

WIC ONLINE GROCERY ORDERING: A CLICK & COLLECT MODEL

THE WIC PROGRAM



MOTHERS & CHILDREN 0-5

WIC serves pregnant/postpartum women, infants, and children up to the age of 5. WIC reaches nearly half of all babies in the U.S. and helps put moms, babies, and kids on a path to a healthy life.



\$3 BILLION IN FOOD ANNUALLY

WIC provides many important services, including a healthy food package. The WIC program spends more than \$3 billion in food costs each year, making it an important program for WIC vendors.

COVID-19 CHALLENGES TO WIC SHOPPING

COVID-19 layered challenges on top of pre-existing barriers to shopping reported by WIC customers, such as having difficulty identifying WIC products in the store, and feeling stigmatized when redeeming WIC benefits.

LIMITED STOCK

Temporary grocery shortages make it hard for WIC customers to get their WIC-approved products.

REDUCED STORE HOURS

Some businesses have reduced their hours, making it more difficult for working families to get to the store.

RETAILER RESTRICTIONS

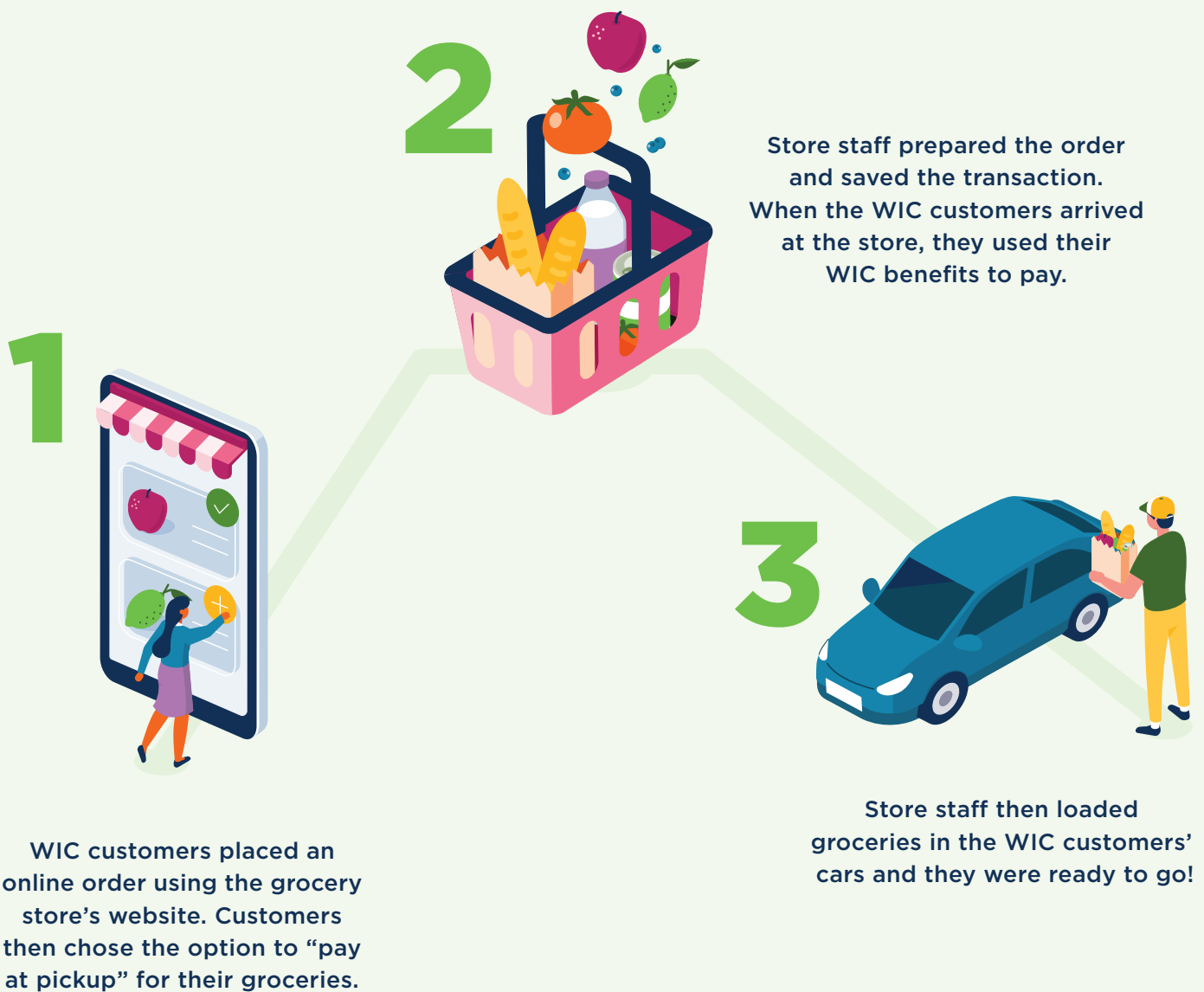
Some stores limit the quantity of items that customers can purchase to avoid empty shelves, making it hard for WIC customers to get all of their WIC products in one trip.

ONLINE SHOPPING LIMITATIONS

Unlike SNAP, most WIC customers are unable to use their WIC benefits online, creating equity issues and limiting their ability to social distance while shopping.

CLICK & COLLECT

Prior to the pandemic, researchers at the University of Tennessee partnered with the Food City regional grocery store chain to make it easier for WIC customers to shop for WIC products online. They used a three-step Click & Collect model.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WIC VENDORS

As WIC explores opportunities for online purchasing, WIC vendors can be at the forefront of this change by piloting a Click & Collect model for online ordering.

Vendor recommendations for WIC online ordering, based on the University of Tennessee research study and interviews with WIC customers and grocery industry staff, include:



COMMUNICATE.

- **Let customers know they can Click & Collect with WIC.**
- **Allow WIC customers to indicate their order is a WIC order.** WIC vendor staff can shop better with this information.
- **Create opportunities for easy communication between WIC vendor staff and WIC customers.** This is especially helpful if substitutions need to be made.



SHOP.

- **Clearly identify WIC products online to make them easier to find.**
- **Sell produce by the pound or a set price, not by the piece.** This makes it easier for WIC customers to buy produce using their Cash Value Benefit.
- **Avoid automatic substitutions.** It can be very challenging for WIC customers if their WIC products are substituted with non-WIC products.



PAY.

- **Allow WIC customers to order online and pay with WIC benefits at the store.** Don't require an additional form of payment to place the online order.
- **If possible, complete the WIC payment at the curb.** This was preferred by WIC customers and vendor staff.
- **Consider reducing or skipping fees for online ordering** with in-store or curbside pickup.

WIC vendors interested in offering online ordering for WIC should work with their State WIC office to ensure compliance with vendor regulations. Federal guidance related to WIC online ordering or purchasing is not currently available, but may be provided in the future.