

**SECTION: Certification****SUBJECT: Request for Caretaker**

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**Federal Regulations:** §246.2 and 246.12(r)(1)

**POLICY**

An authorized person may request in writing designation of a *caretaker* to participate in recertification, mid-certification and nutrition education visits, sign required forms in absence of the authorized person and redeem WIC benefits at the store.

The caretaker option is an exception for convenience and flexibility for the family. It is not the intent of the State agency to have caretakers assume the role of the authorized person, or be present at every WIC appointment. However, the local agency may use discretion in exercising the caretaker option due to family circumstances. This should be communicated to the participant/authorized person.

The caretaker option is available for infants and children, all women categories are expected to attend all WIC appointments unless there are extenuating circumstances.

**Definitions**

A "caretaker" is defined as a person who is authorized by a participant or the parent/guardian of a participant to:

- participate in recertification, mid-certification and nutrition education sessions;
- sign all required forms; and
- shop for WIC foods.

The "caretaker" **must** be someone responsible for the primary care and well-being of the participant and must be able to provide information on the eating habits and medical condition of the participant(s) for example parent (father) or grandmother. Individuals only responsible for the occasional care of the participant do not fall within the definition of "caretaker".

**A Caretaker**

- must be at least eighteen (18) years of age, unless the parent
- can serve no more than two families
- must be able to provide information on the eating habits and medical conditions of the participant's/authorized person's and their child(ren).
- can shop for WIC Foods
- **can** represent an authorized person at mid-certification and nutrition education sessions

An authorized person may only have one authorized caretaker at a time.

**Authorization Procedures**

A Caretaker Request and Authorization Form" must be completed when a "caretaker" is designated and the respective responsibilities of each are listed as follows:

### **Procedures for Authorizing a Caretaker in Person**

1. An authorized person may request in writing designation of a caretaker to participate in recertification, mid-certification and nutrition education, sign required forms in absence of the authorized person and redeem eWIC benefits.
2. The selection of a caretaker by an authorized person should be documented in the participant's file using the Request for Caretaker form. The form **MUST** be retained (scanned) by the local program and shall clearly indicate the individual authorized to participate in WIC certification and nutrition education and shall include the individual's signatures. However, **non-selection** of a caretaker should be documented in CT-WIC, the Family Information screen. Document selection/non-selection of a caretaker in CT-WIC.
3. Inform the authorized person it is her/his responsibility to explain to the caretaker WIC's general office procedures e.g. basic WIC second contact (individual or group nutrition education), recertification and mid-certification process. If a caretaker has been authorized, tell the authorized person that if the caretaker is representing her/him at a WIC nutrition education, mid-certification or recertification appointment the caretaker must present the authorized person's eWIC card and proof of identity See Policy 200-03.
4. Inform the authorized person it is her/his responsibility to explain to the caretaker how to shop for WIC foods with the eWIC card, keep the eWIC card safe and pin private. See policy WIC 400-04 EBT Account Set-Up and Maintenance for additional information.
5. Encourage the authorized person/caretaker to report all problems with a WIC vendor to the local WIC office. See policy WIC 400-08 eWIC Card Theft, Damage and Replacement for additional information.

Note: The Authorized Person should be encouraged to have the caretaker present at the time of designation, to receive an explanation of the WIC Program; including the participant rights and responsibilities and overview of the food delivery system.

### **Procedures for Authorizing a Caretaker when the Caretaker is NOT present:**

- Complete the Request for Caretaker form. (Note: If the authorized person requests that a caretaker be authorized until further notice, complete the form accordingly.)
- Review the Request for Caretaker form with the authorized person and have them sign and date the form.
- Provide the authorized person with the form to obtain the caretaker's signature and request that completed form with caretaker's signature is returned to the office prior to authorizing the caretaker.
- Retain a copy of the completed Request for Caretaker form by scanning the document into the participant's record in CT-WIC under the Images screen.

## Authorization of a Caretaker When Authorized Person is Not Present

If the authorized person sends the proposed caretaker to the WIC office, to participate in a recertification, mid-certification or nutrition education session along with the eWIC card and a signed note requesting authorization of the caretaker.

- Verify the authorized person's signature on the note with the authorized person's signature on file in CT-WIC.
- Local agency staff must sign and date the note and record the family number on the note.
- Have the caretaker sign and date the note.
- Limit the duration of caretaker authorization to one month unless the authorized person in the note specifies a longer.  
Retain a copy of the completed note by scanning the document into the participant's record in CT-WIC under the Images screen.

## Reviewing Requests for Caretaker

When reviewing a request for a caretaker, verify the individual's identity **before** completing the authorization. The caretaker must be either an adult or an emancipated minor (parenthood, marriage, court decree, self-sufficiency with relinquishment of parental rights and duties).

The caretaker must present a valid eWIC card and identification in order to obtain eWIC benefits. **If the eWIC card is lost, the authorized person must appear in person to obtain a new card unless the WIC Coordinator or CPA on staff documents special hardship.**

A WIC staff member shall not serve as a caretaker for a WIC authorized person without written authorization from the local program coordinator.

## Hardship/Emergency

In documented cases of hardship or emergency, the local program coordinator or CPA may authorize a temporary (one month) caretaker with a verbal or phone request from the authorized person. This should be documented in the CT-WIC file in the Alerts screen and a hold placed on future issuance of eWIC benefits in order to complete necessary paperwork.

In instances of special hardship (For example: authorized person is hospitalized):

- On a Request for Caretaker form, document the hardship.
- Record the effective dates for a one-month period and complete the signature sections for the caretaker and local WIC office.
- Retain a copy of the completed Request for Caretaker form by scanning the document into the participant's record in CT-WIC under the Images screen.

## Program Abuse by Caretaker

Abuse of the program by a caretaker shall, as a minimum, result in the caretaker's disqualification from serving as a caretaker for the duration of the certification period.

First offenders may be issued a warning rather than being disqualified if a Coordinator or CPA determines and documents that such disqualification would, in effect, prevent the participant from receiving program benefits. See policy WIC 200-21 Applicant/Participant Ineligibility, Termination and Disqualification.