DATE: October 13, 2026

SUBJECT: WIC Policy Memorandum #2027-2
Use of The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Acronym and Logo

TO: FNA State Support and Evaluations, WIC Staff
WIC State Agency Directors

Authority and Background

The purpose of this memorandum is to update, clarify, and streamline the conditions that are applicable when certain members of the public choose to use the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) acronym and logo. The WIC acronym and logo are hereinafter referred to collectively as “WIC service marks”. Using these service marks is optional for members of the public, but if they are used, the conditions below must be met. The purpose of the outlined conditions is to strengthen program integrity and improve customer service, while reducing confusion among the public. USDA’s authority to authorize how, when, and by whom the “WIC” acronym and WIC logo may be used are provided in 42 United States Code (U.S.C.) 1786, 15 U.S.C. 1051 et seq., and 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 246. The acronym "WIC" was registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on January 1, 1991, Registration Number 1,630,468, and the revised WIC logo Registration Number is 8338005. This memorandum supersedes WIC Policy Memo 2009-1 and WIC Instruction 800-2, which outlined similar conditions for the use of the WIC acronym and a previous version of the WIC logo.

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The acronym "WIC" was first used by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in January 1974. The current WIC logo is a stylized representation of a heart-shaped fresh fruit or vegetable, with heart-shaped leaves and the WIC acronym at its center. The WIC service marks are used by USDA and WIC state and local agencies to provide clear, accurate, and consistent information on the program in various ways, including but not limited to websites, participant facing digital services (e.g., online applications, mobile apps, online schedulers), WIC benefits (i.e., WIC electronic benefits transfer (i.e., EBT cards)), and program related resources on breastfeeding and nutrition education.

This memorandum is intended to ensure the WIC service marks are used to advance the mission of the program (i.e., to improve the health of women, infants, and children during critical periods of growth and development) and to prevent use of the WIC service marks in ways that could contribute to program integrity issues or poor customer service.

Prior Issues

It is USDA policy to avoid endorsements, directly or indirectly, of any commercial product, service or enterprise. USDA Departmental Regulations include non-endorsement provisions at DR 1410-001 Section 5(g) and DR 1440-002 Section 6(c) and both apply to endorsements and use of brand names.

The WIC service marks have previously appeared on promotional materials (e.g., advertisements, brochures, and websites) produced by for-profit organizations along with the name of the company and its product. This use of the WIC service marks may be misconstrued as an endorsement of the product by USDA and is not an authorized use of the WIC service marks.

Additionally, confusion on the part of WIC participants and WIC authorized vendors has occurred as a result of inappropriate use of the WIC service marks. For example, products have appeared in retail stores with the statement "WIC approved" or “WIC

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eligible” printed on or adhered to the package in areas where the product was not a WIC approved food causing confusion among participants and retail grocers (“WIC authorized vendors”).

Prior USDA policy allowed WIC state agencies to restrict use of the WIC service marks by WIC authorized vendors (i.e., grocery stores that accept WIC benefits). Over the past few years, the Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA)[1] has heard from WIC authorized vendors and their associations, as well as the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA), that state agency-imposed restrictions can make it difficult to do business in multiple state agencies where requirements vary. They have requested national-level permission to use the WIC service marks for the purposes of identifying themselves as WIC authorized vendors, identifying WIC as an accepted tender type, and identifying specific WIC authorized foods on shelves (not on the food product or its packaging) using signage and shelf labels, including digital varieties. This memorandum updates the conditions applicable to WIC authorized vendors to allow such use, as outlined below.

Official Use

The Secretary is authorized by statute to administer the program. Specifically, 42 U.S.C. 1786(f)(1) provides that the Secretary shall establish standards for the proper administration of the program. By virtue of the registrations listed above, use of the WIC service marks, including close facsimiles thereof, in total or in part, is reserved for the official use of the WIC program at the national, regional, state and local levels, except as described in this memorandum where conditions for additional uses are outlined.

