
215.06

Participant Categories and Certification Periods

Overview

Introduction

In order to be certified, an applicant for the WIC Program must be categorically eligible. This means that the applicant must meet the regulatory definition for one of the participant categories. The participant's certification period depends on their category. This policy explains the categories and their certification periods.

Determining eligibility

Categorical eligibility is based on an applicant's self-report of:

- Age (for infants and children)
 - Reproductive status (for women), and
 - Medical condition (for women and children with special dietary needs).
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Parent/caretaker

For infants and children, this is the parent, guardian or other adult who has custody of the child and is responsible for the child's well-being. The parent/caretaker is authorized to sign the following WIC documents:

- Your Rights and Responsibilities as a WIC Participant
 - Proof of identity
 - Affidavit
 - Family food benefits issuance and
 - Release of information of the referral and request for information forms
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Participant Categories

Summary table The table below lists the participant categories and their definitions.

Category	Definition
Breastfeeding	<p>A woman up to one year postpartum who is breastfeeding an infant at least once a day. Breastfeeding includes women who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeding at the breast; • Feeding their own expressed breastmilk from a spoon, cup or by tube feeding; • Breastfeeding infants to whom they did not give birth, such as wet nurses, adoptive mothers, and foster mothers; and • Breastfeeding infants to whom they gave birth but their infants reside in another household (e.g., foster care). <p><u>Note:</u> This definition does not include women who donate breastmilk to a milk bank.</p>
Child	A person at least 12 months old but less than five years old
Child receiving WIC formula	A child with qualifying conditions that requires WIC formula (infant formula, exempt infant formula and WIC-eligible medical foods) because the use of conventional foods is precluded, restricted or inadequate to address their special nutritional needs.
Infant	A person less than 12 months old
Not breastfeeding (postpartum)	<p>A woman up to six months after termination of pregnancy who is not breastfeeding an infant at all. Pregnancy may have terminated due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ectopic (tubal) pregnancy • Miscarriage • Spontaneous abortion • Medical abortion • Stillbirth, or • Live birth, including placement of the infant for adoption
Pregnant	A woman with one or more embryos or fetuses in utero
Woman receiving WIC formula	A woman meeting any of the previous definitions with qualifying conditions that requires WIC-eligible medical foods because the use of conventional foods is precluded, restricted or inadequate to address their special nutritional needs.

Note: *If an infant is receiving breastmilk from a milk bank or a woman that did not give birth to the infant, then the infant's biological mother should be considered a not breastfeeding (postpartum) participant. In this situation it is possible for the infant breastfeeding status to be exclusively breastfeeding and the biological mother documented as a not breastfeeding (postpartum) participant in the IWIN data system.*

Certifying Breastfeeding Participants Who Become Pregnant

Introduction Determining when to certify breastfeeding participants who become pregnant will depend on her infant's breastfeeding status and her due date.

Fully breastfeeding The table below provides guidance for certifying fully breastfeeding women whose infants are not receiving formula from WIC.

IF the woman is ...	AND her due date is ...	THEN ...
Fully breastfeeding	After her infant's birthday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to serve her as a fully breastfeeding woman until her infant's birthday or until she weans the infant, whichever is earlier, then Certify her as a pregnant woman.
Fully breastfeeding	Before her infant's birthday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to serve her as a fully breastfeeding woman until one or two months before her due date, or until she weans her infant, whichever is earlier, then Certify her as a pregnant woman.

Partially breastfeeding The table describes why breastfeeding women whose infants receive WIC formula should be certified as pregnant women when they report their pregnancy.

IF the infant's breastfeeding status is ...	AND the infant is ...	THEN certify mother so that ...
Partially BF Within Range ($\leq \frac{1}{2}$ WIC formula package)	< 12 months old	Her new participant status is documented.*
Partially BF Out of Range ($> \frac{1}{2}$ WIC formula package)	≤ 6 months old	She can receive a larger food package.
Partially BF Out of Range ($> \frac{1}{2}$ WIC formula package)	> 6 months old	She can receive FIs for herself.

*The same food package is issued to women pregnant with a singleton and to breastfeeding women whose infants receive a **Partially BF Within Range** ($\leq \frac{1}{2}$ of the WIC formula) package.

Certification Periods

By participant category

The length of a participant's certification varies with the category. The table below lists the certification period for each participant category.

Category	Length of Certification Period
Infant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If less than six months old at certification, may be certified up to the last day of the month in which the infant turns one year old • If six months or older at certification, may be certified for six months
Child*	One year, ending with the end of the month of the child's fifth birthday
Pregnant woman*	For the duration of the pregnancy and up to the last day of the month in which the infant becomes six weeks old or the pregnancy ends
Postpartum women*	Until the last day of the month in which the infant turns six months old
Breastfeeding woman*	12 months postpartum or earlier if she stops breastfeeding

*Includes children and women with qualifying conditions that require WIC formula (infant formula, exempt infant formula and WIC-eligible medical foods).

Modify certification end date

An infant or child's certification end date (CED) may be adjusted +/- 30 days. The adjustment may be made to align the CED of the participant to the rest of the family. When completing this, the CED will be set to the last day of the month selected. An adjustment cannot exceed the child's categorical eligibility end date.

Subsequent certifications

A participant who is still categorically eligible for WIC at the end of a certification period may apply for another certification period. The length of subsequent certification periods is the same as listed in the table above.

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Certification Periods , Continued

Automatic terminations

The data system will automatically terminate WIC participants under specific circumstances. The table below lists examples.

Category	Automatic Termination
Child	At the end of the month the child turns 5 years old
Pregnant woman	Two months after expected delivery date
Postpartum woman	At the end of the 6th month after actual delivery
Breastfeeding woman	At the end of the 12th month after actual delivery
All participants	The month of the certification end date

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