

# “Getting to Know the VMA”

## 2017 NYS WIC Association Conference

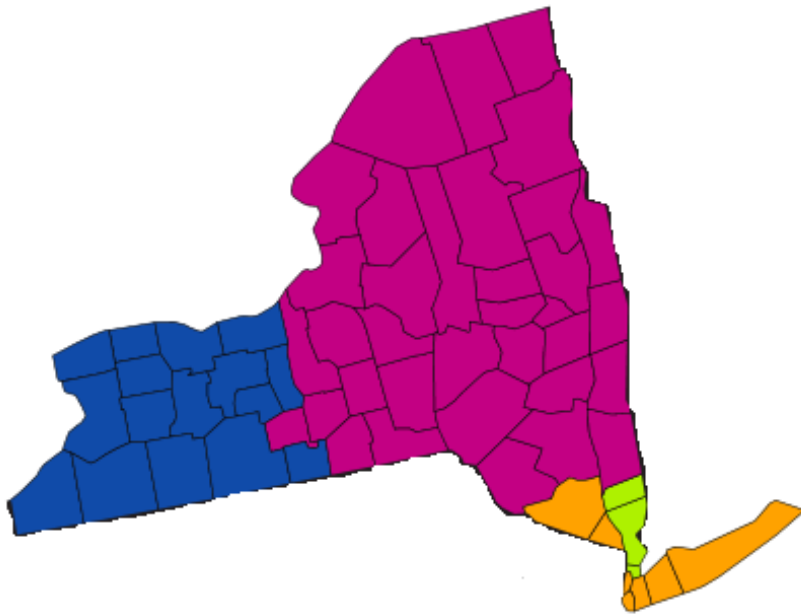
Lonnie Reaves, B.S., VMA Director,  
Rochester Society for the Protection and Care of Children  
&

MaryEllen Holbrook, VMA Contract Manager,  
Food Delivery Vendor Management Section, NYS DOH

# Objectives

- Better understand the purpose and functioning of the VMA
- Learn how to handle program complaints
- Learn how to better collaborate with your VMA to help enhance the participant's shopping experience
- Learn ways to contribute in making the WIC program a success for all players involved

# Who is My Vendor Management Agency?



- **Western Region (SPCC):**

Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates

- **Central/Capital Region (CEO):**

**CENTRAL COUNTIES:** Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Cortland, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, Schuyler, St. Lawrence, Tioga, Tompkins

**EASTERN COUNTIES:** Albany, Clinton, Columbia, Delaware, Dutchess, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Hamilton, Montgomery, Otsego, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, St. Regis, Sullivan, Ulster, Warren, Washington

- **Metro Region (PHS/MNRH):**

Public Health Solutions: Brooklyn, Manhattan, Nassau, Orange, Queens, Rockland, Staten Island, Suffolk

Montefiore New Rochelle Hospital: Bronx, Putnam, Westchester

# How to Contact your VMA

- Western Region (SPCC):
  - VMA Director- Lonnie Reaves
    - Phone: 585-730-8282 Fax: 585-730-8286
- Central/Capital Region (CEO):
  - VMA Director- Penny Bashford
    - P: 518-272-6012 Fax: 518-687-0524
- Metro Region (PHS/MNRH):
  - PHS VMA Director – Rudy Sicari
    - P: 646-619-6400 Fax: 646-619-6784
  - MNRH VMA Director- Charlie Gonzalez
    - P: 718-654-2690 Fax: 718-654-3127

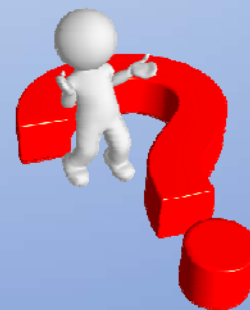
# Role of the VMA in the WIC Program

- Enroll, oversee, train and monitor WIC vendors to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations.
- Provide technical assistance to vendors, participants and LA staff



# Responsibilities of the VMA

- Process WIC vendor applications
- Enter into contractual agreements with WIC vendors
- Monitor WIC vendors for compliance with Federal and State Regulations
- Assist in resolving vendor and participant-related issues
- Vendor Training



# How does one become a WIC Vendor?

- Vendors who are interested in becoming WIC authorized, must fill out an application by contacting the VMA
- All retail grocery WIC Vendors must have SNAP Authorization
- Vendors must receive a fully executed contract and State issued Vendor Stamp before accepting WIC checks

