



September 24, 2020

## **Vendor News Flash**

### **Urgent Update: Temporary Food Substitutions to Remain in Effect Beyond Sept. 30; Least Expensive Brand Monitoring Resumes Oct. 1 Without Sanctions for COVID-19 Flexibilities**

In a late-breaking development, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has granted Texas WIC the authority to **extend current food flexibilities and monitoring waivers until 30 days after the end of the nationally declared COVID-19 public health emergency**. Texas WIC announced in the September 17 [Vendor News Flash](#) that food flexibilities would expire on September 30. However, with the new USDA guidance, Texas WIC has decided to extend the flexibilities to help ensure access to food for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Texas WIC will still resume Least Expensive Brand (LEB) monitoring on October 1, as announced in the September 17 Vendor News Flash. However, LEB sanctions will not be issued for categories with COVID-19 flexibilities, until further notice.**

Please refer to the March 25 [Vendor News Flash](#) for a list of allowable COVID-19 flexibilities by food category. Vendors are encouraged to continue proper labeling and should utilize these flexibilities when prescribed food items are unavailable.

Texas WIC Vendor Management and Operations (VMO) will notify the vendor community when the public health emergency is determined to be over, providing a 30-day advance notice to help manage your food flexibilities stock. WIC vendors are not required to carry the food flexibilities, but if the food flexibilities are in stock, they will transact as a WIC benefit because they have been added to the WIC Authorized Product List (APL). As a



reminder, download the APL daily to ensure your electronic benefits transfer (EBT) system has the most updated APL.

Texas WIC is ready to assist our vendor partners. Should you have any questions regarding this Vendor News Flash, please contact VMO's Compliance Oversight Branch at [WICMonitoringOversight@hsc.state.tx.us](mailto:WICMonitoringOversight@hsc.state.tx.us) or 1-800-252-9629. More WIC vendor resources are available on our website at [bit.ly/TexasWICVendors](http://bit.ly/TexasWICVendors).