
215.12

Precertification of Priority II Infants

Overview

Introduction

The usual certification procedure should be used for most infants because it offers an opportunity for WIC staff to visually assess the infant's health status and to provide anticipatory guidance about infant feeding. However, precertification of Priority II infants (i.e., certification without current anthropometric data) is allowed by the Iowa WIC Program under specific circumstances. The purpose of precertification is to provide adequate nutrition soon after birth. This policy provides information about how to complete precertifications.

Definition: Priority II infants

Priority II infants are infants who are considered to be at nutritional risk solely on the basis of their mother's status defined as follows:

- Mother participated in WIC during her pregnancy, or
 - Mother did not participate in WIC during her pregnancy but her medical records document that she was at nutritional risk during pregnancy.
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Limited to infants who are less than 2 weeks old

Precertification is limited to infants younger than two weeks of age. Breastfed and formula-fed infants may be enrolled using this procedure.

Note: Hospitalized infants cannot be precertified.

When precertification is allowed

Precertification using referral data is an acceptable option for infants:

- Going home from the hospital and hospital staff shares referral data, and
- Whose parent requests services from public health nursing or Early Head Start and the agency shares referral data with the local WIC program.

Precertification in the WIC clinic is an acceptable option for infants when a regular certification appointment is not available.

Continued on next page

Overview, Continued

Certification appointment required to continue

The precertification process permits the issuance of one month of food benefits in the absence of other important health information. Another certification appointment is required to continue receiving benefits.

Option for local agencies

The precertification of Priority II infants using referral data is an option for local agencies. Acceptable referral agencies include the hospital providing delivery services, public health nursing agencies and Early Head Start programs.

Documentation of identity, address and income

In order to comply with federal policy guidance about documenting proof of identity, address and income, precertification is limited to:

- Infants who are adjunctively eligible based on Medicaid eligibility of the infant or the infant’s mother, and
 - Infants whose parent/guardian provides acceptable proof of income.
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FNS Policy Reference

The following policy provides guidance and direction about precertification of Priority II infants:

- FNS Instruction 803-10
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In this subject

Topic	See Page
Requirements for Using Referral Data	3
Precertification Using Referral Data	5
Mailing eWIC Cards	8
Mailing “Using Your eWIC Card”	9
Precertification in the WIC Clinic	10
Certification Appointment Process	11
Feeding Changes Before Certification Appointment	12
What You Need to Know About the WIC Program (sample leaflet)	13
Sample MOU with a Referral Agency	16

Requirements for Using Referral Data

Written agreement needed

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) must be developed between the referral agency and local WIC Program before precertification using referral data can be implemented. This MOU must specify, at a minimum, the following:

- Required training for agency staff involved in the project,
- Identification of referral agency staff who will be involved,
- The role of each organization,
- The processing time frames for faxed data forms,
- Confidentiality issues,
- How the agreement may be modified, and
- Termination rights of both parties.

Note: A sample agreement is included in this policy on pages 15-16. The state WIC office must approve any agreements before precertification procedures can be implemented.

The referral agency's role

The referral agency must designate staff to:

- Assess potential eligibility for WIC services;
- Collect demographic and health data on a standard form provided by WIC;
- Document proof of income, identity and address;
- Provide basic information about how to use the eWIC card;
- Fax the form to the local WIC Program;
- Store the completed forms in a confidential manner until mailed to the local WIC Program; and
- Provide breastfeeding information and support.

Note: Staff must provide information about where applicants can complete the application process if they cannot document proof of income.

The local WIC Program's role

The local WIC Program will:

- Provide training,
 - Determine the next step for referral agencies when they cannot or do not document proof of income,
 - Review the data provided by referral agency,
 - Determine the eligibility status of the applicant,
 - Issue food benefits to those found eligible, and
 - Provide breastfeeding support.
-

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Requirements for Using Referral Data, Continued

Training requirements

The training provided for the referral agency staff by local WIC staff must address the following topics:

- Overall goals of precertification,
- Data collection,
- How applicants can complete the application process if proof of income is not available,
- Breastfeeding promotion and support (including limited formula issuance in the first month and community resources),
- Confidentiality,
- How to use the eWIC card,
- Your Rights and Responsibilities as a WIC Participant, and
- Basic information about the WIC Program.

