5.2.1 Category

Reference: 7CFR 246.7 (c)

Policy: Each applicant must be in a category that is eligible for WIC participation. Eligible categories are: pregnant women, postpartum women, postpartum breastfeeding women, children less than age five, and infants.

Purpose: To ensure that applicants are eligible for the WIC program.

Procedure:
Determine if the applicant is one of the following:

- A pregnant woman determined to have one or more embryos or fetuses in utero (proof of pregnancy is not required)
- A post-partum woman within 12 months of the end of a pregnancy who is breastfeeding or providing breast milk to her infant an average of once per day or more
- A postpartum non-breastfeeding woman within six months of termination of a pregnancy. The end of a pregnancy is the date the pregnancy terminates (i.e., date of delivery, abortion, fetal death or miscarriage).
- An infant under one year of age or
- A child who has had her/his first birthday but has not yet reached her/his fifth birthday

Certification Periods:
Services are to be provided to participants throughout their certification period as long as they remain income eligible, unless the participant chooses not to continue, or in cases of participant abuse/fraud.

- Pregnant Women are categorically eligible through the duration of their pregnancy and up to six (6) weeks postpartum. Following delivery, women may receive one food package before being certified as a postpartum woman. To continue beyond the 6-week postpartum period, the woman must be certified as either a breastfeeding or non-breastfeeding woman.

- Breastfeeding women are categorically eligible for up to one year, ending with the last day of the month in which her breastfed infant turns one. A postpartum woman who provides breast milk to her infant at least once a day (on average), is considered a “breastfeeding woman.” A mid-certification is required. See Section 5.10, Mid-Certification.
  - Breastfeeding women are either fully breastfeeding (her infant is fully breastfed, and receives no formula) or partially breastfeeding (her infant is breastfed and receives some formula; the woman is categorized as mostly- or some-breastfeeding depending on how much formula her infant receives from WIC). The certification periods are the same.
but the WIC food package the woman is eligible to receive depends on how much she is breastfeeding, how much formula her infant is taking, and her infant’s age. See Chapter 7, Food Package.

- **Some-Breastfeeding after six months postpartum:** women who continue to provide breastmilk at least daily after six months postpartum remain active participants, and can continue receiving nutrition services (including nutrition education and a mid-certification), but they are no longer eligible to receive WIC food benefits. See Section 7.12. The local agency is reimbursed for these services.

  o If a breastfeeding woman becomes pregnant, she should be (re)certified as a *pregnant woman*, and is then eligible through the duration of their pregnancy and up to six (6) weeks postpartum.

  o If a breastfeeding woman reduces her breastfeeding to *less than once a day*, the CPA **must change her category** in the participant record to a *non-breastfeeding postpartum woman* (see below).
    - If her infant is less than 6 months old, she is categorically eligible to receive services as a non-breastfeeding postpartum woman until the last day of the month in which her infant turns 6 months old. Nutrition risk codes and priority **are not** changed at this time.
    - If her infant is 6 months or older, she is given 15 days notification of pending ineligibility. If she is due to receive benefits within the 15 days, CPAs may issue a final month of food benefits. See Section 5.4 Notification of Ineligibility/Disqualification.

- **Non-breastfeeding postpartum women** are categorically eligible for up to 6 months from the end of the pregnancy. This includes a woman who had an abortion, a miscarriage, or a fetal death.

- **Infants under 6 months of age** are categorically eligible until the last day of the month in which they turn 1 year old. A mid-certification is required. See Section 5.10, Mid-certification.

- **Infants 6 months of age and over** are categorically eligible for a six-month period.

- **Children** are categorically eligible at one year intervals, ending with the last day of the month in which the child reaches the 5th birthday. A mid-certification is required. See Section 5.10, Mid-Certification.

*Note:* In situations where there is difficulty scheduling the appointment for a pregnant woman, postpartum breastfeeding woman, infant, and child, the certification period may be shortened or lengthened by a period not to exceed 30 days.