



Policy 588 – Program Integrity: Complaints

Revised April 01, 2026

Policy

Local and state WIC Programs must have procedures in place to document all complaints from applicants, participants, parents or caregivers of infants and children, second cardholders, vendors, staff and the public. Complaints of civil rights discrimination must be handled in accordance with 7CFR§246.81(b).

Purpose

To allow and document any complaint regarding state and local program operations, food delivery, or civil rights discrimination.

Relevant Regulations

7 CFR§246.121(o)—Participant, parent/caretaker, proxy, vendor, farmer, farmers' market, and home delivery contractor complaints

7 CFR §246.8—Nondiscrimination

7CFR§246.81(b)—Complaints

ORS 839-005-000(1) —Discrimination

Oregon WIC PPM References

◆ [452—Civil Rights](#)

◆ [590—Program Integrity: Participant Violations](#)

Twist Training Manual Reference

Chapter 8, Lesson 103 – Complaints

Definitions

Applicant: A WIC eligible individual who applies or re-applies for WIC services for themselves and/or on behalf of eligible infants and children.

Complaint source: Any individual or group of individuals who alleges inappropriate behavior or actions in the delivery of WIC program benefits and services. Also referred to as the complainant.

Farm: A business authorized to accept Oregon Farm Direct Nutrition Program (Farm Direct) vouchers or eWIC.

Federal Protected classes: Groups of people protected by law from discrimination on the basis of a shared characteristic or perception of that characteristic. For WIC, the protected classes are race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age.

Oregon's Protected classes: Groups of people protected by law from unlawful discrimination on the basis of a shared characteristic or perception of that characteristic. In Oregon the protected classes are race, color, national origin, religion, disability, sex (includes pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and marital status.

The WIC Data System: The Oregon WIC Management Information System (MIS).

Vendor: A retail store that is authorized by WIC to provide WIC foods to participants.

Procedure

1. Receiving complaints

- 1.1 Local WIC programs must accept verbal and written complaints from and about participants, staff, vendors, farms, farmers markets, WIC Program, Farm Direct Program, or other entities, such as community partners.
 - 1.1.1 Complaints may be received through a variety of methods including, but not limited to phone calls, fax, emails, social media, written statements, in person, via the Oregon WIC website at <https://www.oregon.gov/OHA/PH/HEALTHYPEOPLEFAMILIES/WIC/Pages/complaints.aspx>, or by materials supplied by the state WIC office.
 - 1.1.1.1 Vendors may use a [WIC Shopper Complaint Card](#) (form 57-1005) to report complaints against WIC participants and their eWIC cardholders.
 - 1.1.1.2 Please refer to ♦ [Policy 590—Program Integrity: Participant Violations](#) for reporting complaints for WIC participant violations.

2. Documenting complaints

- 2.1 Local agency staff must document all complaints received:
 - 2.1.1 Complaints against participants, vendors, farms, and farmers markets, must be entered into the WIC data system, TWIST. Refer to the TWIST Training Manual, Chapter 8, Lesson 103 for specific information on how to enter complaints in TWIST, and ♦ [Policy 590—Program Integrity: Participant Violations](#) for reporting participant complaints.

- 2.1.2 Complaints against local agencies, WIC Program, the Farm Direct Program, or other entities such as community partners must be entered in the Online Complaint Form on the Oregon WIC website: <https://www.oregon.gov/OHA/PH/HEALTHYPEOPLEFAMILIES/WIC/Pages/complaints.aspx>.

Complaints against local WIC staff

- 2.2 Complaints against local WIC staff should be referred directly to the WIC Coordinator. The WIC Coordinator will decide whether the complaint should be forwarded to the state WIC office for additional follow-up. If the complainant feels uncomfortable submitting a complaint to the WIC Coordinator or if the complaint is against the WIC Coordinator, it should be referred to the local program Administrator.

Complaints against state WIC staff

- 2.3 Complaints against state WIC staff should be referred directly to a state WIC Program Manager.
- 2.3.1 If staff are not comfortable referring the complaint to a WIC Program Manager or the state WIC Compliance and Civil Rights Coordinator, complaints can be filed directly with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Hotline. The USDA OIG Hotline complaint submission should be used for complaints not related to forms of discrimination. See ¶3.6.2 for filing discrimination complaints directly with USDA. Details for complaint submission to the OIG can be found on the [And Justice For All poster](#) and the [USDA OIG Hotline website](#).

3. Civil rights complaints

- 3.1 Civil rights complaints are complaints that involve alleged discrimination based on one or more of the protected classes. Refer to ♦ [452—Civil Rights](#) for more information. If local program staff identify a potential civil rights complaint, they must follow the process below.

Civil rights complaint process

- 3.2 Local programs must accept and document **all** complaints involving alleged discrimination or civil rights violations.
- 3.2.1 Contact the [WIC Compliance and Civil Rights Coordinator](#) at the state WIC office **immediately** after identifying a complaint of alleged discrimination or a potential civil rights violation.
- 3.2.2 The state WIC office will notify the USDA Food and Nutrition Services Office of Civil Rights of all civil rights complaints based on one or more of the federally protected classes (i.e. race, color, sex, age, national origin and disability) within 5-calendar days from the date of the complaint.
- 3.2.3 The state WIC office will notify the Oregon Department of Justice (DOJ) of all civil rights complaints based on Oregon's protected classes that are not federally protected (i.e. religion, pregnancy, gender, sexual orientation and marital status) within 5-calendar days from the date of the complaint.
- 3.3 As soon as a suspected civil rights complaint is verbalized:
- 3.3.1 Inform the person alleging discrimination of their right to file a complaint and that the complaint must be made within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory action.