# Vendor Monitoring

- WIC Vendors are monitored once annually at a minimum
- Additional monitor visits occur as needed to ensure program compliance
- Vendors must allow on-site monitoring visits by their VMA to review:
  - Minimum Stock Requirements
  - Price Reasonableness
  - WIC Check Cashing Policy Procedures



# Minimum Stock Requirements

- Milk (Whole and 1% low fat/Nonfat/skim)
- Cheese
- Eggs
- Juice (11.5-12 oz. Concentrate and 64 oz/16 oz Concentrate)
- Breakfast Cereal
- Whole Grains (bread/rice/tortilla/pasta)
- Dry Beans, Peas, Lentils
- Canned Beans, Peas, Lentils
- Peanut Butter
- Canned Fish
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Infant Cereal
- Baby Food (Fruits and Vegetables)
- Baby Food Meats
- Enfamil Infant Formula (Concentrate or Powder)

# Non-MSR Categories

- Yogurt
- Soy Beverage
- Tofu
- Lactose Free Milk
- Kosher items
  - Baby Food Meats
  - Cheese
  - Milk

# Complaint Process and Procedures

## **BSI Referrals**

- Fraudulent and/or abusive activity



## **Program Complaints**

- Vendor complaints that do not involve cases of suspected fraud or abuse can be referred directly to the Vendor Management Agency

# BSI Referral Form

Bureau of Special Investigations Referral Form

Record all pertinent information related to the Referral in the space below. Anonymous informants who do not wish to be contacted must be asked to provide as much information as possible to ensure allegations can be investigated.  
Please phone 1-877-282-6657 OR fax (518) 402-1637 OR email: [foodfraud@health.ny.gov](mailto:foodfraud@health.ny.gov) OR [bsiwicvendors@health.ny.gov](mailto:bsiwicvendors@health.ny.gov) OR mail the completed Referral to BSI, PO Box 2061, Albany, NY 12220-2061.

<b>Individual Taking Referral</b>	
Name	LA/VMA Name
Email	Phone # ( )
<b>Informant/Caller Information</b>	
Name	Does Informant/Caller wish to remain anonymous? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Address Street	City/Town State Zip
Email	Phone # ( )

<b>Referral Information</b>	
Complete Relevant Information Based on the Subject of the Referral	
Subject of the Referral (Who/What is the referral about)	<input type="checkbox"/> Vendor/Store/Store Employee <input type="checkbox"/> WIC Local Agency/WIC Vendor Management Agency/WIC Staff
	<input type="checkbox"/> WIC Participant <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Date Referral Received	Date(s) of Incident

Complete this Section if the Referral is about a WIC Vendor/Store/Store Employee	
Store Name	
Store Address Street	City/Town State Zip
Phone # ( )	Vendor ID #
Store Owner's Name	
Store Employee Name	

Complete this Section if the Referral is about a WIC Participant	
Participant Name	
Participant Address Street	City/Town State Zip
ID #	Phone # ( ) DOB

WIC Local Agency/WIC Vendor Management Agency/WIC Staff	
LA/VMA Name	
Staff Name	

12/2016

Bureau of Special Investigations Referral Form

Description of Incident and/or Information Regarding the Referral (attach additional sheets if needed). Ask open-ended questions using the "who/what/when/where/why/how" format. To correct electronic formatting errors click out of description box.

Resolution Information	
Description of Resolution:	
Completed By:	Date Completed:

12/2016

Call NYS WIC Fraud Hotline 877-282-6657; Mail to: BSI, PO Box 2061, Albany, NY 12220-2061; Email to [foodfraud@health.ny.gov](mailto:foodfraud@health.ny.gov) or [bsiwicvendors@health.ny.gov](mailto:bsiwicvendors@health.ny.gov)

# WIC Program Complaint Form

WIC Program Complaint Form

Local agencies and vendor management agencies must respond to all reported complaints involving WIC participants, WIC store owners or employees, or WIC staff. Refer suspected WIC Program fraud or abuse using the Bureau of Special Investigations Referral Form.  
Record all pertinent information related to the Participant/Vendor Complaint in the space below. Anonymous informants who do not wish to be contacted must be asked to provide as much information as possible.