Official use continues to be restricted to purposes consistent with WIC program regulations, FNA Instructions, policy memoranda, and any other applicable guidance issued by USDA. For-profit designers, printers, web developers and similar service

[1] Prior to June 1, 2026, the Food and Nutrition Administration was the Food and Nutrition Service.

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providers may use the WIC service marks to develop official use materials as requested and authorized by USDA, USDA's FNA, and WIC state or local agencies.

Materials that display the WIC service marks for official use will be used primarily for informational, identification, public notification, and education purposes. The WIC service marks may be used on websites, participant-facing digital services (e.g., online applications, mobile apps, online schedulers), WIC benefits (i.e., WIC EBT cards), program related resources on breastfeeding and nutrition education. They may be used on printed or digital materials or in audio-based announcements on radio and television, and included in program guides, manuals, directories, studies, reports, forms, and program-based initiatives, such as "National WIC Breastfeeding Week." This list of uses is not all-inclusive; there may be other appropriate ideas for official use.

Trademark owners have a duty to police their marks to ensure that such marks continue to serve as identifiers of specific sources of goods and services, as required under the Lanham Act, 15 U.S.C. 1127. Therefore, FNA reserves the right to request to view or approve any uses of the WIC service marks by any entity. Additionally, any uses that are considered inappropriate shall be discontinued at FNA's discretion.

For-Profit Use

For-profit organizations are those organizations that are not exempt from taxation under Federal law. This includes, but is not limited to, food manufacturers, WIC authorized vendors, and technology companies that provide WIC-related products and services.

For-profit organizations are not permitted to use the WIC service marks, including close facsimiles thereof, in total or in part, on product labels or packages. The WIC service marks must not be printed on foods, their containers, or packaging in any manner, or on stickers, tags, or labels affixed thereto. Except as outlined below and the exception provided for Official Use, for-profit organizations must not use the WIC logo for any purpose. The intention of these restrictions is to prevent confusion in the marketplace by

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limiting the use of the WIC service marks by organizations that would use them in promotional activities involving their products or services.

For-profit organizations that choose to use the WIC service marks in advertising must ensure that they do not use them in any manner that is likely to cause confusion, mistake, or deception as to the affiliation, connection, or association of the organization with the WIC program, or as to the sponsorship or approval of organization's goods, services, advertising, or commercial activities, including nutritional messages, by the WIC program, USDA, FNA, or the state agency.

In addition to the restrictions that all for-profit organizations must adhere to, there are additional conditions applicable to food manufacturers and WIC authorized vendors. Additionally, for-profit organizations with non-food WIC contracts are exempted from some of these restrictions in some cases (see section below, "For-Profit Organizations with Non-Food WIC Contracts").

Food Manufacturers

FNA recommends that all WIC state agency food contracts, including rebate contracts for infant formula or other foods, contain the following provisions to support and remind these entities of the conditions related to the use of the WIC service marks:

> Use of WIC Service Marks
>
> Manufacturer acknowledges that the WIC acronym and the WIC logo are service marks owned by the Department of Agriculture (USDA), and that all rights therein and goodwill pertaining thereto belong exclusively to USDA.
>
> Manufacturer shall not use these service marks in any manner on their goods or their containers or packaging or on tags or labels affixed thereto. Manufacturer also shall not use the WIC logo in advertising or other promotional materials (collectively: "advertising").
>
> Manufacturer shall not use the WIC acronym in advertising in any manner that is

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likely to cause confusion, mistake, or deception as to the affiliation, connection, or association of Manufacturer with the WIC program, or as to the sponsorship or approval of Manufacturer's goods, services, advertising, or commercial activities, including nutritional messages, by the WIC program, USDA, FNA, or the state agency.

Manufacturer shall include the following statement with any use of the WIC service marks in advertising: "WIC is a registered service mark of the U.S. Department of Agriculture for USDA's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children."

