

SECTION: CERTIFICATION

SUBJECT: Certification Periods

ITEM: *Timeframes for Processing Applications/Applicants*



Policy

Local agencies shall notify applicants of their eligibility status not later than 20 days from the date of application. Exception: for women applicants who would become Priority I participants and migrant farmworkers and their family members, the local agency shall notify applicants of their eligibility not later than 10 days following the date of application. Local agencies shall establish office procedures which ensure that participants and the general public are able to contact the agency by telephone or personal visit during normal business hours without unreasonable delay.

Extension to notification period

Local agencies may request State approval to extend the 10-day notification time frame to 15 days for women applicants who would become Priority I participants and migrant farmworkers and their families. Such requests must be submitted in writing to the WIC Branch and must be accompanied by a justification. Acceptable justifications for requesting an extension to the processing standards include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Limited number of times at a particular distribution site
2. Local agency staff shortages
3. Inclement weather

Agencies may submit requests to extend the notification time period at any time. Approval will be valid through the end of the federal fiscal year during which the request was made. The annual reapplication for funding is one method by which agencies may renew their requests.

Definition of date of application

The date of application is defined by federal regulations as the date an individual first visits a local agency during clinic or office hours to make an oral or written request for program benefits. At the time of the request, the local agency shall record the applicant's name, address, and the date. Even though, by federal definition, the application date is the day the individual first visits the agency to request benefits, local agencies shall develop procedures which provide for eligibility screening and enrollment in an expeditious manner. This is particularly critical for prenatal women.

**Employed
participants**

Local agencies shall schedule time-specific appointments for each employed individual seeking to apply for participation in the WIC program so as to minimize the time each such individual is absent from the work place. No employed applicant shall be given a “block” appointment, e.g., given a block of time with a group of participants to be seen on a first come, first served basis.

**Time frame
for voucher
distribution**

Local agencies shall distribute the first voucher packet to eligible persons at the same time as completion of certification and notification of eligibility. Vouchers shall be imprinted with the current date to enable participants to redeem them immediately.
