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Certification Periods

POLICY:

After eligibility is determined, WIC participants will be certified to receive Program benefits for a specified length of time to assure that they continue to meet eligibility requirements.

DEFINITION:

Participant: Participants mean pregnant women, breast feeding women, postpartum women, infants and children who are receiving eWIC benefits, and the fully breastfed infants of participant breastfeeding women.

PROCEDURE:

A. **Certification Period**

A certification period is the length of time a participant is eligible to receive eWIC benefits.

1. A certification period begins on the date the applicant/participant is determined eligible for eWIC benefits.
2. The expiration date of the certification period is calculated by STORC.
3. Participants who become categorically ineligible will receive benefits until the end of the eWIC benefit issuance period in which they become ineligible.

B. **Categorical Certification Periods**

1. **Pregnant Woman** - For the duration of her pregnancy, and up to the last day of the month in which the infant becomes six weeks old or the pregnancy ends (for example, if the infant is born June 4, six weeks after birth would be July 16, and certification would end July 31).
 - a) To continue to receive eWIC benefits without disruption, the woman must be certified by the last day of the month in which the infant becomes six weeks old or the pregnancy ends, as breastfeeding or non-breastfeeding postpartum.
 - b) The woman retains her status as pregnant until she is certified as fully breastfeeding, partially breastfeeding, minimally breastfeeding or non-breastfeeding postpartum.
 - c) A woman who is not certified as breastfeeding or non-breastfeeding postpartum will not be terminated as postpartum because her certification as pregnant will expire.

Example:

expected delivery date: 11/22/yr
certification expiration date: 01/03/yr

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- d) When funding is limited and the Local Agency is not serving Priority III or VI postpartum women, it is not necessary to issue a **Notice of Ineligibility** to the woman when she is given a verbal notification at least fifteen (15) days in advance that her certification as a pregnant woman will end.

2. **Breastfeeding Woman:**

Breastfeeding women certification periods are as follows.

- a. Fully breastfeeding women whose infant is receiving no formula from the WIC program will be certified up to one (1) year past termination of pregnancy unless breastfeeding is discontinued, the infant receives greater than a 50% formula package or with the breastfed infant's first birthday, whichever comes first.

Example:

infant birth date: 11/22/yr
certification date: 01/05/yr
certification expiration date: 11/22/yr

- b. Partially breastfeeding women whose infant is receiving less than 50% formula, will be certified up to one (1) year postpartum unless breastfeeding is discontinued, the infant receives greater than a 50% formula package or with the breastfed infant's first birthday, whichever comes first.

Example:

infant birth date: 11/22/yr
certification date: 01/05/yr
certification expiration date: 11/22/yr

- c. Minimally breastfeeding women whose infant is receiving greater than 50% formula, will be certified up to one (1) year postpartum. Women who request, after the sixth month postpartum, more than the maximum amount of formula allowed for a partially breastfed infant would no longer receive a food package but would continue to count as a WIC participant and receive other Program benefits and nutrition services (nutrition education, including breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to health and social services.)

Example:

infant birth date: 11/22/yr
certification date: 01/05/yr
certification expiration date: 11/22/yr

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3. **Discontinuation of Breastfeeding during a Certification Period**
- a) If breastfeeding is discontinued before six (6) months postpartum, the woman must have a follow up performed as non-breastfeeding postpartum to continue receiving eWIC benefits.
 - b) If breastfeeding is discontinued after six (6) months postpartum, the participant is no longer categorically eligible and will be terminated from the WIC Program.

4. **Non-breastfeeding Postpartum Woman:** A non-breastfeeding postpartum woman will be certified for up to six (6) months from the date of pregnancy termination.

- a) She will receive eWIC benefits until the issuance period ends.

Example:

pregnancy termination: 11/22/yr
certification date: 01/05/yr
certification expiration date: 05/22/yr

- b) Nines (999) will be entered in the **STORC Health Surveillance Screen** if the pregnancy outcome is unknown for the following: “# of Infants This Pregnancy”, “Infant Sex”, “Infant Condition”, “Birth Weight” and “Birth Length”.

5. **Infant Under 6 Months of Age:** Certification for an infant enrolled before six (6) months ends on the first birthday.

Example:

date of birth: 11/22/yr
certification date: 04/10/yr
certification expiration date: 11/22/yr

6. **Infant Over 6 Months of Age:** Certification for an infant enrolled after six (6) months ends no later than six (6) months from the date of certification.

Example:

date of birth: 11/22/yr
certification date: 06/11/yr
certification expiration date: 12/11/yr

- a) When an infant becomes twelve (12) months of age during a certification period, the infant may continue to receive eWIC benefits until the end of the certification period and certification as a child at twelve (12) months of age is not required.
- b) If the infant's birthday falls within the eWIC benefit issuance period, the food package will be converted by STORC to a child food package.

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7. **Children:** Certification for a child ends no later than six (6) months from the date of certification, or no later than the eWIC benefit issuance period during which the child reaches the fifth birthday.

Example:

certification date: 12/22/yr
certification expiration date: 06/22/yr

C. Shortened or Extended Certification Periods

Federal Regulations permit the certification period of breastfeeding women, infants and children to be shortened or extended by a period not to exceed thirty (30) days only in cases where there is difficulty in scheduling.

1. eWIC benefit issuance will not extend beyond the certification end date in this period.
2. eWIC benefits must be discontinued until a subsequent certification is completed for a participant who does not keep a certification appointment.

REFERENCES:

1. SFP 04-109, Implementation of the Certification and General Administration Provisions of P.L. 108-265
2. WIC Regulations 246.7, Certification of Participants
3. FNS Instruction 803-4, Certification Period
4. SFP 95-022, Questions and Answers on the Enhanced Food Package for Breastfeeding Women