

SECTION 4.3

Subject: Competent Professional Authority (CPA): Requirements

Policy: Each local agency (LA) shall have a competent professional authority (CPA) on staff to determine nutrition risk eligibility, provide nutrition education, and prescribe an appropriate food package for each participant.

Purpose: To assure the quality of nutrition services in the WIC Program. To ensure that qualified professionals are making decisions about eligibility and needed services.

References:	246.2	Definition competent professional authority
	246.6(b)(2)	Perform certification procedures
	246.7(e)	Determine nutritional risk
	246.7(i)(7)	Sign Certification Form
	246.10(a)(2)(iii)	Prescribe supplemental food
	246.11(e)(5)	Provide individual care plan

Related Policies: [Staffing Roles, Section 4.4.2](#)
 [CPA Performance Evaluation, Section 4.6](#) .
 [High-Risk Individual Nutrition Care Plans, Section 6.6](#)

Definitions:

- *Competent Professional Authority (CPA):* An individual on the staff of the local agency authorized to conduct nutrition and health assessments, determine nutrition risk, provide individualized nutrition education and prescribe supplemental foods.
- *CPA Competencies:* Tasks or skills to be mastered by the CPA. The CPA competencies will be attained through training. Mastery of CPA competencies will be assured through initial and on-going monitoring of performance.
- *Cultural Competency:* For the purpose of this policy, cultural competency is defined as extensive experience with and knowledge of cultural patterns and practices of a specific community, particularly those related to the health and nutrition of women and children.

4.3.1 CPA Qualifications

Individuals in any of the following categories may be authorized to serve as competent professional authorities (CPA):

- A. Registered Dietitian (RD) – Registered by the American Dietetic Association, Commission on Dietetic Registration; OR Licensed Dietitian (LD) or Licensed Nutritionist (LN) – Licensed by the Minnesota Board of Dietetics and Nutrition Practice, Minnesota Statutes, Section 148.621 to 148.633.
- B. Bachelor’s or Master’s degree in Nutrition, such as:
 - 1. Nutritional Sciences
 - 2. Community Nutrition
 - 3. Clinical Nutrition
 - 4. Dietetics
- C. Registered Nurse – Licensed by the Minnesota Board of Nursing to practice professional nursing pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section 148.171 to 148.285.
- D. Bachelor’s or Master’s degree in a Health or Home Economics field with applicable coursework in nutrition. At a minimum the coursework should include:
 - 1. 15 quarter or 10 semester credits in Food and Nutrition. Food and Nutrition credits must include coursework in general human nutrition **and** coursework in nutrition for infants, children, and women during prenatal, postpartum and breastfeeding stages; **AND**,
 - 2. 4 quarter or 3 semester credits in the principles of counseling and/or adult education; **AND**,
 - 3. 4 quarter or 3 semester credits in Chemistry or Biological Sciences. The intent is that the science coursework would apply to or enhance the understanding of human nutrition.

Note: Applicants who are individuals with a Home Economics, Health Education, or other degree will be evaluated by the criteria detailed in this category. CPAs approved under the previous “Home Economist” definitions are included in this category.

- E. Dietetic Technician, Registered – Registered or eligible for registration as such by the Commission on Dietetic Registration.

- F. Licensed Practical Nurse – Licensed by the Minnesota Board of Nursing to practice practical nursing pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Sections 148.171 to 148.285.
1. Licensed Practical Nurse, Prior Approval – Hired as a CPA in the WIC Program prior to January 1, 2001.
 2. After January 1, 2001, LPN is no longer a qualification for CPAs. An individual LPN with specific cultural and language competencies may be considered for inclusion in the Locally Trained CPA category (see H below).
- G. Certifier, Prior Approval – A CPA meeting this qualification must have been approved by the state WIC office prior to October 1, 1987.
- H. Locally trained CPAs – In unusual and infrequent circumstances, in order to meet the cultural and language needs of participants, individuals who offer language skills and cultural competencies may be authorized to serve as locally trained CPAs. (See *Definitions* for explanation of Cultural Competency.) These individuals require extensive preparatory training and considerable on-going supervision and training. Locally trained CPAs may be hired, provided the local agency assures that the following requirements are met. LPNs hired after January 1, 2001 must meet the cultural and language requirements of the locally trained CPA category.
1. Select individuals with the following education, specialized skills and knowledge:
 - Have a high school diploma or GED equivalent. Ideally, select individuals with additional educational training and/or experiences which better prepare the applicants to perform the job.
 - Knowledge of socio-economic conditions of the specific community they are hired to serve.
 - Extensive experience with and knowledge of the cultural patterns and practices of the specific community they are hired to serve.
 - Ability to satisfactorily complete the nutrition modules and training activities of the local agency.
 - Ability to communicate effectively both verbally (orally and in writing) and non-verbally.
 - Ability to read and follow WIC policies, procedures, and other materials.
 - Ability to prepare and maintain accurate and neat records.
 - Ability to work as a team member.

