

Overview of Certification

Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- ☞ List the different types of appointments WIC offers.
- ☞ Describe applicant prescreening.
- ☞ Describe what happens during a certification appointment.
- ☞ Describe what happens during a nutrition education appointment.
- ☞ Describe what happens during a recertification appointment.
- ☞ State the certification periods for each participant category.

Overview

What is “certification”? Applicants determined eligible to receive WIC services are certified for WIC. At the certification appointment, they receive a thorough nutrition assessment and individualized services to address their nutrition needs. WIC is different from many other food and nutrition programs because WIC addresses participant’s individual nutrition needs.

- Applicants come to the WIC clinic in person for their certification appointment, so that their eligibility can be confirmed and the nutrition assessment can be completed.
- Competent Professional Authorities (CPAs) complete the certification, although other staff may help collect some of the information.
- CPAs use WIC’s computer program, HuBERT, to collect and store participants’ information.

Applicant Prescreening

Prescreening occurs before the certification process actually begins. Prescreening is used to determine if a person interested in WIC is eligible to receive the services, based on federal program guidelines. This is what happens during applicant prescreening:

1. Applicant requests WIC benefits.
2. The applicant is screened by assessing the following:
 - Does s/he live in the residential area served by your agency?
 - Is s/he in a category served by WIC?
 - Pregnant woman
 - Postpartum woman within 6 months of delivery

- Infant under 12 months
 - Child age 1 through his/her 5th birthday
 - Is s/he eligible for an adjunct program?
 - Does his/her income appear to fall within *WIC Income Guidelines*?
3. If the applicant appears to meet eligibility criteria for residency, category and income, s/he is offered a certification appointment. WIC staff explain what information the applicant will need to bring for the appointment.
 4. If the applicant does NOT meet the eligibility criteria, s/he can be referred to other community resources.

Transfers

A current WIC participant can transfer his/her certification to another county or state if s/he moves. A participant transferring from another state should arrive with a VOC (Verification of Certification) form or card. WIC staff can also contact the state WIC program from which the participant is transferring to verify current eligibility. A VOC is not required for a participant transferring within Minnesota, since WIC staff can look up the participant in the WIC data system. If a transferring participant's certification period has not ended, s/he is eligible to continue receiving WIC services uninterrupted at your clinic -- staff do not need to reassess income eligibility but the participant will need to show current documentation of residency for your agency's service area, as well as documentation of identity.

Certification Appointment

CPAs (Competent Professional Authority) conduct the certification, although other WIC staff may help collect some of the information needed for the assessment process. Below is an example of the process for conducting a certification. In this example, Sylvia is a pregnant woman applying for WIC for the first time.

1. Sylvia **checks in** with the WIC staff upon arriving for her appointment.
2. WIC staff collects and assesses Sylvia's **documentation of identity, residency and income.**
3. WIC staff collects Sylvia's **health and nutrition information:**
 - **Anthropometric** data: Sylvia is weighed and her height measured.
 - **Hematologic** data: Sylvia's hemoglobin (blood iron) is measured with a simple finger-stick.
 - **Health History:** A WIC CPA asks Sylvia about past and current medical conditions, and CPA assesses to identify health risks.

- **Diet & Nutrition:** A WIC CPA asks Sylvia about her diet and eating behaviors, and assesses the information to identify nutrition risks.
4. The CPA reviews all of the assessment information s/he has gathered and determines whether Sylvia is eligible or ineligible based her nutrition risk conditions. If eligible, the CPA assigns the appropriate risk codes.
 5. The CPA and Sylvia work together on a **nutrition plan**.
 - The CPA reviews the health & nutrition assessment with Sylvia.
 - The CPA asks Sylvia what her concerns, interests and priorities are, and together they decide what they will focus on, and what help Sylvia needs (e.g., it might be diet changes to help Sylvia gain adequate weight).
 - Together they set nutrition goals for Sylvia
 6. Sylvia is given **referrals** to community resources, if needed.
 7. The CPA assigns Sylvia a **food package** (WIC foods she will receive) based on Sylvia’s category (pregnant) and any individual nutrition needs.
 8. Sylvia is scheduled to return for her **a nutrition education appointment** (“additional education”).
 9. Sylvia is given a **WIC ID folder**, her first **vouchers** for WIC foods and information about how to use them.
 10. Sylvia reads the form *Your Rights and Responsibilities in WIC* and signs the signature pad indicating that she has read it; she will sign again to document receipt of the vouchers.
 11. The CPA finalizes the documentation of the certification in the WIC data system.

