Iowa WIC Vendor Newsletter

Volume 14 Issue 7 May 2013

- ***eWIC*** Update
  - PLU and UPC Codes
- WIC Vendor (Retailer) Peer Groups
- Clarification of Approved Foods
- FMNP Vouchers

eWIC Update

(Iowa WIC EBT)

Name change for WIC EBT Iowa WIC EBT has been renamed eWIC.

UPC and PLU codes are an important part of electronic benefit payments (eWIC)

What are Fresh Fruits and Vegetables product PLU Codes?

Price Look-Up codes (PLU) – reference International Federation of Produce Standards. PLU information available at this site, www.plucodes.com, provides free Web access for all Price-Look Up (PLU) codes for fresh fruits and vegetables sold in random-weight/bulk in produce departments.

What is a Price Look-Up (PLU) code?

PLU codes are 4 or 5 digit numbers which have been used by supermarkets since 1990 to make check-out and inventory control easier, faster, and more accurate. They ensure that the correct price is paid by consumers by removing the need for cashiers to identify the product; e.g., whether or not it is conventionally or organically grown. They are primarily assigned to identify individual bulk fresh produce (and related items such as nuts and herbs) and will appear on a small sticker applied to the individual piece of fresh produce. The PLU number identifies produce items based upon various attributes which can include the commodity, the variety, the growing methodology (e.g. organic) and the size group.

The 4-digit PLU codes for produce are assigned randomly within a series of numbers within the 3000 and 4000 series. There is no intelligence built into the 4-digit code. For example, no one number within the 4-digit number represents anything in particular. The 4-digit codes are for conventionally grown produce. 5-digit codes are used to identify organic or genetically modified produce. The prefix of '8' would be placed in front of the 4-digit code for genetically modified produce and the prefix of '9' would be placed in front of the 4-digit conventionally grown code for organic produce.

What is the International Federation for Produce Standards (IFPS)?

The International Federation for Produce Standards (IFPS) is composed of national produce associations from around the globe. The long term objective of the federation is to improve the supply chain efficiency of the fresh produce industry through developing, implementing and managing harmonized international standards.

What are Universal Product Codes?

The Universal Product Code (UPC) is a barcode symbology (i.e., a specific type of barcode) that is widely used in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and in other countries for tracking items in stores. Its most common form, the UPC-A, consists of 12 numerical digits, which are uniquely assigned to each item. The UPC is the barcode mainly used for scanning of items at the point of sale, per GS1 specifications.[1]

Iowa WIC Peer Group Criteria

Definition of Peer Group – A calculated field displaying the assignment of each store into a group based on supplied indicators: Business structure, Type business, Number of Front-end Registers, Ownership, Total Gross Retail Sales, Total Square Footage, and Geographic Criteria.

In addition to the above criteria, a member of the State WIC Program staff reviews each application and the physical building/location prior to WIC authorization to confirm correct information has been received. During the actual review of the location the following factors are considered: Size of market area, competition, type of ownership (Independent/regional chain versus national chain) and a current price survey is conducted.

The Iowa WIC data system electronically assigns each vendor one of 9 peer groups using the following criteria:

- Type of vendor
- Grocery peer group 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
- Grocery Vendors may redeem WIC checks for all products; food packages, cash value vouchers and formula checks
- Special Purpose peer group 7, 8, 9
- Special Purpose vendors may only redeem WIC checks for formula and special needs products
- Farmers Markets are not entered into the Iowa IWIN system and are not assigned a WIC peer group

Criteria used:

- Number of registers (primary registers, not department registers)
- Grocery Vendors – redemption of any WIC Benefit (food or formula)
  - 01 1 Register, Partnership or Sole Owner
  - 02 1-2 Registers, Corporate Owner
  - 03 2 Registers, Partnership or Sole Owner
  - 04 3-8 Registers, Partnership or Sole Owner
  - 05 3-8 Registers, Corporate Owner
  - 06 9+ Registers, Partnership, Sole Owner or Corporate
- Special Purpose Vendors – redemption of formula only WIC Benefits
  - 07 1 Register, Corporate Owner
  - 08 1-5 Registers, Partnership or Sole Owner, and/or 2-5 Registers Corporate Owner
  - 09 6+ Registers, Corporate Owner
- Ownership (Sole Owner, Partnership, or Corporation)
- Total Gross Sales
- SNAP (Food Stamp) Eligible Sales
- Square Footage -- total store including storage area and selling area
- Geographic criteria (ranking from 1 to 5 with 1 being most rural and 5 being most urban). The geographic ranking defines vendors in 10 mile increments from the edge of the nine major metropolitan areas.