Note: Local WIC agencies are strongly encouraged to share copies of print nutrition education materials about formula-feeding and breastfeeding in the early weeks with the referral agency. If the referral agency would like to distribute these materials to the mothers of precertified infants, the local WIC agency can provide copies.

Breastfeeding promotion and support

Exclusive breastfeeding in the early weeks is recommended to establish a mother's milk supply and get breastfeeding off to a good start. Therefore, the WIC Program does not provide supplemental formula in the first month unless medically indicated. Referral agency staff is expected to provide the same education messages about the impact of early supplementation.

If a mother chooses later to supplement her breastfed baby, WIC will provide formula in the amount needed. However, formula cannot be issued until the infant completes a certification appointment.

Follow-up on breastfeeding infants

The local WIC agency is strongly encouraged to make telephone contacts with breastfeeding mothers before the certification appointment, especially if the referral agency indicates that the mother wants formula for her infant. If the mother does not have a telephone, the local agency must send a follow-up letter to her with the following information and/or enclosures:

- Information about getting breastfeeding off to a good start, and
- An invitation for her to call with questions or concerns about breastfeeding.

If the mother does not have a telephone and had requested formula for her infant, issue one can of powder formula and directions for contacting the local WIC agency to discuss how breastfeeding is going.

Precertification Using Referral Data

Introduction Infants can be precertified when referral data from a hospital or public health nursing agency is shared with the local WIC Program.

At the referral agency The referral agency will use the following procedure to share data:

Step	Action
1	Identify potential applicants through patient history or interview.
2	Provide the mother with the handout, What You Need to Know About the WIC Program, and ask if she is interested in starting the application process for her baby. <u>Note:</u> It is important to state that the WIC Program makes the final determination of eligibility. Eligibility should not be presumed to be automatic or guaranteed.
3	Collect the required data about the mother and infant on the form, Infant WIC Precertification Application.
4	Review the section on the form about the need for a certification appointment and ask the mother to sign and date the form. Encourage her to make an appointment right away or assist her with making an appointment.
5	Review Your Rights and Responsibilities as a WIC Participant (on the back of the form) with the mother and obtain her signature.
6	Provide education about how to use the eWIC card, document the method used for education and directions for benefits issuance, and sign the form.
7	Fax the completed form to the local WIC Program.
8	Mail the original form to the local WIC Program. <u>Notes:</u> Referral agencies may collect forms for several days and mail them in batches. The local WIC agency will scan the Infant WIC Precertification Application and Your Rights and Responsibilities as a WIC Participant, with the signature.

Continued on next page

Requirements for Using Referral Data, Continued

Process forms in a timely way

The WIC staff will process the faxed forms according to the time frames identified in the MOU with the referral agency. WIC agencies are strongly encouraged to process forms received during the week within 24 hours. However, clinic and staffing schedules will influence processing times. Faxed forms received on Friday afternoons will be processed on the following Monday.

At the WIC office

The table below describes the procedure in the WIC office.

Step	Action								
1	Review income data and use the table below to determine the next step. <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <thead> <tr> <th>If ...</th> <th>Then ...</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Income eligible and mother participated in WIC</td> <td>Retrieve mother’s record and add the baby as a member of her household.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Income eligible and mother DID NOT participate in WIC</td> <td>Create a record for a new family in the data system.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not income eligible</td> <td>Follow Policy 215.08.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	If ...	Then ...	Income eligible and mother participated in WIC	Retrieve mother’s record and add the baby as a member of her household.	Income eligible and mother DID NOT participate in WIC	Create a record for a new family in the data system.	Not income eligible	Follow Policy 215.08.
If ...	Then ...								
Income eligible and mother participated in WIC	Retrieve mother’s record and add the baby as a member of her household.								
Income eligible and mother DID NOT participate in WIC	Create a record for a new family in the data system.								
Not income eligible	Follow Policy 215.08.								
2	Complete the data entry using information from the form. <u>Note:</u> A CPA must record answers for the nutrition interview and design the food package.								
3	If mailing the eWIC card, issue benefits and assemble the enclosures.								
4	Scan the signed Infant WIC Precertification Application and Your Rights and Responsibilities as a WIC Participant, and file in Focus.								