WIC Certification Periods

When a person is determined eligible to receive WIC services, he/she is certified for a specific period of time (generally 6 months – 1 year). The time periods, referred to as the **certification period**, are specified in WIC federal regulations. At the end of the certification period, a participant may be eligible to be recertified for another certification period.

In general, the certification periods are:

- **Pregnant woman** – From certification appointment to the last day of the month in which the infant is 6 weeks old or the pregnancy ends; may be recertified as a breastfeeding or non-breastfeeding woman.

- **Breastfeeding woman** – From certification appointment following delivery, until the last day of the month in which the infant turns one year old or the woman stops breastfeeding .
- **Non-breastfeeding, postpartum woman** – From certification appointment following delivery, until the last day of the 6th month after the baby is born.
- **Infants under 6 months** – From their first certification appointment until the last day of the month in which the infant turns 1 year old.
- **Infants \geq 6 months**– Certified for 6 months at a time; then may be recertified for another 6 months for as long as they are eligible.
- **Children** – Certification is for one year. Eligibility ends on the last day of the month in which the child turns 5 years old.

Mid-certification Appointments

Participants certified for a period greater than 6 months (infants, breastfeeding women and children) require a mid-certification nutrition assessment. This appointment focuses on nutrition assessment and education. The administrative components of certification are not required at mid-certification including: Proof of income, Proof of address, Proof of ID, Rights and Responsibilities.

The mid-certification Nutrition Assessment includes:

- Anthropometric assessment – height and weight measurement collected and growth assessed.
- Bloodwork – must be assessed following the schedule outlined in MOM, section 5.3.2.
- Review and Update of Health/Nutrition Assessment – necessary to identify major changes in health status and/or dietary and physical activity. It includes:
 - Review of last nutrition/health assessment at certification
 - New concerns raised by the participant
 - New medical diagnoses
 - Changes in eating pattern/food intake/food package
 - Changes in physical activity
- Follow-up on Immunization screening – for infants and children under 2 years of age. Follow up as necessary, based on screening and/or referrals given at certification.
- Nutrition counseling or education
- Referrals, if needed
- Food package changes, if needed

In general, mid-certifications should occur at:

- Infants – at 9 months of age.
- Children – 6th month of certification (5-7 month time frame)
- Breastfeeding women – 6th month of certification OR with infant’s mid-certification appointment. (Timing of mid-certification should be applied consistently for all breastfeeding women in the local agency.)

Additional Nutrition Education Contact

WIC participants receive nutrition education at their initial certification and each recertification appointment. They are also offered **additional nutrition education** during their certification period. This additional education is sometimes referred to as a *secondary nutrition education contact*.

The **Additional Education** provided should be individualized to the participant’s nutritional needs (e.g., nutrition risks, anticipatory guidance needs, and/or the participant or caregiver’s interests/concerns).

During this contact, the CPA:

1. Reviews summary of participant’s **last visit** to WIC.
2. Discusses w/ the participant any important changes, and if pertinent, reweighs and/or re-tests blood iron to update health status.
3. Provides **client-centered nutrition education**, addressing participant concerns and interests.
4. **Documents** the nutrition education provided in the WIC data system.

Breastfeeding Support

Breastfeeding is the healthiest feeding choice for both mothers and their infants. In addition to nutrition education on breastfeeding provided to pregnant and breastfeeding women, other forms of breastfeeding support may be offered. Some other types of support offered at WIC clinics include:

- Breastfeeding classes
- Breast pump information
- Lactation specialists to help with breastfeeding problems
- Breastfeeding peer counselors

Participants certified for a period greater than 6 months

Nutrition education for participants certified for a period greater than 6 months must be provided at a rate **equivalent to quarterly**, at the **initial certification** and **mid-certification**, and **two additional education contacts as needed**. These “contacts” should be focused on and scheduled to meet the nutrition education and assessment needs of the participant. For example, the early postpartum period is a critical time in addressing breastfeeding questions and concerns. The CPA, working with the new mother, should determine how soon and how often the breastfeeding mother and baby need to be seen based

on the infant's age, the mother's experience, other support systems available to the mother, and how well breastfeeding is going. It may be best to schedule breastfed infants to return in a month for additional support and to pick-up their next month's vouchers. Once the CPA and mother agree that breastfeeding is going well and the mother's questions and concerns are addressed, the family may be switched to tri-monthly voucher issuance.