Individual Taking Complaint			
Name	LAVMA Name		
Email	Phone #	( )	
Informant/Caller Information			
Name	Does Informant/Caller wish to remain anonymous?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Address	Street	City/Town	State Zip
Email	Phone #	( )	
Complaint Information			
Complete Relevant Information Based on the Subject of the Complaint			
Subject of the Complaint (Who/What is the complaint about?)	<input type="checkbox"/> Vendor/Store/Store Employee	<input type="checkbox"/> WIC Local Agency/WIC Vendor Management Agency/WIC Staff	
	<input type="checkbox"/> WIC Participant	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Date Complaint Received	Date(s) of Incident		
WIC Vendor/Store/Store Employee Information			
Store Name	Street		City/Town State Zip
Store Address	Phone #	( )	Vendor #
Store Owner's Name			
Store Employee Name			
WIC Participant Information			
Participant Name	Street		City/Town State Zip
Participant Address	Phone #	( )	DOB
ID #			
WIC Local Agency/WIC Vendor Management Agency/WIC Staff			
LAVMA Name			
Staff Name			

12/2016

WIC Program Complaint Form

Description of Incident and/or Information Regarding the Complaint (attach additional sheets if needed).  
Ask open-ended questions using the "who/what/when/where/why/how" format.  
To correct electronic formatting errors click out of description box.

Resolution Information	
Description of Resolution:	
Completed By:	Date Completed:

12/2016

Submit as much information as possible to your Vendor Management Agency by telephone, fax, email, or mail

## Examples of complaints handled by the VMA:

- Misunderstanding of foods allowed/not allowed for purchase
- Requesting a participant to show their drivers license as a form of ID
- Type of pen a store mandates a participant must use to sign checks
- Not allowing a participant to pay over check amount on Cash Value Voucher
- Rude/disrespectful behavior
- Limiting participant use of the number of checks that can be redeemed
- WIC allowable food not coming up in vendors “system” therefore not accepted

# Complaint Process and Procedures

- Remember to use “who/what/where/when/why and how” questions when gathering information for complaints and referrals
- BSI Referral and Program Complaint Forms can be found on the Common Drive in the *Fraud\_Alert* folder

# “Let’s File a Complaint”

- Scenario 1:

A conversation between Local Agency staff had disclosed that while LA staff Jane Doe was on social media last night, she noticed a posting that stated Big Apple Grocery, an authorized WIC vendor, buys WIC checks. After looking further into the posting, it was discovered that the posting was made by a WIC participant.



“Filling out the complaint”

# Resolutions to Complaints



# Resolutions: Scenario 1

## Vendor:

- Vendors are held accountable to the program policies and regulations per their WIC contract and are responsible for adhering to program rules.

## Participant:

- The participant has a responsibility of knowing how to properly handle of WIC checks and adhere to program rules.

**Resolutions to this complaint include both parties to be re-educated on WIC program policies and may include a BSI investigation, and additional monitor visits by the VMA**

# “Let’s File a Complaint”

- Scenario 2:

On 5/18/17 Amy Apple went shopping with her WIC checks at Empire Market. Ms. Apple had multiple WIC checks to use during her shopping trip, including a WIC check for Enfamil Infant formula. However, she noticed that the formula listed on her check is not carried on the shelf, and a note on the shelf that stated “Due to high theft activity, this formula is carried behind our registers. Please see a Cashier”.

After choosing the WIC approved items that she wanted, she went to a check out line, and began to separate her WIC items and checks. While the Cashier began transacting a check, Amy told the Cashier that she would be needing infant formula. The Cashier says “Sign the check while I finish these other checks up, and I’ll go get the formula for you when I’m done”. So Amy signs and dates the check. While going to get the formula, the Cashier notices that they are all out of the prescribed formula. The Cashier returns and says “Sorry but we are all out of the formula”, and hands the check back to Ms. Apple. Then the Cashier proceeds by saying “If you take it back to where it was issued, they can re-issue you another check”.

