

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention WIC Nutrition Program

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Policy No. CE-4

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Certification Periods and Termination of WIC Benefits

Authority

7 CFR §246.4(a)(11)(i)

7 CFR §246.7(g), (h)

Public Law 111-296, Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act 2010

FNS Policy Memo, Guidance for Providing Quality WIC Nutrition Services during Extended Certification Periods, August 29, 2011.

WIC Policy Memo, #94-9 WIC Exit Counseling Brochure

Policy

1. The State Agency shall authorize all Local Agencies to certify infants less than six months of age for a period extending up to the first birthday (“extended certification”) provided the quality and accessibility of health care services are not diminished.
2. The State Agency shall authorize Local Agencies to certify children for a period of up to one year provided that participant children receive required health and nutrition services.
3. Extended certification shall be an option for Priority 1, Priority 2, and Priority 4 infants.
4. The State Agency shall ensure that health care and nutrition services are not diminished for participants certified for longer than six months.
5. Local Agencies may shorten or extend the certification period up to thirty (30) days in certain circumstances.
6. Local Agencies may suspend an individual in the middle of a certification period for the following reasons:
 - 6.1 Participant volunteers information that they are over income and an income calculation determines the participant is over income for their family size
 - 6.2 Participant abuse (refer to Policy OM-7, Participant Abuse)
 - 6.3 A family member is found income ineligible at recertification
 - 6.4 Failure to use benefits for two consecutive months.

7. Local Agencies must stipulate that an individual is not automatically disqualified mid-certification due to the fact that she/he no longer participates in one or more of the programs on the basis of which he/she was originally determined to be adjunctively or automatically eligible.

Procedures

1. Pregnant women shall be certified for the duration of pregnancy and for up to six (6) weeks postpartum.
2. Non-breastfeeding women shall be certified for up to six (6) months after delivery.
 - 2.1. Any woman whose most recent pregnancy ended due to miscarriage or abortion, who delivered a stillborn infant or whose baby experienced neonatal death may be certified as non-breastfeeding after the end of her pregnancy.
3. Breastfeeding women shall be certified for up to twelve (12) months, ending with the breastfed infants' first birthday.
4. Breastfeeding women whose infants are more than six (6) months of age, and receive more than half the full amount of infant formula allowed each month for fully-formula fed infants, shall be counted as participants in the program and shall be eligible to receive breastfeeding support as well as referrals, but will not receive food benefits.
5. Infants less than six (6) months of age shall be certified to their first birthday. Infants six (6) months or older shall be certified for up to six (6) months.
6. Children are certified at 12 month intervals, ending with their fifth birthday.
7. In accordance with 7 CFR §246.7 (g)(3), in cases where there is difficulty in scheduling appointments for breastfeeding women, infants and children, the certification period may be shortened or extended by a period not to exceed thirty (30) days. The reason for shortening or extending the certification period must be documented in the participant's file.
8. Changes in Income Eligibility: Local Agency WIC staff must reassess a participant's income eligibility during a current certification period if information indicating a change in the participant's household income or adjunctive eligibility is received.
 - 8.1. Local Agencies must disqualify a participant and any other household members currently receiving WIC benefits who are determined to be ineligible based upon certification income reassessment.
 - 8.2. Adjunctively eligible WIC participants may not be disqualified from the Maine CDC WIC Nutrition Program solely because they, or certain family members, no longer participate in one of the other specified programs.
 - 8.2.1. The State Agency will ensure that such participants, and other household members currently receiving WIC benefits, are disqualified during a certification period only if they are found ineligible after their income

- eligibility has been reassessed based on the WIC income screening guidelines used for applicants who are not adjunctively eligible.
- 8.2.2. Participants should not be terminated just because they are no longer adjunctively eligible; income eligibility must be assessed first.
 - 8.3. Income reassessments are not required in cases where there is not sufficient time to effect the change.
 - 8.4. For participants whose income rises above income guidelines:
 - 8.4.1. If the participant is in a valid certification period, , staff shall:
 - 8.4.1.1. Issue benefits for the calendar month in which the participant becomes over-income, then
 - 8.4.1.2. Enter new income contact with current monthly income amount provided by participant
 - 8.4.1.3. Participant's record shall be immediately terminated by the application.
 - 8.4.2. If a participant is over income at recertification, no benefits shall be issued.
 9. Participants certified for a period of 12 months must receive the same quality of nutrition services that would be provided with shorter (6-month) certification periods. A mid-certification assessment which includes the following must be provided:
 - 9.1. Anthropometric measurements and assessment of growth; referral data that is less than 60 days old may be accepted.
 - 9.2. Blood work that meets CDC periodicity recommendations:
 - 9.2.1. Children age 12-24 months: a blood test at 15-18 months of age is recommended; this test should be done 6 months after the initial test, which is done at 9-12 months of age.
 - 9.2.2. Participants with a previous low hemoglobin/hematocrit result shall have a follow-up screening during the mid-certification assessment. Referral data <60 days old may be accepted.
 - 9.3. Brief update of health and dietary risk assessment.
 - 9.3.1. Immunization screening for children with incomplete immunization records. Referrals must be provided as necessary.
 - 9.4. Nutrition education
 - 9.5. Breastfeeding promotion and support for breastfeeding women
 - 9.6. Referrals for identified health and social needs
 10. Categorical Ineligibility- Benefits may be issued for the calendar month in which the participant becomes categorically ineligible if the first date to use comes before the date of categorical ineligibility.

- 10.1. Partially breastfeeding women whose infant(s) are at least 6 months of age and who receive more than the maximum amount of formula for their partially-breastfed infant may continue to participate in the program to receive health education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to other programs, but will not receive food benefits.
- 10.2. These women shall not be removed from the program until they completely stop breastfeeding or their infant(s) reaches their first birthday.
- 10.3. Breastfeeding or Non-breastfeeding women who become categorically ineligible shall receive exit counseling. See NS-1 for exit counseling requirements.
11. Abuse or Fraud – See PolicyOM-7 Participant Abuse for further information about termination of WIC Benefits in cases of participant abuse or fraud.
12. Participants terminated for voluntary withdrawal or no-show who request reinstatement and who are within a valid certification period can have their termination reversed.