High Risk Participants

Participants with more complex or serious health/nutrition concerns are considered "high risk". They require more specialized care, often provided by CPAs with more advanced nutrition training. To ensure quality, comprehensive care for their condition, the CPA will develop an Individual Nutrition Care Plan (INCP), to more aggressively address and resolve the high risk condition.

For more information on INCPs, and effective counseling topics and strategies for High Risk participants, see the **WIC High Risk Counseling Guide**.

Recertification

When the participant's initial certification period ends, s/he must be recertified to continue receiving WIC services. The process for recertifying someone is similar to the initial certification. Some of the participant's information is already stored in the WIC data system; it must be reviewed and updated if necessary. The participant must provide current documentation of identity, residency and income.

The CPA will reassess the participant's nutrition status, provide counseling and nutrition education appropriate to the needs and interest of the participant, and assign the food package.

Practice Activity A



1. Review the form, *Your Rights and Responsibilities in WIC*. Ask your WIC Coordinator to show you what happens when a signature is missed in the data system. A paper form is signed and then scanned into the participant record.
2. Ask your WIC Coordinator what types of breastfeeding support are offered at your clinic.
3. To what community services or programs does your clinic commonly refer participants? Review any referral information that your clinic may use.
4. Observe a variety of appointments from start to finish. Your WIC Coordinator can help arrange your observations.
 - Applicant Prescreening (If possible, observe the staff screen applicants over the phone.)
 - Certification – Pregnant Woman
 - Certification – Breastfeeding Woman
 - Certification – Infant
 - Certification – Child
 - Recertification – Child
 - Additional Education Contact (Nutrition Education)



Skill Check 1

1. What are the types of appointments that WIC participants are scheduled for?
2. What is the purpose of the certification and recertification appointments?
3. What is the purpose of prescreening?
4. How often do participants receive nutrition education?

Overview of Identity, Residency & Income

Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- ☞ Describe the documentation the participant is required to bring to the certification appointment.

Overview

For each WIC certification appointment (the first certification and each recertification), the applicant is asked to bring documentation of identity, residency and income. Staff need to review this information to assess the participant's current eligibility to receive WIC services. Staff are also responsible for documenting the information on identity, residency and income in the participant's electronic record.

NOTE: WIC does not require proof of US citizenship.

Identity

Each time a person is certified for WIC, s/he must show **documentation of identity** (ID). This requirement is established by the federal government to help prevent fraud.

WIC staff must ask to see documentation of identity at the first certification, recertification appointment, and when participants are picking up vouchers at the clinic. Staff may want to routinely ask each participant, "Did you bring something with your name and current address on it, such as a driver's license or paystub?"

Some examples of acceptable forms for documentation of identity include: birth certificate, baptismal certificate, crib card, driver's license, passport, photo ID issued by employers or schools, or a Health Benefits card.

NOTE: "Known to staff" is acceptable documentation at subsequent certifications

Residency

Each time a person is certified for WIC, s/he must show **documentation of residency**. This requirement is established by the federal government to help prevent people from receiving WIC benefits at more than one WIC clinic.

Documentation of residency is used to determine if the applicant actually lives in Minnesota. WIC staff must ask to see a document that shows the participant's name and current address. If the applicant lives in Minnesota, but outside of your agency's service area, WIC staff should refer her/him to the local agency that serves the area in which the participant lives. A listing of local agencies is available on the WIC website at: [Local Agency Listing](#)

Examples of acceptable forms of documentation of residency include: a bill, driver's license, lease agreement or rent receipt, mail addressed to applicant, or pay stub.

❖ **NOTE:** Residency refers to where the person normally sleeps at night.

Income

Each time a person is certified for WIC, s/he must show **documentation of income**. This will determine if household income falls within the WIC Income Guidelines.

More information on how to determine income eligibility is found in the Income Eligibility lesson.

No Proof

If a person does not bring documentation of identity, residency or income to their WIC appointment, s/he can be certified on that day and asked to bring the documentation within 30 days. If s/he does not bring the documentation within 30 days, s/he will no longer be eligible to receive WIC benefits.

If a person cannot provide documentation of identity, residency or income due to special circumstances (such as theft, disaster, homelessness or migrant status) s/he can fill out and sign the Certification Notice indicating that s/he is unable to provide this information and why.

Practice Activity B



1. Review Section 5.2 Certification Procedures in the Minnesota Operations Manual.
2. What are three acceptable forms of documentation of residency?
3. List three acceptable forms of ID for children.
4. List three acceptable forms of ID for women.

