

2.08 Certification Periods

POLICY:

Program benefits will be based upon certification periods established in accordance to timeframes for each WIC category. At the end of the certification period, the WIC participant must complete a new certification to continue Program benefits.

See Policy 2.16 Mid-Certification Follow-Up for Infants and Children for mid-certification appointments.

Note: Participants mean pregnant women, breastfeeding women, postpartum women, infants and children who are receiving supplemental foods or food instruments (eWIC benefits) or cash-value vouchers under the Program, and the breastfed infants of participant breastfeeding women.

PROCEDURE:

A. Certification Period

1. A certification period is the length of time a participant is eligible to receive eWIC benefits.
 - a. Certification periods are based on the participant's WIC category.
2. The initial certification period begins on the date the applicant/participant is determined eligible for eWIC benefits. Subsequent certification periods begin the day after the current certification period ends.
3. The **Crossroads Computer System** calculates the certification's expiration date.
4. Participants who become categorically ineligible will receive benefits until the end of the eWIC benefit issuance period in which they become ineligible.

B. Categorical Certification Periods

1. **Pregnant Woman** – certification period is for the duration of her pregnancy plus six weeks from her reported Expected Delivery Date.
 - a. To continue receiving Program (eWIC) benefits without disruption, the woman must be certified by the certification end date, which is six weeks past her reported Expected Delivery Date.
 - b. The woman retains her status as pregnant until she is certified as fully breastfeeding, partially breastfeeding, minimally breastfeeding or non-breastfeeding postpartum.

Example: *expected delivery date:* 11/22/yr
certification expiration date: 01/03/yr

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- c. When funding is limited and the Local Agency is not serving Priority III or VI postpartum women, it is not necessary to issue a **Notice of Ineligibility** to the woman when she is given a verbal notification at least fifteen (15) days in advance that her certification as a pregnant woman will end.

2. Breastfeeding Woman – certification periods are:

- a. Fully breastfeeding women whose infant is receiving no formula from the WIC program will be certified up to one (1) year past the end of pregnancy unless breastfeeding is discontinued, the infant receives greater than (\geq) MMA (maximum monthly allowance) of formula or with the breastfed infant's first birthday, whichever comes first.

Example: infant birth date: 11/22/yr
certification date: 01/05/yr
certification expiration date: 11/21/yr

- b. Partially (mostly) breastfeeding women whose infant is receiving less than (\leq) MMA (maximum monthly allowance) of formula, will be certified up to one (1) year postpartum unless breastfeeding is discontinued, the infant receives greater than (\geq) MMA (maximum monthly allowance) of formula or with the breastfed infant's first birthday, whichever comes first.

Example: infant birth date: 11/22/yr
certification date: 01/05/yr
certification expiration date: 11/21/yr

- c. Minimally breastfeeding women whose infant receives greater than (\geq) MMA (maximum monthly allowance) of formula, will be certified up to six (6) months postpartum. The woman will receive eWIC benefits until the issuance period ends.

Example: infant birth date: 11/22/yr
certification date: 01/05/yr
certification expiration date: 05/21/yr

3. Discontinuation of Breastfeeding during a Certification Period

- a. To continue receiving eWIC benefits, staff will need to update the breastfeeding questions on the **Crossroads Health Information Screen** and add a non-breastfeeding prescription for the woman participant. This will change the participant from breastfeeding to non-breastfeeding postpartum. This will change the certification end date to reflect the certification period for the non-breastfeeding postpartum. *The infant's prescription also needs to be updated to reflect this change.*

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4. **Non-breastfeeding Postpartum Woman** – certification period is up to six (6) months from the date the infant is born or the pregnancy ends (postpartum). The woman will receive eWIC benefits until the issuance period ends.

Example: pregnancy termination: 11/22/yr
certification date: 01/05/yr
certification expiration date: 05/21/yr

5. **Infant Under 6 Months of Age** – certification period for an infant enrolled before six (6) months ends on the day before the first birthday.

Example: date of birth: 11/22/yr
certification date: 04/10/yr
certification expiration date: 11/21/yr

6. **Infant Over 6 Months of Age** – certification period for an infant enrolled after six (6) months ends no later than six (6) months from the date of certification.

Example: date of birth: 11/22/yr
certification date: 06/11/yr
certification expiration date: 12/10/yr

- a. When an infant turns twelve (12) months of age during a certification period, the infant may continue to receive eWIC benefits until the end of the certification period and certification as a child at twelve (12) months of age is not required.
- b. If the infant's birthday falls within the eWIC benefit issuance period, the food package will reflect the age on the first date to spend on the benefit. Benefits that start after the birthday will reflect the child package.
7. **Children** – certification for a child ends one (1) year from the certification start date, or until child reaches the fifth birthday.

Example: certification date: 12/22/yr
certification expiration date: 12/21/yr

- a. Hemoglobin values **must** be obtained at the 18-month mid-certification appointment (see **Policy 2.13 Hematological Testing**).

REFERENCES:

1. WIC Regulations 7 CFR 246.7 Certification of Participants