



## Policy and Procedure Manual

### Volume 1, Chapter 3

### Application and Processing Standards

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Washington State WIC Nutrition Program

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# Application and Processing Standards

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## Section 1: Eligibility Requirements

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**POLICY: Eligibility Requirements**

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Applicants must meet all of the following requirements to be placed on the WIC Nutrition Program:

1. Category.
2. Residency.
3. Income eligible.
4. At nutrition risk.

**PROCEDURE:**

Staff:

- A. Determine if the applicant meets WIC's category requirements:
  1. Pregnant.
    - Proof of pregnancy isn't required since it may cause personal expense to the applicant.
  2. Breastfeeding up to one year from the delivery date.
    - A participant is considered breastfeeding when either breastfeeding the infant once a day on average or expressing breastmilk to feed to the infant once a day on average.
  3. Non-breastfeeding Postpartum up to six months from the delivery date.
    - A participant who has been pregnant within the past 6 months regardless of the length of the pregnancy or its outcome (for example: live birth, stillbirth, miscarriage, or spontaneous or elective abortion).
  4. Infants, birth to one year of age.
  5. Children, 12 months of age to five years of age.

- B. Determine if the applicant meet's WIC's residency requirement:
1. The person lives in Washington.
    - There is no length of residency requirement.
  2. Is a migrant farm worker, temporarily living in Washington.
  3. A person doesn't have to be a United States citizen to be on the Washington State WIC Nutrition Program.
    - Staff can't deny WIC participation to foreign students and other non-citizens for this reason.
    - Being on WIC doesn't make a person a "public charge" and doesn't affect a person's immigration status.
      - See the National WIC Association's [Public Charge Talking Points](#) for more information.
- C. Determine if the applicant is income eligible. A person is income eligible when:
1. Currently eligible for a program that makes the person automatically income eligible for WIC, called adjunctive eligibility.
  2. Household income is at or below WIC's income eligibility guidelines, which are 185% of the federal poverty level.
    - See [Volume 1, Chapter 6 – Income](#) for more information about income eligibility.
- D. Determine if the applicant has a nutrition risk:
1. The Competent Professional Authority (CPA) completes an assessment and determines if the person is at nutrition risk.
    - See [Volume 1, Chapter 14 – Nutrition Risk Criteria](#).

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## Section 2: Processing Standards

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### **POLICY: Processing Standards – Timeframes for Scheduling Certification Appointments**

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Agencies must:

1. Serve the following applicants within ten calendar days of the initial contact date:
  - Pregnant applicant
  - Breastfeeding applicant
  - Infants
  - Migrants
2. Serve Children and Non-breastfeeding Postpartum applicants within 20 calendar days of the initial contact date.

The initial contact date is the date the person first asks for WIC services in person.

### **PROCEDURE:**

Staff:

- A. Ask the applicant questions to determine the potential participant's category and migrant status to determine when to schedule the certification appointment.
- B. Serve pregnant, breastfeeding, infant, and migrant applicants as follows:
  1. Schedule and complete the initial certification, which includes the presumptive eligibility appointment for the applicant, within ten calendar days of the initial contact date.
  2. Let the applicant know if they are eligible for WIC when the certification assessment is completed.
- C. Serve children and non-breastfeeding postpartum applicants as follows:
  1. Schedule and complete the certification within 20 calendar days of the initial contact date.
  2. Let the applicant, parent guardian, or caretaker know if they or their child are eligible for WIC when the certification assessment is completed.

- D. Add the applicant to the Pending List when scheduling the certification appointment outside the processing standards.
1. Select a reason for scheduling the certification outside the processing standards.
  2. Use the Pending List to contact applicants if an earlier appointment becomes available.
- Note:** The Pending List is different than a Waiting List which is used when the agency or clinic can't serve all potentially eligible participants due to a lack of funding.
- See [Volume 1, Chapter 5 - Priority System and Waiting Lists](#).
- E. Document missed appointments.
1. The processing standards only apply to the first application date for the applicant.
  2. If the applicant misses this appointment and reschedules, staff don't have to schedule based on the application date.

**Information:**

Calendar days are consecutive days which include weekends and holidays.

WIC Program Federal Regulation 246.7(f)(2)(iii)(A) and (B).



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**RECOMMENDATION: Reserve Appointment Times for New Applicants, Transfers and Employed Persons**

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Local agencies should reserve appointment times each week for:

- New applicants
- New infants
- Transfer participants
- Participants, Parent Guardians, or Caretakers who are employed and need scheduled appointments
  - See the [“Scheduled Appointments for Employed Participants, Parent Guardians and Caretakers”](#) policy in this chapter.

Cascades allows staff to set appointment types that only become available for scheduling one to two weeks in advance. Local agencies are encouraged to use this function to accommodate new applicants, new infants, transfer participants, and employed participants and caregivers.

