Participant Categories and Certification Periods

Policy

USDA Federal Regulations:
Category definitions
246.2 Category definitions:

- Breastfeeding women means women up to one year postpartum who are breastfeeding their infants.
- Breastfeeding means the practice of feeding a mother's breast milk to her infant(s) on the average of at least once a day.
- Children means persons who have had their first birthday but have not yet attained their fifth birthday.
- Infants means persons under one year of age.
- Postpartum women means women up to six months after termination of pregnancy.
- Pregnant women means women determined to have one or more embryos or fetuses in utero.

Certification periods
246.7(g) Certification periods. (1) Program benefits will be based upon certifications established in accordance with the following timeframes:

A/an:	Will be certified:
(i) Pregnant woman	For the duration of her pregnancy, and up to the last day of the month in which the infant becomes six weeks old or the pregnancy ends (for example, if the infant is born June 4, six weeks after birth would be July 16, and certification would end July 31).
(ii) Postpartum woman	Up to the last day of the sixth month after the baby is born or the pregnancy ends (postpartum).
(iii) Breastfeeding woman	Approximately every six months. The State agency may permit its local agencies to certify a breastfeeding woman up to the last day of the month in which her infant turns 1 year old, or until the woman ceases breastfeeding, whichever occurs first.
(iv) Infant	Approximately every six months. The State agency may permit its local agencies to certify an infant under six months of age up to the last day of the month in which the infant turns 1 year old, provided the quality and accessibility of health care services are not diminished.
(v) Child	Approximately every six months ending with the last day of the month in which a child reaches his/her fifth birthday. The State agency may permit its

	local agencies to certify a child for a period of up to one year, provided the local agency ensures that the child receives the required health and nutrition assessments, as set forth in §246.11(e)(3).

Note: Iowa utilizes the state agency option for breastfeeding women, infants and children.

Scheduling flexibility
246.7(g)(3) In cases where there is difficulty in appointment scheduling for persons referenced in paragraphs (g)(1) (iii), (iv) and (v) of this section, the certification period may be shortened or extended by a period not to exceed 30 days.

Authority

7 CFR Part 246.2
7 CFR Part 246.7 (g)(1)(i-v)
7 CFR Part 246.7 (g)(3)
WIC Policy Memo 1996-1

Procedures

Categorical eligibility
In order to be certified, an applicant for the WIC Program must be categorically eligible. Categorical eligibility is based on an applicant's (or parent/guardians) self-report of:

- Age (for infants and children)
- Reproductive status

A participant who is still categorically eligible for WIC at the end of a certification period may apply for another certification period. The length of subsequent certification periods is the same as listed in the table above.

Breastfeeding women
Breastfeeding women include those who are:

- Feeding at the breast;
- Feeding their own expressed breastmilk from a bottle, spoon, cup or by tube feeding;
- Breastfeeding infants to whom they did not give birth, such as wet nurses, adoptive mothers and foster mothers; and
- Breastfeeding infants to whom they gave birth, but their infants reside in and receive WIC in another household (e.g., foster care).

This definition does not include women who donate breast milk to a milk bank (e.g. woman who does not give birth to a live infant but chooses to lactate and donate breast milk).

Two WIC eligible women in the same household

- If a non-birth mother is breastfeeding an infant, you may certify her as a breastfeeding WIC participant if she meets the eligibility requirements of:
    - Residency
    - Income and
    - Nutritional risk
        - She may have her own independent nutritional risk or be at nutritional risk because the infant she is breastfeeding is at nutritional risk.
- A birth mother who meets all of the eligibility criteria may receive postpartum WIC benefits if her infant is being breastfed by a non-birth mother whether or not the non-birth mother breastfeeding woman is receiving WIC services.

See the Serving Families with Two WIC Eligible Adults in the Household procedure located in the Certification, Eligibility and Coordination of Services Procedures section of the WIC web portal for more information.

Infants receiving breast milk from a milk bank or from a woman who did not give birth to them

If an infant is receiving only breast milk from a milk bank or from a woman that did not give birth to the infant, then the infant's biological mother should be considered a not breastfeeding (postpartum) participant.

- Only one woman can be certified on WIC as a breastfeeding woman for that infant.
- In this situation it is possible for the infant's breastfeeding status to be exclusively breastfeeding and the biological mother documented as a not breastfeeding (postpartum) participant in the WIC data system.

Postpartum women

Postpartum women include:

- Those who are not breastfeeding their infant at all, and
- Those whose pregnancy may have terminated due to:
    - Ectopic (tubal) pregnancy
    - Miscarriage
    - Spontaneous abortion
    - Medical abortion
    - Stillbirth, or
    - Live birth, including placement of the infant for adoption

Automatic system terminations

The data system will automatically terminate WIC participants under specific circumstances. The table below lists examples related to certification periods.

Child	At the end of the month the child turns 5 years

	old
Pregnant woman	Two months after expected delivery date as listed in the data system on the pregnancy panel
Postpartum woman	At the end of the 6th month after actual delivery
Breastfeeding woman	At the end of the 12th month after actual delivery
All participants	The month of the certification end date

Best Practices

Modifying certification end dates

An infant or child's certification end date (CED) may be adjusted +/- 30 days.

- The adjustment may be made to:
  - align the CED of the participant to the rest of the family or
  - accommodate the family's scheduling needs.
- When completing this, the CED will be set to the last day of the month selected.
- An adjustment cannot exceed the child's categorical eligibility end date.

Substance use education for non-birth mothers

If a non-birth mother has a nutrition risk condition that contraindicates her breastfeeding an infant (e.g., substance abuse or other medical reasons listed in the Breastfeeding Promotion and Support policy), provide the same guidance and education to her as provided to a birth mother.