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### Section 3: Household Size

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#### **REQUIRED GUIDANCE: Household Size**

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Staff must determine the number of people in each household based on the definition of “household” and the information listed in policy and in procedures below.

**Definition** A family or household is a group of related or nonrelated individuals who are living together as one economic unit, except that residents of a homeless facility or an institution aren’t counted as an economic unit.

1. An economic unit or household must have its own source of income (or savings) to support living expenses. See the “Zero Income” policy for guidance when the household reports zero income.
  - a. The income must be adequate to sustain the household. State guidance for adequacy is \$500 per person per month.
  - b. Staff must not use in-kind benefits as a factor to determine if a separate economic unit exists. See Procedure F below for an example.
2. Staff must count an applicant or participant in the household that directly supports his or her living expenses.

**Note:** Staff may use terms family, household, and economic unit interchangeably.

3. Staff must count the number of expected infants in the household size for households with a pregnant applicant, unless the pregnant person has a religious, cultural or personal objection and wishes to exclude the number of expected infants.

Note: This aligns with Medicaid’s practice of including the number of expected infants in the household size and [WIC Policy Memorandum #99-4](#), Section IV, C, 1, paragraph 3.

#### **PROCEDURE:**

Staff consider the following to determine household size:

**A. Children in joint custody or shared guardianship:**

1. Count a child in the household where he or she lives most of the time.

2. When a child lives with each parent 50% of the time, count the child as a member of both households when determining household size. Only one household can apply for and receive WIC benefits.
  3. Follow these guidelines when the child spends large amounts of time at each household.
    - a. Alternating months – Count the child in both households. Only one household can apply for WIC.
    - b. Two or more months at each household – Count the child only in the household where he or she is currently living. Only the household where the child currently lives can apply for WIC.
- B. **Foster child** - The foster child is the legal responsibility of the state. Count each child as a household of one.
- If a foster parent has more than one foster child, count each foster child as a household of one.
1. Since WIC counts a foster child as a household of one, the foster child’s eligibility for an income-qualifying program like Medicaid Title 19, doesn’t make other individuals living in the same household income eligible for WIC.
- C. **Adopted child** – Count the adopted child as a member of the adoptive household.
- D. **Children who are temporarily living in the home of others** - For children who are temporarily living in the home of others, for example if the military parent(s) are deployed, staff choose the most appropriate option for the situation.
1. Count the child(ren) as part of the household or economic unit where they are living. Determine WIC income eligibility on the total number in the economic unit and all of the economic unit’s income.
  2. Count the absent parent(s) and the child(ren) as one household or economic unit. To use this option, clinic staff need to be able to determine the income of the economic unit and see proof of income.
  3. Count the child(ren) as a separate household or economic unit. To be a separate economic unit, there must be a source of income (parent contribution, etc.) that is enough to support the child(ren). If an adequate amount isn’t received for the child(ren)’s support, staff use another option.

- E. **Pregnant** – Count a pregnant applicant as one plus the number of expected infants.
1. Enter the number of expected infants on the Income Information screen.
    - This field only displays when there’s a pregnant person in the family.
  2. Select “Exclude No. of Expected Infants” when the pregnant person wishes to exclude the number of expected infants.
  3. If the pregnant applicant isn’t income eligible when excluding the number of expected infants:
    - a. Inform the applicant they aren’t income eligible and that they may be eligible if they include the expected infant(s).
    - b. Ask if the person would like to include the expected infant(s) and reassess income eligibility.
    - c. If the person prefers not to count the expected infant(s), let them know they can reapply for WIC after the birth of the infant(s).
- F. **Pregnant teen** - Consider each situation individually.
1. If the pregnant teen lives with a family and the family pays for living expenses, count the teen as part of the household and assess the household’s income for WIC eligibility.
  2. If the pregnant teen has no income and lives with a family who provides shelter, food, etc. as an in-kind benefit for providing child care for their children, count the teen as part of the household and assess the household’s income for WIC eligibility. The in-kind benefit doesn’t count as a source of income for the teen.
  3. If the pregnant teen lives with a family, has a job and contributes money in a “proportionate share” each month for her living expenses, count the teen as a separate household and document the teen’s income to assess for WIC eligibility.
- Note:** Count a pregnant teen’s household size and income according to policies and procedures in this chapter and enter this information in the participant’s file. If the teen has adjunctive eligibility with a positive ProviderOne adjunctive eligibility verification, the teen is income eligible for WIC.

**Example:**

A pregnant teen lives with her parents. Staff determine she is economically dependent on her parents. Staff document the entire household size and income in Cascades. The amount is above WIC income guidelines and the teen isn't income eligible.

The teen returns two months later with a ProviderOne card. Staff enter the P1 number and search, they receive a positive ProviderOne adjunctive eligibility verification. The teen is income eligible for WIC due to adjunctive income eligibility. Staff document the actual household size and income, including her parents.

G. **Multiple households under one roof** – Because people who live together typically share their resources they usually count as one household. However, it's possible for two separate economic units to live under the same roof. Staff ask more questions to find out if there are separate households or economic units living under the same roof. For example:

1. Does the household have its own source of income?
  - Receiving shelter and food as an in-kind benefit for providing a service, like childcare or house cleaning, doesn't count as having a source of income.
2. Is the amount adequate to sustain the number in the household?
  - State guidance for adequacy is \$500 per person per month.
3. Does the household pay its proportionate share of expenses for housing, food, bills, etc.?

Examples of multiple households under one roof include:

- Roommates who pay for their share of the rent and their own living expenses.
- Families who share a house and pay their share of the rent or mortgage and living expenses.

H. **Person living at school** - When the parent or guardian pays the tuition, count the child living at a school as a member of the household.

- I. **Person living in an institution** –Residents of a homeless facility or an institution aren't one large household. An individual or group of individuals (for example a woman and two children) living in a homeless facility or an institution are counted as a separate household.

**Information:**

When people live together it is likely they share resources which makes them one economic unit. However, clinic staff may ask questions and find that the units are independent of each other. Asking questions about the dividing of living expenses, sharing of food, etc. can provide helpful information to determine if there are separate economic units living together.

Washington WIC Program  
DOH 960-367 Effective June 30, 2025

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