**GUIDELINES:**

Staff:

- A. Determine the number and types of appointments to reserve for new applicants, transfers and participants, parent guardians or caretakers who are employed.
- B. Use Cascades functionality to hold these appointments and become available for scheduling one to two weeks in advance.

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**POLICY:      Contact Pregnant Applicants who Miss Initial Appointments**

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Staff must contact pregnant applicants who miss their initial appointment within 15 calendar days of the missed appointment to offer a second appointment.

Clinic staff must document an address and telephone number for each pregnant applicant scheduled for an initial appointment.

**PROCEDURE:**

Staff:

- A. Document the applicant's address and telephone number at the time of initial contact.
  - 1. If the applicant is homeless, ask if there is an address and phone number where staff can send mail or messages.
  - 2. If the applicant has no address or phone number, document this information in their file.

B. Document a missed initial appointment.

C. Try to contact the applicant at least once by phone or mail to offer a second appointment.

**Note:** Send a letter when the applicant's phone is disconnected.

D. Document the attempt to reach the applicant.

- 1. Printing a letter from Cascades automatically documents the attempt to contact the applicant.
- 2. If staff try to reach the applicant by phone, document this information in the file.

E. Document if the applicant refused or missed the second appointment.

**Note:** If the applicant misses the second appointment, staff have the option to attempt another contact.

**Information:**

Pregnant applicants are the highest priority served by the WIC Nutrition Program. Staff make every effort to get pregnant applicants in for services as soon as possible.

This federal requirement to contact the pregnant applicant who misses the initial appointment applies only to the initial certification appointment, not to food benefit pick-ups, high-risk appointments, subsequent applications or any other type of appointment. This policy doesn't apply to infants or children.

When a pregnant applicant misses an initial certification appointment, Cascades will print a "Missed Appointment for Pregnancy" letter when staff print missed appointment letters.

- When staff select Spanish in the Language Read field, Cascades will print the letter in Spanish.
- The letters print in English and Spanish; order other language from the Washington State Department of Printing Fulfillment Center [myPRINT.wa.gov](http://myPRINT.wa.gov) website or print [Missed Appointment Letters](#) from the Washington WIC website.

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**POLICY:      Schedule Appointments for Employed Participants, Parent Guardians and Caretakers**

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Staff must:

1.      Develop flexible appointment schedules to ensure that employed WIC participants, parent guardians and caretakers can participate in the program.
2.      Provide scheduled appointments for employed participants, parent guardians, and caretakers when requested, even if the clinic typically doesn't schedule appointments (open access).

**PROCEDURE:**

Staff:

- A.      Keep a sufficient number of scheduled appointment times in the clinic schedule to accommodate employed participants, parent guardians, and caretakers.
- B.      Offer a choice of scheduled appointment times to employed participants, parent guardians, and caretakers.

**Note:** If an employed person misses a scheduled appointment staff can ask the person to come in on a “walk in” day, if the clinic has walk in days. If the person can't come in on that day, staff offer another scheduled appointment.

**Information:**

Offer scheduled appointments in order to decrease the amount of time the person has to be away from work.

“Walk in” appointment schedules could result in a barrier to WIC services for employed participants, parent guardians, or caretakers since there is an unknown amount of time the person will have to wait for services.

Staff should offer scheduled appointment times to each employed participant, parent guardian, or caretaker. Some strategies for determining the appointment needs of employed persons are listed below.

1.      Conduct a survey to determine if the clinic needs to change appointment schedules and estimate the number of people needing flexible hours.

2. Develop monthly clinic schedules with flexible hours, which include, but are not limited to, services during lunch hours, night and evening clinic hours and Saturday clinic days.
3. Give employed participants, parent guardians, and caretakers appointments during flexible clinic hours so they can participate.

### Section 3: Documentation Requirements

#### **POLICY: Initial Screening and Documentation Requirements**

Staff must:

1. Screen applicants for category, income, and residency eligibility requirements.
2. Complete a statewide search before creating a new record for the applicant or participant to assure the person isn't already a participant in Washington WIC.
3. Document information as listed below when scheduling the applicant for an initial appointment.

#### **PROCEDURE:**

Staff:

- A. Complete a statewide search before creating a new record for the applicant or participant to assure the person isn't already a participant in Washington WIC.
- B. Screen for the following:
  1. Category and age of applicant served by the agency.
  2. Income eligibility.
    - See [Volume 1, Chapter 6 – Income](#) for more information.
  3. Washington state residency.

**Note:** See the "[Eligibility Requirements](#)" policy in this chapter for more information.
- C. Document the following information when the applicant appears eligible:
  1. Foster Family information, if applicable.
    - Select the Foster Family box on the Family Demographics screen if **all** the participants in the family are foster children. This includes when the only participant in the group is a foster child.

