends out EBT training cards that are preloaded to all Vendors and the Vendor Liaisons to perform test buys.

This is an example of the types of issues that we work on to enhance the shopping experience while partnering with our Local Agencies and Vendors across the state.



Here is a common shopping question that we receive. A WIC participant has 2 gallons of milk that are on sale however, it is not store's declared Least Expensive Brand.

The best solution is to Explain to the participant they must purchase your store's declared LEB.



Here is another situation that our vendor liaisons share with us through the site visits.

We speak to the store manager and ask that they Apologize to the participant and allow them to purchase the 2 half gallon containers of soy milk.

Let's begin talking about Approved Foods.



The shopping guide contains all WIC Approved Foods

- choose any brand
- choose these brands and
- LEB items what many refer to ask the "pink sticker" which states (WIC Approved Food) that are store specific

On the shopping guide we also include the

- WIC website
- Vendor 1800 line

We have many authorized vendors that ask about store specific shopping guides and these must get State Agency Approval.

We also have annual mail outs to all 2200 vendors that include the

- WIC Approved Foods Poster
- And the Shopping guides to keep at the registers



Our least expensive brands are in the following categories:

Milk

Cheese

Juice

**Dried Beans** 

And Whole Grains

The purpose of the LEB items is for cost containment. This keeps food costs down and is a way we can serve all participants in the state.

Cost containment includes the Maximum Allowable Reimbursement (MAR) per price bands for all authorized vendors and also includes the Not to Exceed (NTE) price.

Least expensive brands are not the same as cheapest. Traditional LEB means approximately 27 weeks out of the year the grocer can buy and sell that item for less.

Due to package sizing and nutritional content a lesser priced item may not WIC approved.



Our vendor liaisons assist with the shopping experience in many ways. Also, during the vendor trainings our vendor trainers will go out to the stores and perform site visits as well. Here we have situation that WIC participant wants to buy corn tortillas but they are out of your store's declared LEB.

If available, the participant must be sold the next allowable least expensive brand of corn tortillas.

This leads us into Labeling.



Stores are required to tag their declared least expensive brands with the uniform "WIC Approved Item" shelf tags/labels. The state agency provides the pink stickers to all stores. If the store chooses to use a label that they have created they must receive State Agency Approval.

We do require that all LABELS BE PRINTED IN COLOR!

If the store chooses to tag other allowable non-LEB WIC food types with the pink stickers, all of the allowable foods the store carries within the food group shall be tagged (i.e. if one cereal is tagged, then all allowable cereals).

Non-LEB item labeling is optional



There is quite a level of commitment required to use the WIC pink stickers for this purpose. The vendors would need to ensure they are correctly placed on all the fresh & frozen fruits and vegetables all the time.

Does the level of commitment change if store uses the Texas WIC Logo stickers? YES

How? When you use the Texas WIC Logo stickers it is placed on an authorized food item, not all and the vendor will not be penalized.

## Texas WIC Shopping Experience Labeling 1. The store carries 2 brands of gallon size whole milk: Oak Farms and Poinsettia. You find that the Oak Farms Whole Milk has this shelf tag next to it: WIC Approved Item 2. You find a quart of Poinsettia low-fat (1%) milk labeled with this shelf tag: 3. The store carries Lactaid and Dairy Ease lactose-free milk. You find the Lactaid brand is labeled with the following tag next to its shelf price: WIC 4. The store carries Jif, Reese's and Parade peanut butter in the 18 ounce size. You find only the Parade brand labeled with this shelf tag: Wic Approved 5. You walk down the baby food aisle and find the Gerber Rice Infant Cereal with this label on the package: WIC helps you make amazing kids! Visit our website at Texas W.C.org \* TEXAS WIC

During the store visit we find many of these labeling questions.

- 1. It's OK, store used optional label for non-LEB items.
- 2. Some, not all, labeled with pink stickers.
- 3. Labeling non-declared item as declared LEB.
- 4. Item not declared.
- 5. Unauthorized use of WIC acronym.



This morning we have talked about Program Basics, Vendor Training, Vendor Liaisons, Approved Foods, Shopping Guide, Leb's and Labeling. Texas WIC strives to always improve the shopping experience for Vendors and WIC participants. I hope you can all take something away from the Texas WIC Shopping Experience.



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WIC helps you make amazing kids!





