

2.17 Certification Periods

PURPOSE: To define WIC certification periods based on client category.

DEFINITIONS:

Certification means the use of procedures to determine and document an applicant's eligibility for the Program.

Certification Start Date means the date on which an applicant has been determined eligible to receive benefits based on meeting Program eligibility criteria.

Certification End Date means the date on which Program eligibility expires.

Certification Period means the length of time a client is eligible for the WIC Program.

Client Categories:

- PG = Pregnant
- BE = Breastfeeding Exclusively
- BP = Breastfeeding Partially
- NPP = Non-lactating Postpartum
- IBE = Infant Breastfeeding Exclusively
- IBP = Infant Breastfeeding Partially
- IFF = Infant Formula Fed
- C1 = Child 12 – 23 months
- C2 = Child 24 – 35 months
- C3 = Child 36 – 47 months
- C4 = Child 48 – 59 months

A. POLICY

1. Program benefits must be based upon the certification periods state below.
 - a. **Pregnant** (category code: PG)
 - i. A pregnant client is eligible for certification through the duration of the pregnancy to 6 weeks postpartum (Expected date of delivery [EDD] + 42 days).
 - ii. In the event of early termination of pregnancy (i.e., miscarriage or intentional termination), a client is eligible for 42 days after the end of the pregnancy and is eligible to recertify as an NPP.
 - b. **Breastfeeding** (category codes: BE, BP)

- i. A breastfeeding client is eligible for certification up to the infant's first birthday, or until the client discontinues breastfeeding, whichever occurs first.
 - ii. If a client discontinues breastfeeding *before* 6 months postpartum, the category and certification end date must be changed to reflect the NPP status.
Note: Recertification is not required.
 - iii. If a client discontinues breastfeeding after 6 months postpartum, they must be provided notice of the new certification end date and be issued benefits in accordance with Policy 2.20, Notification of Ineligibility, Mid-Certification Termination and Expiration of Certification.
- c. **Non-Lactating Postpartum** (category code: NPP)
A non-lactating client must be certified until 6 months past the pregnancy end date.
 - d. **Infant Under 6 Months of Age** (category codes: IBE, IBP, IFF)
An infant under 6 months of age must be certified at the time of entrance into the Program up to the infant's first birthday.
 - e. **Infant 6 Months of Age or Older** (category codes: IBE, IBP, IFF)
An infant 6 months of age or older must be certified at the time of entrance into the Program for 6 months.
 - f. **Child** (category codes: C1, C2, C3, C4)
A child must be certified at 12 month intervals up to the fifth birthday.
2. Short Certification: If an applicant has not presented required proof of identity, residency, or income at the time of certification but provides two of these three proofs, the client must be assigned a shortened 30-day certification period and provided a short certification notice. (See Policies, 2.02, Residency; 2.03, Identity; 2.04, Income Determination, 2.20 Notification of Ineligibility, Mid-Certification Termination and Expiration of Certification.)
 - a. If the missing documentation is not provided in person, by mail, or via secure electronic means within 30 days of the appointment, or if the income is found to be over the WIC limit, the certification must be terminated. A client may reapply but all three required proofs will need to be presented for review at that time.
 - b. Applicants assigned a shortened 30-day certification may not receive a consecutive, subsequent temporary certification (i.e., two "back-to-back"

temporary certifications that would equate to 60 days of continuous temporary certification).

- c. If the client presents the missing proof before the short certification period ends, the certification period would be extended/reinstated according to the standard certification period based on the date of the initial certification appointment and client category.
 - d. If an applicant presents with less than two of the three required proofs, the applicant is not eligible for a shortened certification and the certification appointment cannot be completed.
3. Reinstatement: When a client has been terminated prior to the certification end date, the client must be reinstated if the cause of termination has been resolved. Examples include:
- a. Short certification for no proof of identity, residency, or income.
 - b. Clients who move out of state and return during the same certification period. (See Policy 2.19, Verification of Certification.)
4. Certification Period Adjustment: For infants and children only, in cases where there is difficulty in appointment scheduling due to illness or to synchronize appointments with other family members, an adjustment may be made to the certification period of plus or minus 30 days from the certification end date.
5. A mid-certification health evaluation must be offered to clients with certifications longer than 6 months. (See Policy 2.24, Mid-Certification Health Evaluation.)

Reference:

7 CFR 246.7(g)

USDA: Guidance for Providing Quality WIC Nutrition Services during Extended Certification Periods, August 29, 2011

USDA WIC Certification and Eligibility Resource and Best Practices Guide June 2021

USDA WIC Policy Memorandum #2023-6 May 10, 2023: Streamlining Certification – Documentation Guidance

Cross-Reference:

2.02 Residency

2.03 Identity

2.04 Income Determination

2.19 Verification of Certification

2.20 Notification of Ineligibility, Mid-Certification Termination and Expiration of Certification

2.24 Mid-Certification Health Evaluation