2. Successfully complete training in specified competency areas and demonstrate attainment of required working skills.
 - Initial training should prepare locally trained CPAs for duties of the position by teaching them the basic skills needed to function in the position.
 - The locally trained CPA may need more time to be trained than a professional.
3. Participate in on-going staff development (e.g., in-services on topics related to the CPA competencies).
4. Continue to meet minimum standards as assessed by periodic evaluations.
5. Work under the on-site supervision of a registered dietitian or a CPA with a master's degree in Nutrition. If a registered dietitian or CPA with a master's degree in Nutrition is not available, the locally trained CPA may work under the on-site supervision of another CPA, *excluding*: LPNs, Certifier (prior approval), or locally trained CPAs. CPA staff that will provide the on-site supervision of locally trained CPAs should be identified in the Local Agency Supervision Plan. Ideally, the on-site supervisor will also be responsible for the on-going training and evaluation of the locally trained CPA.
 - Locally trained CPAs and local agency will meet the supervision requirements as specified in the policy [CPA Performance Evaluation, Section 4.6](#).
6. Refer high-risk participants to appropriate CPA.
 - All locally trained CPAs will receive training in the identification of high-risk participants and how and when to refer high-risk participants.
7. Before employing a locally trained CPA, the local agency will develop a written plan with the assigned State Regional Consultant. The written plan shall include:
 - Definition of duties so that all staff understand the role of the locally trained CPA.
 - An organizational plan identifying lines of supervision.
 - A written training plan.
 - A plan for maintaining quality assurance which includes supervision and monitoring.

4.3.2 CPA Competencies

All persons designated as competent professional authorities must demonstrate proficiency in applicable CPA competencies by:

- A. Satisfactory completion of training in Certification Procedures (for example, state developed New Staff Training modules, or training by the local agency).
- B. Satisfactory completion or review of the Nutrition modules, as needed based on local agency evaluation of the individual's credentials and/or experience.
- C. All CPAs will receive training in the identification of high-risk participants and in how and when to refer high-risk participants.
- D. The local agency shall evaluate and document continued competency through the local agency supervision plan. This evaluation must be done yearly at a minimum, per the local agency policy.

4.3.3 CPA Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the competent professional authority include:

- A. Perform the certification procedures;
- B. Determine nutritional risk;
- C. Sign the Rights and Responsibilities form;
- D. Prescribe types of supplemental foods;
 - 1. All requests for Medically Prescribed formula will be referred to a CPA designated to serve high-risk participants. (See policy [Staffing Roles, Section 4.4.2.](#))
- E. Provide nutrition education.
 - 1. Provide nutrition education based on identified needs.
 - 2. Develop Individual Nutrition Care Plan (INCP) and provide education based on identified high-risk condition *or* refer to a CPA designated to serve high-risk participants. (See policy [High-Risk Individual Nutrition Care Plans, Section 6.6](#))
 - 3. Provide high-risk follow-up for participants *or* schedule high-risk participant for follow-up with CPA designated to serve high-risk participants. (See policy [High-Risk Individual Nutrition Care Plans, Section 6.6.](#))

4.3.4 Approval of CPA Staff

Local agencies are responsible for hiring individuals whose professional credentials meet the qualification requirements of CPAs. Hiring criteria shall be based on the employment and supervision requirements for CPA staff as outlined in this chapter.

Each local agency is responsible for reviewing the qualifications of applicants for CPA positions, evaluating their credentials, and determining whether the applicant meets hiring criteria. Exhibit 4-A should be used to evaluate the coursework of an applicant with a Bachelor's or Master's degree in a Health or Home Economics field. Local agencies do not need to submit the applicant evaluation to the state WIC office for review; however, state WIC Regional Consultants are available to answer any questions regarding the applicant's qualifications.

In the WIC Grant Application, the applicant agency must assure that each WIC clinic site is adequately staffed with qualified CPAs to meet the federal requirements.

Please note: Before hiring a LPN or a "locally trained CPA", the local agency is required to develop a written plan with their State WIC Regional Consultant. The written plan will address job responsibilities, training, supervision, and monitoring issues.

Related Note: If a unique situation arises in the implementation of this policy, contact your State Regional Consultant for guidance.

REFERENCES:

1. Paraprofessionals in the WIC Program: Guidelines for Developing a Model Training Program, United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, FNS269, 1993.
2. "WIC Nutrition Services Standards," WIC Nutrition Services Committee, National WIC Association and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, January 1988.
3. NWA/FNS Joint Statement on Quality Nutrition Services in the WIC Program, National Association of WIC Directors and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 1993.