



## Policy and Procedure Manual

### Volume 1, Chapter 17

#### WIC Eligibility

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Washington State WIC Nutrition Program

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# WIC Eligibility

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Section 1: Overview

**POLICY: Table of Eligibility Time Periods**

A Competent Professional Authority (CPA) must complete an assessment to determine eligibility for WIC.

- The participant’s eligibility period is based on their category and federal regulations

Participant Category (Abbreviation)	Priority	Eligibility Begins	Eligibility Ends
Pregnant (P)	1, 4	Date of Certification	Last day of the month the participant turns 6 weeks postpartum.
Breastfeeding (B)	1, 2, 4	Date of Certification	Last day of the month the participant turns 12 months postpartum or until the participant stops breastfeeding, whichever comes first.  <b>Note:</b> If the participant stops breastfeeding before 6 months postpartum, serve as a non-breastfeeding postpartum participant.
Non-breastfeeding Postpartum (N)	6	Date of Certification	Last day of the month participant turns 6 months postpartum.
Infants (I)	1, 4	Date of Certification	If certified less than 7 months of age, last day of the month infant turns 12 months old.  If certified 7 months or older, last day of the month of a 6 month period.
	2*	Date of Certification	Last day of the month infant turns 12 months of age.
Children (C)	3, 5	Date of Certification	Last day of the month of a 12 month period. Last day of the month the child turns 5 years old.

\* Infants 6 months and older new to WIC must be Priority 1 or Priority 4 to qualify for WIC.

**PROCEDURE:**

The CPA:

- A. Assesses the participant for WIC eligibility.
- B. Presses the Certify button in Cascades to document the eligibility begins and ends dates.

**Note:** WIC has a priority system. Priority 1 is the highest priority. When funds and caseload are limited, the priority system makes sure participants with the greatest risk receive WIC benefits before those with lower risk.

See [Volume 1, Chapter 5 - Priority System and Waiting Lists](#) for more information.

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## Section 2: Pregnant Participants

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### **POLICY: Eligibility Period for Pregnant Participants**

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The eligibility period for a pregnant participant:

- Begins on the day of the WIC certification.
- Ends on the last day of the month the participant turns 6 weeks postpartum.

Pregnant participants are Priority 1 or 4.

#### **Information:**

The pregnant participant is eligible for a pregnant participant's food benefits through the end of the month of the sixth week postpartum. The end of a pregnancy includes a:

- Live birth
- Miscarriage
- Termination
- Fetal death

**Example:** Staff certify a pregnant participant on January 5<sup>th</sup>. The due date is July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

- The pregnancy eligibility period begins January 5<sup>th</sup> (the date of certification)
- The pregnancy eligibility ends August 31<sup>st</sup> (the last day of the month the participant turns 6 weeks postpartum).

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### Section 3: Breastfeeding Participants

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#### **POLICY: Eligibility Period for Breastfeeding Participants**

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The breastfeeding participant's eligibility:

- Begins when the participant is certified.
- Ends on the last day of the month in which the infant turns 1 year old, or when the participant stops breastfeeding, whichever comes first.

If a breastfeeding participant reduces breastfeeding so it's less often than once a day on average, for example 4 times a week:

- a. Update breastfeeding information to change the category to non-breastfeeding postpartum if the infant is less than six months old.
- b. Take the participant off the program if the infant is more than six months old.

Breastfeeding participants are Priority 1, 2, or 4.

**Note:** In the month the infant turns 12 months old, a breastfeeding participant doesn't get food benefits if the baby has reached the first birthday. See the "Food for Infants in the Month They Turn One Year Old" table in [Volume 1, Chapter 23 – WIC Foods](#).

**Example:** Staff certify a fully breastfeeding participant on January 9<sup>th</sup> (the baby was born on January 3<sup>rd</sup>). The participant's eligibility period ends January 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year (one year postpartum).

1. If the breastfeeding participant's food benefit issuance day is January 2<sup>nd</sup> (the day before the infant's first birthday) of the following year (one year postpartum):
  - The breastfeeding participant receives food benefits.
  - The infant receives the appropriate infant food benefits.
2. If the breastfeeding participant food benefit issuance day is January 3<sup>rd</sup> or later (on or after the child's first birthday) of the following year (one year postpartum):
  - The breastfeeding participant **doesn't** receive food benefits.
  - The child receives the appropriate child food benefits.



**Information:**

- If a breastfeeding participant stops breastfeeding and is within 6 months postpartum, the participant may qualify as non-breastfeeding postpartum.
- If a breastfeeding participant stops breastfeeding and is more than 6 months postpartum, WIC eligibility ends.