On June 14, 2010, Peer Group rankings were mailed to all WIC Authorized stores at that time. As stores have been added to the Iowa WIC Program the stores have been informed as to which peer group the store has been assigned.

The Iowa WIC Program will be mailing Peer Group rankings to all authorized WIC Stores prior to June 30, 2013.

Iowa WIC APL (Approved Product Listing)

⇒ In the past the Iowa WIC Program has referred to APL as our Approved Food List.

⇒ **100% Natural Domestic Cheese** —100% Natural Domestic Cheese

- Package sizes 8 or 16 ounces
- Variety: Cheddar, Colby, Co-Jack, Monterey Jack or Mozzarella
- "NOT" authorize
  - Added ingredients and/or flavoring
  - American cheese, cheese foods, cheese spreads, jar, imitation, processed or jar cheese
  - Cheese from a service counter (meat counter, deli or cheese island)
  - Sliced, cubed, crumbles or smoked cheese

⇒ **String or Stick Cheese**—100% Natural Domestic Cheese

- ONLY flavor authorized is Mozzarella Cheese
- Package size 8, 12, or 16-ounce

⇒ **Cereal**—Store brand/private label only in 10-ounce or larger packages. Cereal may not have added fruit, yogurt or nuts, nor be in individual serving packets

- Corn Flakes, Crisp(y) Rice, Bran Flakes, Toasted Oats, Frosted Shredded Wheat, Oat Squares (store brand oat square), Corn biscuits (store brand corn chex), Rice biscuits (store brand rice chex) and Crispy hexagons (store brand rice chex)
- National brand cereals are not authorized except for General Mills Rice Chex and General Mills Corn Chex.
- Gluten free cereals are issued on separate WIC Food Instruments (FI) specifically for General Mills Rice and Corn Chex. **Participants may not use a FI for 36-ounces of store brand cereal and approved hot cereal to purchase General Mills Rice and/or Corn Chex**
- Hot cereal—approved brands are Cream of Wheat or Whole Grain (1-minute, 2 1/2 minute 10 minute) or Malt-O-Meal (Original or Chocolate). **May be purchased with a FI for 36-ounces of store brand cereal and approved hot cereal FI**

⇒ **Milk** (Issued in gallon, 1/2 gallon or quart containers)

- Participants are allowed to purchase only the item listed on the FI
- Any brand pasteurized with vitamins added
- Iowa WIC issues milk FIs specifically for Whole milk, Fat Free (skim) or Low Fat (1%)

⇒ **Soy Beverage**

- The only approved brand is 8th Continent (Vanilla or Original), 1/2 gallon containers
- SILK is "NOT" an authorized item

⇒ **Baby food—Iowa only authorizes 4-ounce containers. Examples shown below.**

- Only single ingredient fruits and/or vegetables OR blends of single ingredient fruits and vegetables.
- Dinners are NOT authorized (vegetables with added meats, rice or pasta)
- Desserts are NOT authorized (fruits with added sugar, custard or cobbler ingredients).

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Attn: Store Management
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SNAP / Food Stamp Program Questions 800-414-1422

In-State Toll Free #: 800-532-1579
State WIC FAX#: 515-281-4913
Iowa Web site:
www.idph.state.ia.us/wic
FNS Web site:
http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic.

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FMNP Farmers Market Nutrition Program Vouchers

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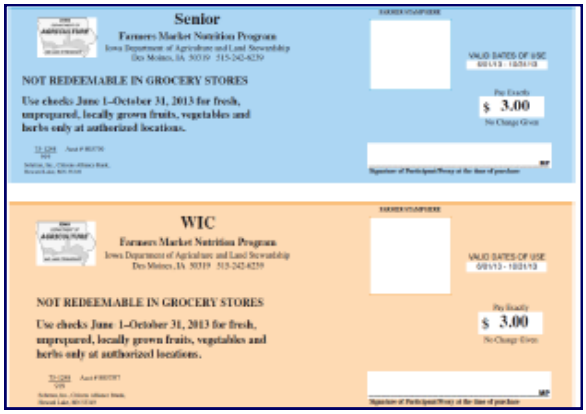

WIC Authorized Grocery and Special Purpose Vendors are **"NOT"** authorized to accept FMNP Senior or FMNP WIC Vouchers.

- Senior FMNP vouchers are blue
- WIC FMNP vouchers are beige.
- FMNP vouchers will be issued starting in May.