WIC Authorized Vendors

When choosing to use the WIC service marks, FNA recommends that vendors include the statement "WIC is a registered service mark of the U.S. Department of Agriculture for USDA's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children" on advertising or promotional materials. The WIC service marks must not be used in a manner that states or implies that the vendor itself is affiliated with or sponsored by the WIC program, USDA, FNA, or the state agency. For example, a vendor must not place the term "WIC program" directly above the name of the vendor in an advertisement.

FNA recommends that WIC state agencies include the conditions (i.e., restrictions and permitted uses) outlined in this memorandum in their vendor agreements when agreements are updated or by amendment to ensure that all vendors are aware of these requirements. If vendor agreements conflict with this memorandum, they should be updated as soon as possible. Please note that the state agency may establish service mark violations as a selection criterion pursuant to 7 CFR 246.12(g)(3) and may establish state agency sanctions for violations pursuant to 7 CFR 246.12(l)(2).

Updating this memorandum to allow WIC authorized vendors to use the WIC service marks supports WIC State agencies' and WIC authorized vendors' ability to meet

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program requirements at 7 CFR 246.12. Therefore, any WIC authorized vendor may use the WIC service marks for the following three (3) purposes:

1) To identify a store as a WIC authorized vendor. WIC authorized vendors may describe themselves as such by placing signs on their storefronts stating that they are WIC authorized. The state agency may provide signage to the WIC authorized vendor but must not prohibit vendor-developed signage or require the vendor to purchase state agency-developed signage.
2) To inform the public that it is a WIC authorized vendor and to inform customers that they may use WIC benefits. This includes using the WIC service marks on websites and advertising and promotional materials. Vendors that operate multiple stores must only use the WIC service marks to identify individual stores as WIC authorized and are responsible for ensuring that this information is up-to-date and accurate. WIC authorized vendors may inform customers that they may use WIC benefits to pay for WIC authorized foods by including the WIC service marks on tender type signs at the front of the store, at the point of sale, and/or in vendor advertising and promotional materials. The WIC service marks must be depicted on any such signs, advertising, and promotional materials in a similar size as other tender types. Vendors that operate multiple stores must ensure that they do not cause confusion by including the WIC service marks in stores or advertising and promotional materials for individual stores that are not WIC authorized.
3) To identify healthy, WIC approved food items as “WIC approved” in store when such food items have, in fact, been approved by the state agency or agencies that authorize(s) the store. WIC authorized vendors may identify WIC approved foods in store by placing channel strips, shelf-talkers, shelf tags, window clings, or other signage (including digital) that identify foods as WIC approved. Acceptable phrasing for such identifiers includes “WIC,” “WIC approved,” “WIC authorized,” with or without necessary state agency labels (e.g., if the store is authorized by two state agencies where there is variation in the approved food list). The WIC logo may also be used to identify WIC approved foods on signage.

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The purpose of this allowance is to ensure that WIC participants can find WIC approved foods in store as quickly and easily as possible. As stated above, vendors are not permitted to affix stickers, tags, or labels containing the WIC service marks to WIC approved foods or their packaging. The state agency may provide signage to the WIC authorized vendor, but must not impose additional requirements, including:

a) Requiring their use if the vendor has its own method of identifying WIC approved foods in store consistently and adequately via shelf tags, talkers, labels, etc. (including digital);
b) Prohibiting vendor-developed signage; or
c) Charging the vendor for state-developed signage.

The appropriate use of WIC service marks by vendors can also improve program integrity by clearly identifying only those food products authorized by WIC.

WIC authorized vendors are not permitted to use the WIC service marks, including close facsimiles thereof, in total or in part, either in the official name in which the vendor is registered or in the name under which it does business (i.e., doing business as, dba), if different. The purpose of this restriction is to avoid giving WIC participants the impression that the business is affiliated with or sponsored by the WIC program, USDA, FNA, or the state agency. The state agency remains responsible for determining whether a vendor's name is impermissibly similar to the WIC service marks. FNA reserves the right to overrule the state agency based on a valid complaint or discovery of inappropriate use.