Skill Check 2



1. Practice what you would tell a participant about what documentation s/he needs to bring to the certification appointment. It may be helpful to practice aloud with a co-worker.

Income Eligibility

Objectives

After completing this lesson you will be able to:

- ☞ Correctly screen for income eligibility.

Overview

Each time a person is certified for WIC, income eligibility must be determined. There are two ways to determine income eligibility: **adjunctive eligibility** and by calculating **household income**.

Adjunctive Eligibility

Adjunctive eligibility is a term used to describe “automatic” income eligibility for WIC, based on current income eligibility for another program.

Household Eligibility

If **anyone in the household** has been determined eligible for one of the following programs, other members of the household are income-eligible for WIC. The applicant must provide **documentation of current eligibility** in the adjunctive program. Staff must assist as appropriate to determine current eligibility.

- Medical Assistance
- Minnesota Care
- Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)
- Food Stamps/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Free or Reduced Price Meal Eligibility for School Lunch
- Head Start
- Fuel Assistance

Applicant Only Eligibility

For some programs, adjunctive eligibility applies only to the applicant **currently eligible to receive benefits**; not the whole family. Other family members are **not** adjunctively eligible. These programs are:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act (TEFRA)

NOTE: For more information on adjunctive eligibility, see MOM section 5.2.4 – Income and Income Eligibility on the WIC website.

Calculating Household Income

If the participant or household is not income-eligible based on adjunctive eligibility, staff must calculate total household income. Staff must document all sources of income for the household. (See MOM for more detail regarding sources of income.) The household size and total income are compared to the WIC Income Guidelines to determine if the household is eligible for WIC.

Household

For the purposes of WIC, a **household is defined as:**

- A person or group of people, related or not, who usually (though not necessarily) live together and who share income and the consumption of goods and services.
- For pregnant women, each fetus is counted as an additional household member.

Examples of Household Size

Sophie lives alone in an apartment. She is pregnant with twins. She is on Medicaid. Sophie's household size would be three (3).

Josefina lives with her boyfriend. They have a 2 month-old baby who lives with them. Josefina receives MFIP/TANF payments and her boyfriend works part-time and they share expenses. Josefina's household size would be counted as three (3).

Candy has a 3 year-old son and lives with a roommate. She works and so does her roommate. She and her roommate split the rent and utilities evenly, each paying half. Candy and her son buy their food separately and eat separately from the roommate. Candy's household size would be counted as two (2).

Income

For WIC purposes, income is calculated by adding the income of all household members. Generally, the documentation of income used for calculating income includes:

- Gross income from current pay stubs
- Unemployment award letter
- W-2 forms or income tax return

- Foster child payment statement
- Signed letter from employer stating gross earnings
- Benefits or earnings statements
- Letter of alimony or child support payments

WIC staff must **select the correct payment frequency and rate**. Enter all relevant sources of income into the data system. The data system will assist in calculating household income.

Examples of Income Documentation
<p>Jordan is paid \$300 once a week. \$300 is entered with a “weekly” payment frequency. The data system calculates the annualized amount to be \$15600.</p>
<p>Jayne has three jobs. This is the information entered in the data system:</p> <p>\$100 – weekly \$200 – biweekly \$500 – monthly</p> <p>The data system calculates the annualized amount to be \$16,400.</p> <p>\$100 per week = \$5200 a year \$200 biweekly = \$5200 a year \$500 monthly = \$6000 a year Total..... \$16,400 annual income</p>

WIC Income Guidelines

Each year, the federal government updates the federal poverty guidelines which are used to determine eligibility in many programs. WIC Income Guidelines are based on the federal poverty guidelines, but are set at **185% of the federal poverty level**. If a household’s income is less than or equal to WIC Income Guidelines, they would have an income that qualifies them for WIC. (They would still need to be determined eligible for WIC services based on category and nutrition need).

The most current income guidelines are on the WIC website at: [WIC Income Guidelines](#) as Exhibit 5-A in the Minnesota Operations Manual.

Presumptive Eligibility for Minnesota Health Care Programs

Presumptive eligibility is applied to households that are over basic WIC Income Guidelines but which appear to be income eligible for Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP), and are willing to apply for MHCP. They will need to apply for and found to be eligible for MHCP to be considered income eligible for WIC.