“Filling out the complaint”

# Resolutions to Complaints



## Resolutions: Scenario 2

### Vendor:

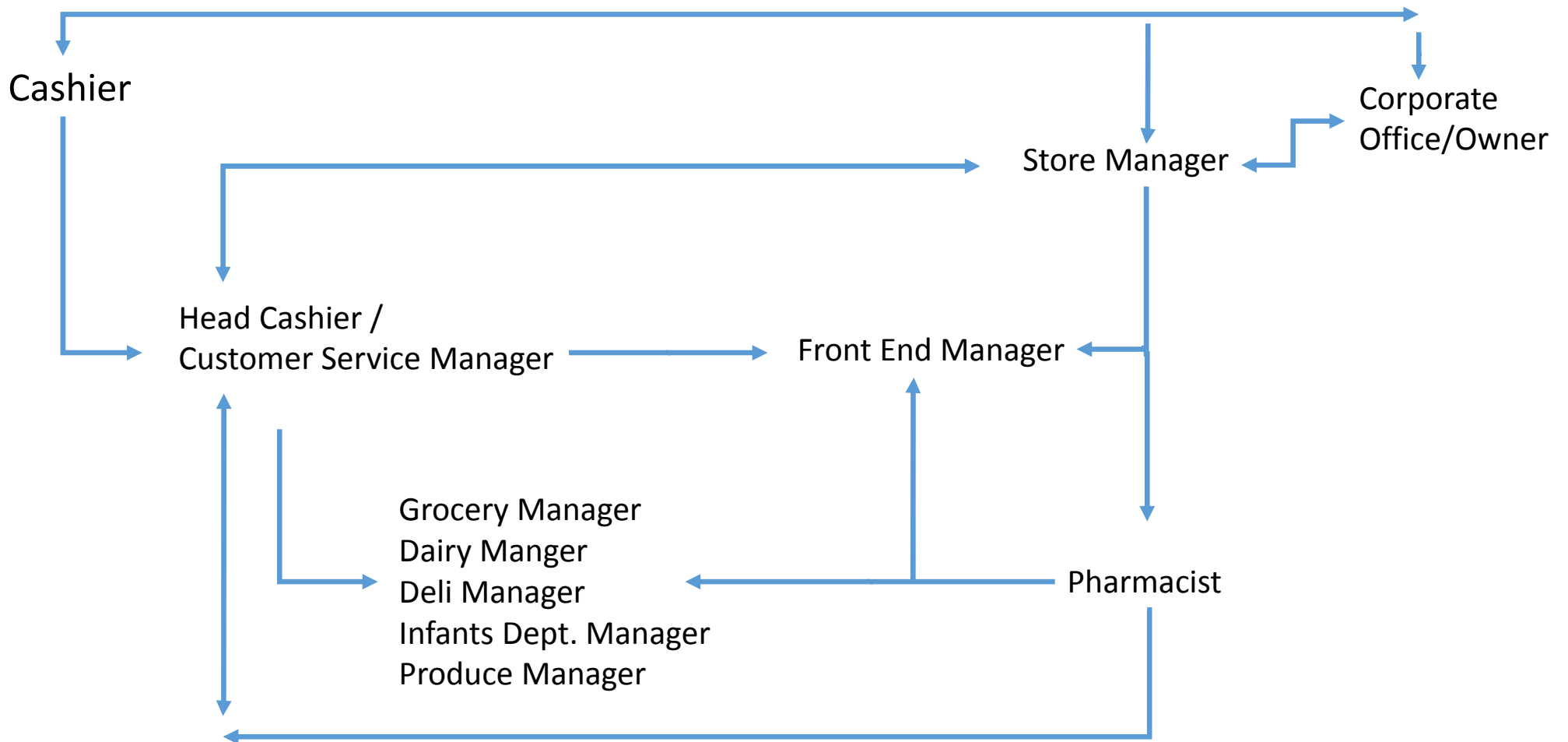
- The vendor has a responsibility to make sure that the product is in stock prior to starting the transaction. They are also responsible for knowing how to properly handle WIC checks.