Note: The application date is the date the form is processed by the WIC agency.

Proration Override

When issuing benefits for a precertification, a proration override may be completed to ensure the participant has adequate benefits prior to returning to complete a full certification appointment within 30 days.

Continued on next page

Requirements for Using Referral Data, Continued

Missing information on faxed forms

Proof of identity, address and income must be documented in order to precertify the infant. If this documentation is missing, contact the applicant and tell her what documentation she must bring to the WIC agency or the designated local WIC contact to complete the process.

Note: Depending on the local agency schedule and family's access to transportation, it may be a better use of everyone's time to complete a face-to-face certification appointment when applicants bring the required documentation to the WIC agency.

Proof of income for infants not eligible for Medicaid

The local WIC agency must provide clear directions to each referral agency about how to process applications for infants who are not eligible for Medicaid.

Example 1: New mothers are not likely to have proof of income with them at the hospital after they deliver. Hospital personnel should give the incomplete application form to the mother and tell her what documentation she must take to the WIC agency or the designated local WIC contact to complete the process.

Example 2: Public health nursing and Early Head Start programs may be collecting proof of income as part of the application process for other services. If the mother does not provide adequate proof, referral agency personnel can either follow-up with the mother to obtain the documentation OR give the incomplete application form to the mother and tell her what documentation she must take to the WIC office (or the community action program outreach office) to complete the process.

Note: Income eligibility is based on current income. The mother's participation in WIC during her pregnancy is not acceptable proof of income.

Standard form

A standard form developed by the state WIC program must be used. See Policy 215.12A for a copy of the form.

Mailing eWIC cards

See page 8 for information about mailing the eWIC card to Priority II infants.

Mailing eWIC Card

Procedure Mail the eWIC card in an envelope marked “Return Service Requested” and enclose a letter with the required text.

Required text The following text is required in this letter.

Enclosed is the eWIC card with formula for your baby. You must set-up a PIN number to use the card at the store. The PIN number is for you and should not be shared with anyone.

The instructions for setting up your eWIC card PIN number is being mailed separately.

You must have your eWIC Card with you to purchase the formula.

Please call us at (*insert telephone number*) to make appointments for you and your baby as soon as possible. You must bring your baby to the WIC clinic for an appointment to continue receiving formula. If you do not complete this appointment by the time your baby is 6 weeks old, you will need to reapply.

Required enclosures The following enclosures must be sent with the letter:

- eWIC Card
- Family Food Benefits list
- List of approved vendors

Replacing an eWIC card The initial set of benefits may be reissued if they are reported as not received within seven days from the issue date. The parent/guardian must come to the WIC clinic to receive a replacement card. Do not mail a second card.

Note: See Policy 225.65 for more information.

Mailing “Using your eWIC Card”

Policy WIC eWIC Cards may be mailed to Priority II infants of mothers not on WIC during pregnancy that were precertified using hospital referral data.

Procedure Mail the WIC eWIC Card in a separate envelope from the Using your eWIC Card brochure; do not mail the brochure and the eWIC card in the same envelope. Both envelopes must be stamped Return Service Requested. Enclose a letter with the required text.

Required text The following text is required in the letter:

Enclosed is the “Using Your eWIC Card” brochure. The brochure explains how to set your PIN and use the card at the store. You must set-up a PIN number to use the card at the store. The PIN number is for you and should not be shared with anyone.

You will receive the eWIC card in the mail soon. Once you receive the card and set-up the PIN, take the eWIC card to the store when you shop. It is the only identification you need when you use the eWIC card.

Bring this card every time you come to the WIC clinic. It is the only identification you need to pick up benefits.

Enclosures The enclosures include the “Using our eWIC Card” brochure and letter.

Precertification in the WIC Clinic

Introduction The precertification procedure in the WIC clinic follows the same steps except that the **eWIC card** is sent home with the parent/guardian.

Procedure in the clinic The table below describes the intake process in the WIC clinic.

