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Certification of WIC Participants

POLICY:

To be eligible for participation in the WIC Program, pregnant women, breastfeeding women up to one (1) year past termination of pregnancy, postpartum women up to six (6) months past termination of pregnancy, infants under one (1) year of age and children younger than five (5) years of age will meet the following criteria defined by Federal Regulations and State Agency policies:

- Residency (see **Policy 2.04, Residency Requirements**);
- Income Eligibility (see **Policy 2.06, Income Eligibility Requirements**); and
- Nutrition Risk (see **Policy 2.11, Nutrition Risk Criteria**).

PROCEDURE:

A. Applicant/Participant Certification Information

Applicant/participant certification information will be entered into the appropriate Crossroads computer screens.

B. Participant Agreement Form (WIC-05)

1. During each certification appointment, each participant, parent/guardian or caretaker will have an opportunity to read and/or be read the participant's rights and responsibilities prior to electronically signing the **Participant Agreement (WIC-05)** (see **Policy 2.10, Participant Rights and Responsibilities**).
2. During each certification appointment, WIC personnel will also verbally instruct the participant, parent/guardian or caretaker of the items from Rights and Responsibilities as outlined in **Policy 2.10 A (2)**.

C. Applicant Screening

1. The applicant will be screened by WIC personnel to determine if residency requirements and income criteria are met.
2. The Competent Professional Authority (CPA) will determine whether the applicant meets nutritional risk criteria through nutritional assessment.

D. Proof of Pregnancy

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Documented proof of pregnancy is required as part of the eligibility determination process, though this process will not create a barrier to participation.

1. Benefits will be issued to an applicant who claims to be pregnant, but does not have proof of pregnancy at the time of application as long as other eligibility criteria are met.
2. Proof of pregnancy may include a positive pregnancy test statement from a health care facility or physician.
3. Home pregnancy tests will **not** be accepted as proof of pregnancy.
4. Request proof of pregnancy prior to issuance of benefits to an applicant whose past status as a pregnant WIC participant was questionable.
5. If pregnancy can be visually determined, written proof is not required.
6. When proof of pregnancy is not obtained within sixty (60) days of the certification date, the participant will be terminated during the certification period due to insufficient information available (**see Policy 2.09, Notification of Ineligibility**).
7. Documentation of proof of pregnancy will include:
 - a. A copy of proof of pregnancy scanned into the participant's chart and documented on the **Health Information Screen**; or
 - b. Visual proof of pregnancy will be documented on the **Health Information Screen**.
8. WIC certification will be performed at no cost to the applicant. WIC personnel should ensure that pregnant applicants have prenatal care services that include pregnancy testing at no cost to the applicant if done to establish WIC eligibility.

E. Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the practice of feeding breast milk to an infant on the average of at least once a day.

1. Women who breastfeed infants that they did not give birth to (non-birth mothers), will be certified as breastfeeding when eligibility criteria are met.

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- a. Examples of breastfeeding non-birth mothers may include a wet nurse, an adoptive mother or a foster mother. A foster mother must have prior approval of this feeding plan by the foster care special service supervisor or child welfare supervisor.
 - b. This does not include women who donate breast milk to a milk bank.
 - c. A non-breastfeeding postpartum birth mother who meets WIC eligibility criteria may receive benefits, even if her infant is breastfed by a non-birth mother who is certified as breastfeeding.
2. When a woman has a nutritional risk condition that contraindicates breastfeeding an infant, i.e. substance abuse or HIV infection, guidance and education will be provided to her. In this instance, she will not be certified as breastfeeding.

F. Postpartum

A postpartum woman may be certified as a WIC participant up to six (6) months after termination of pregnancy.

1. Regardless of the reason of the termination or duration of pregnancy, the woman will be reassessed for certification criteria to receive postpartum benefits.
2. If breastfeeding is discontinued before six (6) months postpartum, continuation of WIC Program benefits depend on participant certification as non-breastfeeding postpartum.

G. Infant

Infants will be added to the WIC Program and issued food benefits after the completion of a certification appointment where the infant is physically present.

H. Child

A child who is a WIC applicant/participant must be physically present at the WIC clinic during each certification appointment.

I. Applicant/Participant with Long-Term Home Confinement

1. The parent/guardian or caretaker of a WIC applicant/participant who is not able to attend WIC clinic because of a long-term home confinement condition will attend the scheduled certification appointments and provide the following documentation:

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- a. Physician's note including a diagnosis and duration of confinement;
 - b. Anthropometric measurements on physician's letterhead that are less than sixty (60) days old;
 - c. Hemoglobin measurements must be on physician's letterhead. The blood value date must meet the criteria as established in **Policy 2.13, Hematological Testing**.
 - d. Certification information, such as proof of income and residency eligibility.
2. For those with a terminal or chronic condition, a physician's note is required once during their continued participation in the WIC Program for the duration recorded on the physician's note. New documentation must be obtained:
 - a. Prior to their certification; or
 - b. Prior to their subsequent certification when the physician's note is lacking a duration or has an expired duration.
 3. The CPA will document in **Crossroads on the Family Demographics Screen in the Family Comments "Yellow Sticky Note"** at the time of the initial certification appointment the reason why the participant is not able to be present at the WIC clinic.
 4. The parent/guardian of an infant/child who is tube-fed and not able to eat by mouth will have the option whether to attend group nutrition education classes or not.
 5. A WIC applicant/participant with a short-term illness will be rescheduled and attend WIC clinic at a later date.

REFERENCES:

1. WIC Regulations 246.2, Definitions
2. WIC Regulations 246.7, Certification of Participants
3. WIC Regulations 246.7(o)
4. WIC Regulations 246.7(c)(2)(ii)
5. WIC Regulations 246.7(g)(1)(i)-(ii)
6. SFP 96-005, Non-Birth Mothers Certified as Breastfeeding Women
7. SFP 01-041, WIC Final Policy Memorandum, WIC Blood Work Requirements
8. SFP 09-046, WIC Hematological Data Requirements: Clarification