### Participant:

- The participant has a responsibility of knowing how to properly handle of WIC checks

**Resolution to this complaint requires both parties to be re-educated on the proper procedures of WIC transactions**

# Vendor Operational Flow Chart





# Vendor Training

- Types of Vendor Trainings include:
  - Initial training: provided to new vendors during the authorization process
  - Annual training: routine interactive training provided to existing vendors at least once every 12 months by the VMA
  - Technical Assistance: provided when problems arise, vendors request assistance, and to clarify policy

# Vendor Training

- Purpose of the WIC Program
- WIC Vendor Contract terms
- Procedures for handling WIC checks
- WIC Acceptable Foods authorized by the State agency
- Stocking requirements for WIC Acceptable Foods
- Process for requesting reimbursement for exception checks
- Vendor complaint process
- Penalties and sanctions that can be imposed by the State for WIC Program abuse and violations
- Any changes to program requirements that have occurred since the last training session

# WIC Acceptable Foods Card

- Identifies foods that WIC participants are allow to purchase with their WIC checks
- Serves as a shopping guide
- Items are selected based on several factors:
  - Nutrition
  - Availability
  - Cost
  - Time on the market
  - Package Size
  - Participant preference

# WIC Acceptable Foods Card Interactive Activities

# Reminders

## Special Situations

- Brown Rice- 14 to 16 ounces or 28 to 32 ounces
- Tofu (calcium-set)- 14 to 16 ounces
- Peanut Butter- 16 to 18 ounces
- Canned Beans- 15 to 16 ounces

## Use of Coupons/Bonuses

- Federal WIC Regulations require WIC authorized vendors to offer WIC Program participants, parents, caretakers of infant and child participants, and proxies the same courtesies that are offered to other (non-WIC) customers
- Store incentives may include but are not limited to:
  - Cents Off Coupons
  - Buy One, Get One at a Reduced Price
  - Buy One, Get One Free
  - Free Ounces Added to a Food Item
  - Store Shopping Cards
  - Discounts

# Formulas

- Federal Regulations requires that vendors only purchase infant formula from legitimate suppliers to prevent stolen, expired, or mislabeled infant formula from being sold to WIC vendors and then to WIC families.
- WIC Vendors are identified on the Authorized Vendor List by types. The various types identify what type of formula checks the vendor is authorized to accept.

## Vendor types:

- G= Grocery
- E= Exempt
- I= Pharmacy inside a grocery store
- P= Pharmacy

# Formulas

## Non-Exempt formulas

- Enfamil Infant (required)
- Enfamil AR
- Enfamil Gentlease
- Gerber Good Start Soy

**\*Can be purchased at any authorized WIC Vendor Type**

## Exempt formulas

- Enfamil Nutramigen
- Enfamil Nutramigen with Enflora LLG
- Similac Alimentum
- Boost/Boost High Protein/Boost Kid Essentials
- Ensure/Ensure Plus
- PediaSure/PediaSure with Fiber
- PediaSure Enteral/PediaSure Enteral with Fiber

**\*Can be purchased only at WIC Vendor Types *E, I, and P***

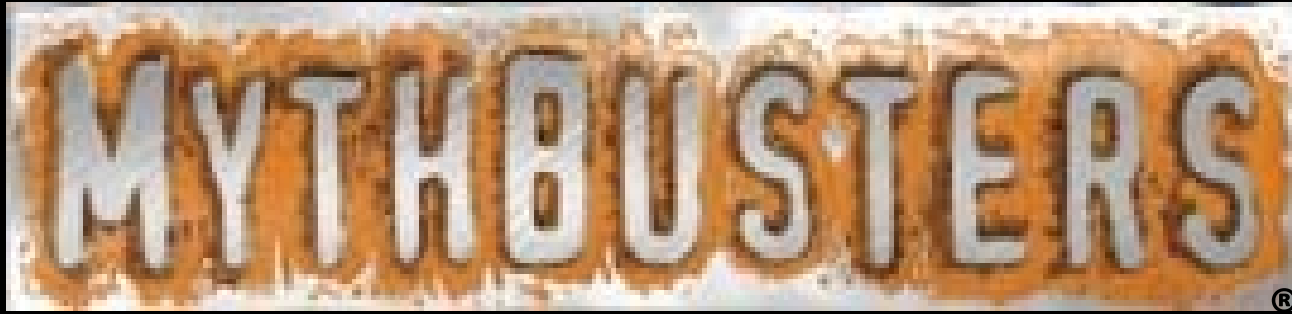
# Formula

## Exempt/Specialized Formulas, and Modular Products

- Enfamil EnfaCare
- Similac Neosure
- Pregestimil
- Enfaport
- Similac PM 60/40
- MCT oil
- Phenex- 1
- Phenex- 2
- Phenyl-Free 1
- Phenyl-Free 2

**\*Can be purchased only at Vendor Types *I* and *P***





WIC EDITION  
MIC EDITION

## FACT OR MYTH:

Applicant vendors become authorized to accept WIC,  
once they complete a vendor application

Applicants must go through Vendor training, monitoring,  
and an extensive background check before becoming an authorized vendor.