Step	Action								
1	Describe the precertification procedure, emphasizing that the mother and baby must complete an appointment at the WIC clinic to continue receiving services.								
2	Review income data and use the table below to determine the next steps. <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <thead> <tr> <th>If ...</th> <th>Then ...</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Income eligible and mother participated in WIC</td> <td>Retrieve mother’s record and add the baby as a member of her household.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Income eligible and mother DID NOT participate in WIC</td> <td>Create a record for a new family in the data system.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not income eligible</td> <td>Follow procedure in Policy 215.08.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	If ...	Then ...	Income eligible and mother participated in WIC	Retrieve mother’s record and add the baby as a member of her household.	Income eligible and mother DID NOT participate in WIC	Create a record for a new family in the data system.	Not income eligible	Follow procedure in Policy 215.08.
If ...	Then ...								
Income eligible and mother participated in WIC	Retrieve mother’s record and add the baby as a member of her household.								
Income eligible and mother DID NOT participate in WIC	Create a record for a new family in the data system.								
Not income eligible	Follow procedure in Policy 215.08.								
3	Complete the required data entry. <u>Note:</u> A CPA must record answers for the nutrition interview and design the food package.								
4	Have the participant review Your Rights and Responsibilities as a WIC Participant, and obtain the parent/guardian’s signature.								
5	Issue benefits according to standard procedure.								
6	If the parent/guardian is new to WIC, Provide education about how to use the eWIC card , Provide the Family Food Benefits list and WIC Approved Foods booklet , Provide a list of vendors in the area, and Issue the eWIC Card .								
7	Schedule certification appointments for both the mother and her baby.								

Certification Appointment Process

Policy	Priority II infants who were precertified must complete a certification appointment at the WIC clinic in order to continue receiving benefits.
Using previous income data	If the certification appointment is completed within 30 days of the precertification, it is acceptable to import the previous income determination data and use it.
Benefit issuance	<p>If possible, the certification appointment should occur in the same calendar month as the precertification, to avoid the need for benefit proration.</p> <p><u>Example:</u> Precertification was completed on 10/1 with benefits issued for October. The next certification appointment is on 10/26; benefits can be issued for November, December, and/or January based on the Food Benefit Issuance Period recorded in the infant's electronic record.</p>
Failed appointments	<p>If the infant does not return for the certification appointment, print a Notice of Termination form and mail it to the parent/guardian. Check the following reason for termination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failed to reapply <p>Enclose a Notice of Missed Appointment.</p>

Feeding Changes Before Certification Appointment

Policy

A certification appointment must be completed at the WIC clinic in order to make any changes to the formula or feeding method.

Breastfed infants needing supplemental formula

The certification appointment provides an opportunity to discuss breastfeeding in the early weeks and the use of supplemental formula and its potential impact on breastfeeding. This information is critical to prevent unintended early weaning.

Changes in formula prescription

The certification appointment provides an opportunity to monitor infant growth and to discuss formula preparation and feeding. Telephone follow-up is inadequate for infants needing formula changes in the early weeks of life.

Formula samples

Formula samples cannot be provided before the certification appointment in either situation described above.

What You Need to Know About the WIC Program

What is WIC? WIC is a food and nutrition education program for women, infants, and children. That's just what your family may need now with a new baby. Good nutrition is important for new mothers like you, too.

What foods will you get? Formula-fed babies get iron-fortified formula. WIC also provides supplemental formula for breastfed babies who need it. New mothers get milk, cheese, eggs, juice, cereal, dried legumes or peanut butter, fruits and vegetables. Breastfeeding mothers receive larger quantities of these foods and can also choose from additional whole grain options.

What else does WIC provide? WIC will help your baby get off to a good start with feeding. If you are breastfeeding, WIC can answer questions. WIC will also help your family:

- Eat better,
- Stretch your food dollars, and
- Find out where to get health care.

How can your baby get on WIC? You can apply for WIC right now! Here are the steps:

- We will ask some questions about your family and your baby,
- You will review the form and sign it,
- We will fax the form to the local WIC Program, and
- WIC staff will review the form to see if your baby is eligible. The WIC staff will contact you if they have any questions, so make sure your address and phone number are correct.