There are three conditions each of which must be met by the applicant to be considered for **presumptive eligibility**. **These conditions are:**

1. Income that meets income guidelines
2. Income documentation to demonstrate the probable eligibility
3. Applicant is willing to apply for MHCP

Procedures for Determining Presumptive Eligibility

Staff must review income documentation. The applicant (or parent of child) must indicate that s/he has applied, or will apply for MHCP within 10 days. Staff must add an appropriate alert to each record. For example, “Gave 3 months of vouchers. Need documentation of pending application or MHCP eligibility before more vouchers are issued.” Such an alert identifies what is needed in order for the participant to continue receiving WIC services.

Other Situations

Foster Children

Foster children are **counted as a household size of one** (1). Income is the payment the foster family receives for the child.

Teen Mothers

Pregnant teens and teen mothers who live with their parents should be counted as **their own household** when they have income and provide some payment for their care (paying rent, buying food, etc.) or provide in-kind services such as housekeeping or child care. Otherwise, the household income should be counted, including the parents.

Split or Joint Custody

When the custody of a child is split, the child shall be considered a member of the household in which he or she lives *the majority* of the time. If the parents share custody 50/50, the child can only qualify for WIC in one parent’s household. Parents can be encouraged to share the food or make the other parent a proxy on the ID folder.

Practice activity C



1. Use the WIC Income Guidelines and answer the questions about each situation.
 - *Maria lives with her husband who gets paid \$500 once a month. They have two children under 5. Maria works 20 hours per week during the school year and makes \$7 per hour.*
 - a. What is their household size?
 - b. What is their household income?
 - c. Is anyone in the household income eligible for WIC?
 - *Shondra is pregnant with twins. She lives with her boyfriend and a roommate. The roommate doesn't have a job and Shondra and her boyfriend are paying for his food. Shondra makes \$200 a week (The dats system calculates the annualized amount to be \$10,400), and her boyfriend makes \$1000 a month.*
 - a. What is their household size?
 - b. What is their household income?
 - c. Is Shondra income eligible for WIC?
 - *Justin has sole custody of his son and is at WIC to request benefits for the child. His ex-wife pays child support of \$700 a month. Justin also receives \$400 a month in unemployment benefits. He and his son live alone.*
 - a. What is their household size?
 - b. What is their household income?
 - c. Is Justin's son income eligible for WIC?
2. Answer the income eligibility questions about the following scenario.

Alexander Smith is 2 years old and is at WIC for his first certification appointment. He lives with his mom, Jane, in an apartment. Jane receives a \$500 per month from MFIP/TANF). She brings with her to the appointment:

 - *Her Minnesota Driver's License*
 - *Alexander's birth certificate*
 - *A letter stating her MFIP award*
 - *An electricity bill with her name and address on it.*
 - What is the household size?
 - How would you determine income eligibility for this household?
 - What information is needed to document their income?
 - What is Alexander's proof of ID and residency?
 - What is the household size?
 - Is Alexander adjunctively eligible?
 - Would Jane need to bring back proof later?

Final Skill Check

1. Prescreening helps determine if an applicant appears eligible for WIC benefits. T F
2. Besides residency and income eligibility, prescreening also involves determining if the applicant has a medical/nutritional need for the WIC Program. T F
3. An infant who is less than 6 months at the first WIC appointment is certified until their first birthday but an infant older than 6 months is certified for a period of 6 months. T F
4. The process for recertification of a participant is almost identical to the initial certification. T F
5. WIC participants need to provide documentation of identity, residency and income at all certification visits, not just the initial one. T F
6. Examples of acceptable documentation of identity include: birth certificate, driver's license, crib card, passport, Health Benefits card, or 'known to staff'. T F
7. Examples of documentation of residency could include: a bill, driver's license, a lease agreement, mail addressed to the applicant, or pay stubs. T F
8. If an applicant does not bring all the required documentation, s/he has 45 days to bring the document(s) to the WIC office. T F
9. The only two ways a person can be income eligible is by adjunctive eligibility and by meeting WIC Income Guidelines. T F
10. Participation in Medical Assistance or Headstart makes an applicant adjunctively income eligible for WIC services. T F
11. In order to be presumptively eligible for WIC an applicant must be willing to apply for MHCP. T F
12. A woman with one child living with a roommate would be a household of 2 if she and the roommate split all rent and utilities. T F
13. WIC income guidelines are set at 250% of the federal poverty level. T F
14. A foster child is counted as a member of the foster parent's household, when determining household size. T F