- 3.3.2 Inform the individual that local staff will document the complaint and immediately forward it to the state WIC office.
 - 3.3.2.1 If the complaint is based on one or more of the federally protected classes, the complainant may also choose to file a complaint directly with USDA, see ¶3.6.2.
 - 3.3.2.2 If the complaint is based on one or more of Oregon's protected classes that are not federally protected, the complainant may also choose to file a complaint directly with Oregon's Department of Justice (DOJ), see ¶3.6.3.
- 3.3.3 If the complainant verbalizes the complaint but does not wish to make allegations in writing, local WIC staff must still ensure the complaint is documented according to ¶3.5.

Required documentation for all civil rights complaints

- 3.4 Include the following documentation in **all** civil rights complaints.
 - 3.4.1 Name, address and telephone number of the person making the complaint. Information given will remain confidential until such time as the complainant gives permission for its release. If the complainant wants to remain anonymous do not include this information.
 - 3.4.2 Name and location of the participant's local program.
 - 3.4.3 The basis on which the civil rights discrimination has been filed, i.e., race, color, sex, age, national origin, or disability.
 - 3.4.4 The nature of the incident or action that led the person to feel discrimination was a factor.
 - 3.4.5 The location where the incident occurred.

- 3.4.6 The name(s), title(s) and business address(es) of individual(s) involved in or with knowledge of the discriminatory action, i.e., local health department staff, local WIC staff, vendors.
- 3.4.7 The date(s) the alleged discrimination occurred or, if continuing, the most recent date of such action.

How to document civil rights complaints

- 3.5 All civil rights complaints are documented in the WIC data system, unless they are specific to a WIC staff member. Include a brief summary of the discussion with the individual and document all actions taken. Check the “Civil Rights” box on the WIC data system “Complaint” screen.
 - 3.5.1 To ensure employee confidentiality, civil rights complaints against WIC program staff are documented in writing but are **not** documented in the WIC data system.
 - 3.5.2 Send the documentation to the [WIC Compliance and Civil Rights Coordinator](#) at the state WIC office **immediately** after identifying a complaint of alleged discrimination or a potential civil rights violation.

Resolution of civil rights complaints

- 3.6 The state WIC office will notify the local coordinator and administrator if any corrective actions need to be taken to address a civil rights complaint.
 - 3.6.1 Notification will be sent to the complainant confirming the receipt of the complaint. Corrective actions may not be disclosed to the complainant in order to maintain confidentiality.

Civil rights complaints may be sent directly to USDA and/or Oregon’s DOJ

- 3.6.2 In addition to the complaint process described above, an individual or local agency staff may also choose to send a civil rights complaint based on one or more of the federally protected classes directly to USDA. Local staff can offer assistance in writing a formal complaint, if necessary. See ¶3.4 for what to include in the complaint. Send the complaint according to instructions here: [How to file a program discrimination complaint with USDA](#).
- 3.6.3 An individual or local agency staff may also choose to send a civil rights complaint directly to Oregon’s Department of Justice (DOJ). Local staff can offer assistance in writing a formal complaint, if necessary. Report a civil rights violation to Oregon’s DOJ here: [Report and Support hotline and online form Oregon DOJ](#).

4. Complaint Data Entry Document

- 4.1 Local staff may use the [“WIC Complaint Data Entry Document” \(form 57-500\)](#) to record complaints at a satellite clinic or if the WIC data system is unavailable. A copy of [form 57-500](#) is posted online.
- 4.1.1 The information recorded on the “WIC Complaint Data Entry Document” must be entered into the WIC data system within three days to ensure timely follow up by the state WIC office.

5. WIC Shopper Complaint Card

- 5.1 Vendors may file a complaint against a WIC participant or shopper by completing and mailing the “WIC Shopper Complaint Card” card to the state WIC Compliance and Civil Rights Coordinator. A copy of the [WIC Shopper Complaint Card](#) (form 57-1005) is online if no paper copies are available.

- 5.1.1 The state WIC Compliance and Civil Rights Coordinator will enter the complaint into the WIC data system and take appropriate action.

Policy History

Policy History Table

Date	Revised, Reviewed, or Released
2/25/2015	Revision
3/9/2020	Major Revision
4/10/2026	Major Revision

The date at the top of the policy is the date of the most recent release. Policies become effective on the release date. Policy changes become compliance findings 6 months from the release date.

Major Revision: Policies with content changes that impact local agency functions. Please review all policies with major revisions. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) reviewed and approved these changes.

Minor Revision: Changes in policy that have small impacts on local agency functions. Minor edits, grammatical updates, clarifications, and/or formatting changes have occurred in these policies.

Reviewed: The policy was checked for accuracy. Minor formatting changes may have been made.

Date of Origin: Date policy was initially released

If you need this in large print or an alternate format, please call 971-673-0040. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Pending USDA Approval