**Example:** Staff certify a breastfeeding participant on March 7<sup>th</sup> (child born on March 3<sup>rd</sup>).

- The eligibility period begins March 7<sup>th</sup> (the day of certification)
- The eligibility ends on March 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year (one year postpartum) as long as the participant continues breastfeeding.

If the participant stops breastfeeding **before 6 months postpartum** (for example in July):

- The participant would be eligible for WIC as a non-breastfeeding postpartum participant.
- The non-breastfeeding postpartum eligibility goes through the end of September – the sixth month postpartum.

If the participant stops breastfeeding **after 6 months postpartum**:

- Staff take the participant off the program.

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## Section 4: Non-Breastfeeding Postpartum Participants

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### **POLICY: Eligibility Period for Non-breastfeeding Postpartum Participants**

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The eligibility period for a non-breastfeeding postpartum participant:

- Begins on the day of the WIC certification
- Ends on the last day of the month the participant turns six months postpartum.

Non-breastfeeding postpartum participants are Priority 6.

#### **Information:**

Postpartum refers to the 6 month period following the end of pregnancy. The end of pregnancy includes a:

- Live birth
- Miscarriage
- Termination
- Fetal death

A participant on WIC during pregnancy, who doesn't breastfeed, receives pregnant participant food benefits through the end of the month of the sixth week postpartum.

- Staff issue pregnant food benefits **before** completing the subsequent certification as a Non-breastfeeding postpartum participant. This allows the participant to receive pregnant food benefits through the end of the pregnancy eligibility period.
- When staff complete the subsequent certification Cascades automatically assigns a non-breastfeeding postpartum food prescription.

**Example:** A pregnant participant has the baby on June 10<sup>th</sup>. Staff recertify from pregnant to non-breastfeeding postpartum on July 25<sup>th</sup>.

- The pregnant eligibility period goes to July 31<sup>st</sup>.
- On July 25<sup>th</sup>, the participant is eligible for pregnant food benefits. To provide the pregnant food benefits staff issue them **before** completing a subsequent certification as a non-breastfeeding postpartum participant.
- The following month the participant receives non-breastfeeding postpartum food benefits.

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## Section 5: Infants

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### **POLICY: Eligibility Period for Infants**

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The eligibility period for infants entering the WIC program from birth through 6 months of age (through the end of the month the infant turns 6 months old):

- Begins on the day of WIC certification.
- Ends on the last day of the month the infant turns 12 months old.

These infants are Priority 1, 2, or 4.

The eligibility period for infants entering the program between 7 and 12 months of age:

- Begins on the day of the WIC certification.
- Ends the last day of the month of a six-month period.

These infants must be a Priority 1 or 4 to be eligible for WIC.

**Note:** Staff can extend the certification for infants for 30 days in limited situations.

- See [Volume 1, Chapter 18 – Certification](#).

#### **Information:**

##### **Infant under 6 months of age example:**

Staff certify an infant born February 2<sup>nd</sup> on February 5<sup>th</sup>.

- The infant's eligibility begins on February 5<sup>th</sup> (the date certified eligible for WIC).
- The eligibility period ends February 28<sup>th</sup> of the following year (the end of the month the infant turns 12 months old).

##### **Infant over 6 months of age new to WIC example:**

Staff certify a nine-month old infant on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

- The infant's eligibility begins on December 11<sup>th</sup> (the date certified eligible for WIC).
- The eligibility period ends May 31<sup>st</sup> (last day of a six month period; the participant receives six months of benefits).

**Note:** The participant receives child food benefits when they turn 1 year of age.

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## Section 6: Children

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### **POLICY: Eligibility Period for Children**

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The eligibility period for children:

- Begins on the day of WIC certification.
- Ends the last day of the month of a 12 month period. A child may participate and receive food benefits through the end of the month the child turns 5 years old.

Children are Priority 3 or 5.

For an initial certification, the eligibility begins the day of the WIC certification.

For a subsequent certification, eligibility begins:

1. On the first day of the month following the end of a current certification period
- Or
2. On day of the certification when eligibility period has ended.

Staff must not certify or recertify a child on the day of or after the day the child turns 5 years old.

**Note:** Staff can extend the certification for children for 30 days in limited situations.

- See [Volume 1, Chapter 18 – Certification](#).

#### **Information:**

**Examples:** Staff initially certify a 2 year old child on November 20<sup>th</sup>.

- The child's eligibility begins November 20<sup>th</sup>.
- The eligibility period ends November 30<sup>th</sup> the following year.

Staff initially certify a 4 year, 8 month old child on August 17<sup>th</sup>.

- The child's eligibility begins August 17<sup>th</sup>.
- The child's eligibility ends December 31<sup>st</sup>, the last day of the month the child turns five years of age.