FNA has worked with several state agencies in the past to stop infringement of the WIC acronym in vendor names. Examples of such infringement include using the letters "W," "I," and "C" in that order next to one another in the vendor's name, or these letters in that order but not next to one another, with the letters made to stand out in some fashion, such as with a different color or size than other letters. There may be other examples of this type of infringement. When in doubt, state agencies should contact FNA for advice.

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For-Profit Organizations with Non-Food WIC Contracts

When a for-profit organization with a non-food WIC contact chooses to use the WIC service marks on advertising or promotional materials, FNA recommends including the statement “WIC is a registered service mark of the U.S. Department of Agriculture for USDA’s Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children”.

An exception to the above restrictions involves for-profit organizations that are under contract with the WIC program for goods and services other than food. These for-profit organizations may be authorized by the WIC program, including USDA, FNA, or the state agency to use the WIC service marks on products purchased or produced under contract with the WIC program at the Federal, state, or local level.

For example, a firm assisting FNA or state agencies in the development of a management information system (MIS) may use the WIC acronym, since the term "WIC" is critical in describing the use of the software and since the WIC program will own any software developed with federal funds. In this example, while the firm is permitted to use the acronym in the name of the software developed under contract, USDA retains its ownership of the WIC service marks. The contract does not transfer ownership of the WIC service marks to the contractor. FNA encourages WIC state agencies to include the permitted uses of the WIC service marks in their contracts with for-profit organizations other than food manufacturers to assist the state agency's monitoring and control of usage.

Nonprofit Use

When a nonprofit chooses to use the WIC service marks, FNA recommends including the statement “WIC is a registered service mark of the U.S. Department of Agriculture for USDA’s Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children” on advertising or promotional materials.

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Nonprofit organizations are those organizations that are exempt from taxation under Federal law, including charitable and educational organizations. These organizations may be permitted to use the WIC service marks for non-commercial, educational purposes when such use is essentially a public service and will, in the judgment of the WIC state agency, contribute to public information and education concerning the program. For example, a nonprofit social service agency could include WIC on a brochure about local resources for families. While this discretion is afforded to state agencies, FNA reserves the right to deny uses of the WIC service marks by any entity based on a valid complaint or discovery of inappropriate use.

National/Regional Level

All requests for use of the WIC service marks by national or regionally based nonprofit organizations must be submitted to FNA in writing with a copy/sample of the way in which it will be used. FNA shall respond in writing whether such use is authorized.

The National WIC Association, a nonprofit membership organization dedicated to providing tools and leadership to expand and sustain nutrition services for mothers and children, may continue to use the WIC service marks in the organization's name, materials, and branding. It may also use the WIC service marks as a part of its work to support WIC state and local agencies, including through the provision of branding and materials as well as related technical assistance. It must not sell the rights or access to any branding that includes the WIC service marks but may profit from produced materials (e.g., nutrition education materials, promotional materials) that include the WIC service marks, and related technical assistance.

State/Local Level

All requests for use of the WIC service marks by nonprofit organizations within the jurisdiction of a specific state agency (excluding those that have been previously approved at the national/regional level) must be submitted to the WIC state agency in

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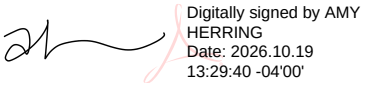
writing with a copy/sample of the way in which it will be used. The state agency shall respond in writing whether such use is authorized.

State agencies are not required to seek FNA approval prior to authorizing use of the WIC service marks by nonprofit organizations at the state or local level. FNA reserves the right, however, to overrule the state agency based on a valid complaint or discovery of inappropriate use.

Unauthorized Use

Any person or organization that uses the WIC service marks, including close facsimiles thereof, in total or in part, in an unauthorized manner may be subject to injunction and the payment of damages. Any person who is aware of violators should inform FNA.

Sincerely,



Amy Herring
Director, Office of Innovation
Supplemental Nutrition and Safety Programs
Food and Nutrition Administration
U.S. Department of Agriculture

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