What happens next? **If your baby is eligible for WIC and needs formula**, you will get the **eWIC card** in the mail in 5-7 days. Or, if you prefer, you can go to the WIC clinic to pick up the **card**. **Information on how to set up your PIN will be mailed separate from the card.**

If your baby is not eligible for WIC, you will receive a notice in the mail. Call the WIC Program with questions or to make an appointment to reapply.

How does your baby stay on WIC? Your baby must keep a WIC appointment to continue receiving benefits. See the back of this page for more information.

Make A WIC Appointment Soon!

- For your baby** You must bring your baby to the WIC clinic for an appointment so that your baby can stay on WIC. Call to make this appointment right away. The next WIC clinic in your area may be soon. At the clinic, WIC staff will:
- Check your proof of income, address, and identity,
 - Weigh and measure your baby,
 - Ask questions about your baby's health, and
 - Talk about how you are feeding your baby.
-

For yourself and other children in your family Make an appointment for yourself at the same time because you may be eligible for WIC, too! The WIC foods will help you recover from pregnancy. If you are breastfeeding, the foods help meet your extra nutrition needs. Remember, you can get more WIC foods for yourself if you are breastfeeding and not giving your baby any formula.

If you have other children under 5 years of age, make appointments for them, too. They may be eligible for WIC.

- Call WIC!** Call your local WIC Program to:
- Make an appointment,
 - Ask for help with breastfeeding,
 - Ask questions about using your **eWIC card**, or
 - Check on what is needed for proof of income, address, and identity.
-

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http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Iowa Department of Public Health
Iowa WIC Program
2/16

Sample MOU With a Referral Agency

Memorandum of Understanding
between
[WIC Contractor]
and
[Referral Agency]
to Expedite WIC Enrollment of Infants

This agreement is entered into by and between the [WIC Contractor] and [Referral Agency] to enhance access to WIC services for infants. The parties agree to cooperate in expediting enrollment for infants by [Referral Agency] as potentially eligible for WIC services.

[Referral Agency] will:

1. Limit the staff involved in this activity to those who have received the required training about the WIC Program, its goals, and the procedures for expediting services.
2. Promote the WIC Program to agency clients by providing verbal information and written information supplied by the [WIC Contractor] describing eligibility guidelines and services.
3. Collect the required data on the standard form developed by the state WIC program and transmit it via fax to the [WIC Contractor].
4. Obtain a parent's signature on the document, Your Rights and Responsibilities as a WIC Participant, and in the signature block providing notice that an appointment must be completed to continue receiving benefits.
5. Encourage all participants to make an appointment for certification as soon as possible.
6. Promote breastfeeding as the optimal infant feeding method.
7. Provide for the confidentiality of WIC applications while in the referral agency's possession and mail the original documents to the WIC office as soon as possible. [Referral Agency] staff will not disclose any information received from applicants to any third party.

[WIC contractor] will:

1. Provide training for the referral agency regarding data collection, confidentiality, how to use the **eWIC card**, applicant rights and conditions of participation, and basic information about the WIC Program.
2. Provide the required forms, outreach materials, and education materials about using the **eWIC card**.
3. Attest to the infant's eligibility for program services.
4. Create the infant's electronic record, assign a food package, **assign the eWIC card and issue benefits**.

5. Mail the eWIC card to the applicant’s home address and enclose a statement that certification must be completed before any more WIC foods can be issued.
6. Make follow-up telephone calls or send a follow-up letter if there are questions about income eligibility.
7. At the certification visit, complete the normal WIC certification process and provide the initial nutrition education contact.
8. Follow-up with the applicant if s/he fails to complete the certification appointment.

Essential Terms and Conditions:

This agreement may be modified through written amendments executed by both parties and approved by the appropriate program officials.

This agreement shall take effect on [date] and will continue thereafter until termination by either party by giving written notice to the other at least 30 (thirty) days before the effective date of such termination.

 Name of WIC Coordinator
 Title
 [WIC Contractor]

 Name of contact person at referral agency
 Title
 [Referral Agency]

Date: _____

Date: _____

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