## FACT OR MYTH:

FACT

Vendors receive greater benefits from WIC participation than they do from WIC transactions

Authorized WIC Vendors provide a service to their community and in particular to WIC participants.

## FACT OR MYTH:

The Pictorial Foods Guide replaces the Acceptable Foods Card

**MYTH**

The Pictorial Foods Guide does not replace the Acceptable Food Card. It is a colorful guide with pictures to help participants identify which WIC approved items they can choose.

## FACT OR MYTH:

Most complaints received by the VMA are a result of fraudulent and abusive activity

Most complaints result in being program complaints and are resolved in a re-educational manner.

## FACT OR MYTH:

Vendors are not required to carry every WIC approved item listed on the WIC Acceptable Foods Card

FACT

However, vendors are required to carry certain amounts and varieties of WIC approved foods at all times.

# Collaboration



“SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND, THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD”



# Responses as a result of listening with the intent to respond

- Evaluate
  - You judge and then either agree or disagree
- Probe
  - You ask questions from your own frame of reference
- Advise
  - You give counsel, advice, and solutions to problems
- Interpret
  - You analyze others' motives and behaviors based on your own experiences

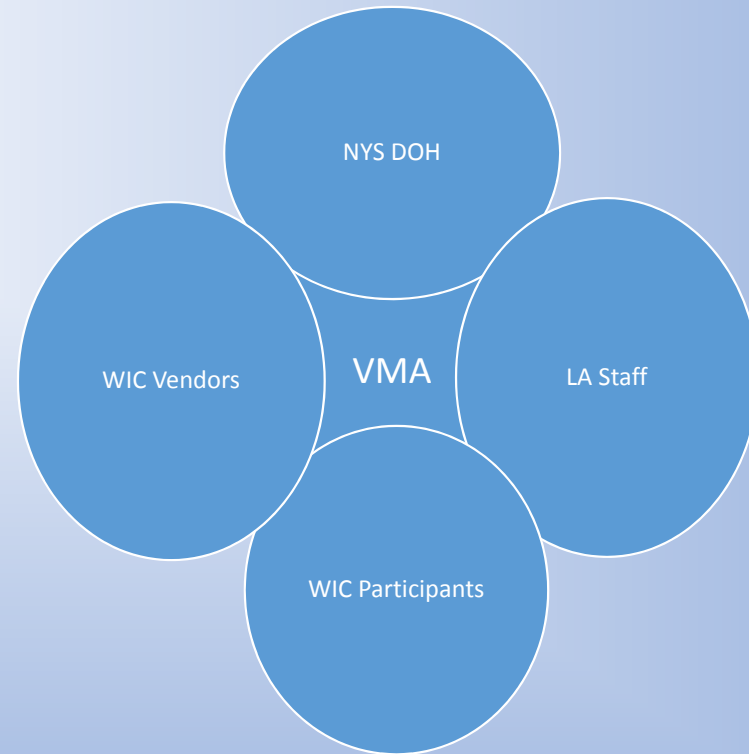
# Collaborating with your VMA

## Ways to collaborate with your VMA:

- Attend regional coordinators meetings
- Attend a WIC Vendor Training
- VMA Staff attend WIC clinic
- Provide technical assistance to LA
  - Attend meetings
- Stay informed and connected
  - Retain updated vendor lists
  - VMA newsletter and other means of communication

## VMA Stakeholders

- NYS DOH
- WIC Vendors
- LA staff
- WIC Participants



# VMA Q & A



# How to Contact your VMA

- Western Region (SPCC):
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  - MNRH VMA Director- Charlie Gonzalez
    - P: 718-654-2690 Fax: 718-654-3127

# Resources

- NYS DOH Website  
<http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/wic/>
- WIC Vendor Website  
<https://nyswicvendors.com>
- Cashier Training  
<http://nyswicvendortraining.com>
- WIC Strong Website  
<http://www.wicstrong.com/>
- Pictorial Foods Guide  
<http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/3791.pdf>

# Work Cited

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