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**SECTION: CERTIFICATION**

**SUBJECT: Eligibility Requirement**

**ITEM: Length of Certification**

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## Policy

The local agency (LA) shall notify the participant either verbally or in writing of the length of their certification period and shall provide verbal or written notification to each participant, not less than 15 days before the expiration of each certification period that their eligibility to receive program benefits is about to expire.

## Required Procedures

### I. Initial Certification Period Guidelines

Category	Certification Period
Prenatal women	The duration of the woman's pregnancy plus up to six weeks postpartum.
Non-breastfeeding postpartum women	Approximately six months, ending with the last day of the sixth month following the delivery or termination of the pregnancy.
Breastfeeding women	Period of up to one year, ending with either the end of the month in which the mother stops breastfeeding or in which the infant reaches her/his first birthday, whichever comes first.

Category	Certification Period
Infants	Period of up to one year, ending with the end of the month in which the infant reaches her/his first birthday. <b>Or</b> , a period of six months if enrolled when 7 months old or more.
Children	Period of up to one year, ending with the end of the month in which the child reaches her/his fifth birthday.

Staff shall designate certification periods for eligible participants for the full allowable period above. However, the length of the certification period may be shortened if a participant is later disqualified from the program (e.g., increased income) prior to expiration of the period in accord with WPM Section 280-20.

When a participant's category changes at mid-certification, the participant's priority ranking may also change. The following table describes specific situations and their consequences.

## II. Mid-certification category/priority change

IF category changes from...	AND...	THEN a local agency shall...
	The participant is less than six months postpartum	Determine if the indicators of participant's nutritional need that applied in the breastfeeding categories are valid for non-breastfeeding category.  If yes, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continue to serve until the end of the sixth month following delivery, and</li> <li>• it is not necessary to it is not necessary to conduct a new assessment for eligibility or risk.</li> </ul>

IF category changes from...	AND...	THEN a local agency shall...
<i>(Cont.)</i>		<p><b>If no,</b> reassess nutritional risk if <i>eligible</i>, update the record with the new nutrition indicators and continue to serve until the end of the sixth month following delivery, or if <i>ineligible</i>, issue a “Notice of Action Affecting WIC Program Participation” and disqualify the participant.</p>
Breastfeeding to Non-Breastfeeding	The participant is <b>more than six months</b> postpartum	Issue a “Notice of Action Affecting WIC Program Participation” and disqualify the participant as categorically ineligible.
<b>Either</b> Breastfeeding or Non-Breastfeeding	The participant becomes a prenatal applicant	Reassess participant and if eligible, recertify as a prenatal participant.
Infant to a Child at One Year	Infant was enrolled at seven months of age or older	Continue to serve the participant for a full six months. There is no requirement for new eligibility or risk evaluation until the next certification.

IF a change in category...	THEN a local agency shall...
Causes a participant to be categorically ineligible, or in a priority not currently being served by the local agency.	Issue a “Notice of Action Affecting WIC Program Participation” and disqualify the participant.

### III. Recertification period guidelines

**The following guidelines apply to subsequent certifications:**

- A participant is not eligible for food instruments after the end of their certification period unless a local agency recertifies them.
- The recertification period always follows the previous certification period and the periods never overlap.
- A local agency shall make every effort to schedule and complete a recertification during the last month of the current certification period to avoid any breaks in receipt of food instruments.

The prenatal certification period is valid until a local agency conducts the “six-week postpartum certification.” During the six-weeks following delivery, local agencies shall issue the appropriate prescription according to the woman’s current category.

**Note:** If a local agency does not conduct the “six-week postpartum certification” within the six weeks following delivery and she is ineligible for recertification, the participant may not receive food instruments at that certification visit if she is ineligible, since the prenatal certification period will have expired. If the participant is found ineligible, a local agency shall disqualify the participant, and issue a “Notice of Action Affecting WIC Program Applicants” effective immediately. See page 5 under “Ineligible”.

IV. Six-week postpartum certification

If a local agency determines the participant is...	And it is the...	Then...	And the local agency issues...
<p><b>Eligible</b></p>	<p>Month prior to month certification ends</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recertification period begins the day after the current certification period ends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food instruments for the current month and the following month(s) as appropriate.</li> </ul>
	<p>Month certification Ends</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recertification period begins the day after the current certification period ends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food instruments for the current month and the following month as appropriate.</li> </ul>

<i>(Cont.)</i>	Within two months after certification end date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current month becomes the first month of the new certification period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food instruments for the current month and the following month as appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>Ineligible</b>	Month prior to month certification ends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The following month shall be the final month of participation and</li> <li>• Disqualify participant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food instruments for the current and following month as appropriate (if over income, issue only current month) and</li> <li>• A “Notice of Action Affecting WIC Program Participation.”</li> </ul>
	Month certification ends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current month shall be the final month of participation and</li> <li>• Disqualify participant,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food instruments for the current month and</li> <li>• A “Notice of Action Affecting WIC Program Participation.”</li> </ul>
	Within two months after certification end date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use disqualification function</li> <li>• Eligibility has expired – applicant is ineligible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A “Notice of Action Affecting WIC Program Applicants.”</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible, but currently not serving the participant’s priority</b>	Month prior to end of certification,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The following month shall be the final month of participation;</li> <li>• Disqualify participant and,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food instruments for the current and following month as appropriate and</li> <li>• A “Notice of Action Affecting WIC Program Participation.”</li> </ul>

<i>(Cont.)</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place participant on a waiting list</li> </ul>	
	Month certification ends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current month shall be the final month of participation;</li> <li>• Disqualify participant and</li> <li>• Place participant on a waiting list,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food instruments for the current month and</li> <li>• A “Notice of Action Affecting WIC Program Participation.”</li> </ul>
	Within two months after certification end date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use disqualification function</li> <li>• Eligibility has expired - applicant is ineligible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A “Notice of Action Affecting WIC Program Applicants.”</li> </ul>

## References:

For information on:

1. Priority ranking – refer to WPM Section 230-10.
2. Category changes and food instrument issuance – refer to WPM Section 310-30.
3. Ineligibility – refer to WPM sections 280-10 and 260-40
4. CSFP – refer to WPM 280-20

## Authority

WRO Policy Memo 8/29/2011: Guidance for Providing Quality WIC Nutrition Services During Extended Certification Periods

7 CFR 246.7 (g) & (h)  
Title 22 CCR 40677