- Staff can unselect the Foster Family box at any time if the foster parent becomes pregnant, or has a biological child under 5 years of age and wants to apply for WIC.
2. Parent Guardian name for infants and children.
  3. Parent Guardian date of birth.
  4. Address: street address, zip code, city, state, and county. Entering zip code will automatically document the city, state, and county.
    - a. Document the following when the person is homeless or incarcerated.
      - A physical address if there's a place the person routinely spends the night.
      - A mailing address if available.
      - Use the clinic address if the person doesn't have a physical or mailing address.
    - b. Document the clinic address for the person's address when the address is confidential, for example the person is living in a domestic violence shelter.
- Note:** A zip code is required for the person to set a Personal Identification Number (PIN) for the WIC Card and shop for WIC foods.
5. Telephone number, if applicable.
  6. Language read and language spoken.
    - Document if an interpreter is needed.
  7. Preferred method of contact.
    - Mark the Confidentiality box when the family doesn't want to receive appointment notifications by email, text, or phone.
    - Cascades requires staff to enter information in certain fields depending on the preferred method of contact. For example, a phone number is required when phone is listed as the preferred method of contact.
      - Cascades has standard text message appointment reminders, but not back and forth text messaging functionality.

- Cascades doesn't have built-in functionality to make automated appointment reminder phone calls.
8. Participant name.
  9. Participant date of birth (DOB).
  10. Category.
  11. Gender.
    - We acknowledge that Cascades doesn't allow for gender selection other than male or female and can't be left unmarked.
    - Female is automatically assigned to all pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum clients.
    - Participant's gender designation appears as pink and blue participant icons on the family dashboard, and on the participant summary document report. The gender doesn't appear on the VOC (Verification of Certification) transfer information.
    - Refer to participants who identify themselves as other than female or to parent guardians or caretakers who identify themselves or their children other than male or female by their preference.
    - See the [Staff Tool: Tips for Talking with Transgender Persons](#).
  12. Foster Child information, if applicable.
    - Document the Foster Care Entry Date or select Date Unknown.
    - Select "Not Required" for Proof of Foster Care.
      - Washington WIC only requires proof of custody when in question.
      - See [Volume 1, Chapter 25 – Legal Considerations and Confidentiality](#) for more information about custody.
  13. Due date for pregnant participants.
- D. Schedule a certification appointment for the applicant within the processing standards.
- See the "[Processing Standards - Timeframes for Scheduling Certification Appointments](#)" for more information.



**POLICY: WIC Participation Based on Specific Residency or Membership Requirements**

Local agencies have the option to restrict participation to applicants and participants who meet specific residency or membership requirements.

The local agency must:

1. Have approval from state WIC staff before restricting participation.
2. Write a policy describing the restrictions and keep it on file.
3. Apply the policy fairly and equally to all applicants and participants.

Residency or geographic restrictions include, but aren't limited to:

- Residing within city or county boundaries.
- Living on an Indian reservation.
- Other geographic boundaries determined by the local agency.

Membership or similar restrictions include, but aren't limited to:

- Military personnel.
- Belonging to the medical group where WIC services are provided.
- Tribal membership or eligibility for Indian Health Services.

**PROCEDURE:**

Staff:

- A. Send a written request to restrict participation based on specific residency or membership requirements to their Local Program Consultant (LPC) at the state WIC office.
- B. Receive approval from the LPC before using the restricted requirements.
- C. Follow the local agency policy and procedures for residency and membership requirements and apply them equally to all applicants and participants.

**POLICY: Document Language Read and Language Spoken**

Staff must document the language read and language spoken for all applicants and participants.

**PROCEDURE:**

Staff:

- A. Let the participant or caregiver know that information about language needs has no effect on eligibility.
  - WIC uses this information to better serve participants who do not speak or read English.
- B. Ask the person what language he or she speaks and select the language spoken on the Family Demographics screen in Cascades.
  - Provide an [“I Speak Statements”](#) document for the person to identify his or her language.
- C. Document when an interpreter is needed.
- D. Select the language read for written materials on the Family Demographics screen in Cascades.
  - Cascades prints notification letters in English or Spanish when documented in the Language Read field.
  - Staff can order notification letters in many languages from the Washington State Department of Printing Fulfillment Center [myPRINT.wa.gov](http://myPRINT.wa.gov) website or the WIC website.

**Information:**

For more information about providing WIC services to Limited English Proficient (LEP) applicants and participants refer to:

- [Volume 1, Chapter 7 - Rights and Responsibilities](#)
- [Volume 1, Chapter 11 - Assessment](#)
- [Volume 1, Chapter 20 - Notification, Fair Hearings and Civil Rights](#)