

# **MI-WIC POLICY**

## ***Program Maintenance***

### **3.0 Program Maintenance**

*Effective Date: 8/15/2022*

#### **3.01 Processing Timeframes and Appointment Scheduling**

**PURPOSE:** To provide procedures for scheduling applicants/clients for certification appointments in consideration of their needs and in accordance with federal regulations.

#### **DEFINITION:**

**Applicants** means pregnant women, breastfeeding women, postpartum women, infants, and children who are applying to receive WIC benefits, and the breastfed infants of applicant breastfeeding women. Applicants include individuals who are currently participating in the program but are re-applying because their certification period is about to expire.

**Date of Application** means the date the applicant and WIC staff establish joint contact.

#### **A. POLICY**

1. Local agencies must schedule applicants/clients within the following timeframes:
  - a. Pregnant, breastfeeding, infant and homeless individuals, as well as migrant farmworkers and their families must be scheduled within 10 calendar days of the date of first request of Program benefits to determine eligibility.
  - b. All other applicants/clients must be scheduled within 20 calendar days of the date of the first request of Program benefits to determine eligibility.
2. The timeframe for appointment scheduling of applicants/clients begins when they contact the agency in person, by phone, or through a technology platform to request Program benefits and schedule an appointment.
  - a. If the request is submitted in a format in which the applicant-staff communication is not immediately established, including but not limited to requests submitted through a technology platform or voice mail, staff must attempt to contact the applicant within 2 business days.
  - b. If the applicant is not immediately responsive to the attempted contact, the timeframe may be adjusted to begin on the date of application rather than the date of request.
3. To ensure applications are being processed within the required timeframe, an accurate MI-WIC record must be created, and an appointment scheduled on the date of application.
4. Applicants/clients that transfer within a valid certification period, regardless of priority ranking, must be offered an appointment within the required timeframe. (See Policy 3.04 Transfers.)
5. The local agency must accommodate employed applicants/clients with a scheduled appointment that minimizes their time absent from work.

6. If appointments are not available within processing standard times, staff must record in MI-WIC that it was not the applicant's/client's choice to schedule the appointment outside of the policy requirements. If an applicant/client chooses to be scheduled outside of the 10/20-day requirements, staff must document this in their appointment record. Responding to the 10/20-day reminder pop-up question is sufficient to meet required documentation.
7. When a local agency waiting list is in effect, the local agency shall adhere to Policy 3.02, Waiting List Maintenance.
8. Local agencies shall attempt to contact each pregnant client who misses their initial appointment to enroll in the WIC Program to reschedule the appointment. Contacts may be made by automated system-generated notification or in its absence an agency must contact the client by phone, a family on-demand message, or alternative forms of notifications.

### **B. GUIDANCE**

1. Clients should be asked about their schedule preferences prior to scheduling an appointment.
2. Appointment show rate information is helpful in monitoring caseload. Show rate information should be used to adjust clinic schedules to maintain enrollment sufficient to support base caseload allocations. If show rates are below expectations, additional appointments can be scheduled to maintain caseload.
3. Clinics should be evaluated periodically to ensure available appointments meet the community needs. Activities to increase client satisfaction and appointment availability include:
  - a. Designing and conducting a customer service survey/evaluation and reviewing on a regular basis.
  - b. Providing same day appointments and/or allowing walk-in appointments when possible.
  - c. Coordinating appointments with non-WIC programs within the agency if applicable/possible.
  - d. Routinely reviewing and contacting clients from the "Clients Eligible for Benefits" and the "Clients Eligible for Benefits without a Future Appointment" reports, to schedule their next appointment or to complete a lesson on WICHealth.org.
4. Applicants/clients may be offered an appointment for certification at another agency/clinic if the current or contacted agency/clinic cannot meet the required processing standards.

#### References:

- 7 CFR 246.7 (b)(4), (5)
- 7 CFR 246.7 (f)(2)

#### Cross References:

- [Policy 3.02 Waiting List Maintenance](#)
- [Policy 3.04 Transfers](#)