

SECTION: Certification**SUBJECT: Physical Presence Requirement**

Federal Regulations: §246.7 (o)**POLICY**

In order to maintain WIC Program integrity, individuals must be physically present at the local agency or satellite office at the time of their initial certification, and subsequent recertifications (including mid-certifications). The local agency must notify every applicant or participant prior to certification of the physical presence requirements for certification. Additionally, local agencies should refrain from blanket statements regarding having child participants present or not present at WIC appointments. Visual assessment of child participants is vital to the overall WIC nutrition assessment and provides understanding of family dynamics. It should be the rare occasion where a child participant is not present at the initial certification, mid-certification or recertification appointments.

Exceptions and Waivers

Limited exceptions are allowable on an individual basis for certain applicants and participants. The need for an exception must be re-assessed prior to each certification period. In most cases, waivers or exceptions to physical presence cannot be used for consecutive certifications. Physical presence or an acceptable waiver code must be documented on the individual's CT-WIC record.

Infants of women who were enrolled in the WIC program during pregnancy may be certified for up to eight weeks of age without being physically present at the time of certification. Physical presence of the infant must be documented by **eight weeks** of age.

If the physical presence requirement poses **an unreasonable barrier to participation**, it may be waived for an infant or child who meets the following conditions:

- The infant or child was present at his/her initial certification, and has received **ongoing health care**. Acceptable documentation includes any one of the following:
 - A WIC certification form or other referral form signed by a health care provider or a CPA on the provider's staff
 - A child health record that indicates that his/her immunizations are up-to-date
 - A letter signed by the health care provider indicating that the infant/child has been receiving ongoing health care
- The infant/child was present at his/her initial WIC certification *and* was present at the time of certification no more than one year prior to the most recent certification date, and is under the care of one or more **working parents** or primary caretakers.

Exceptions will also be allowed for individuals with disabilities/**medical conditions** or in the event of a **natural disaster**, as described below. Medical conditions may be self-reported by the participant, parent or caretaker.

- A medical condition that necessitates the use of medical equipment not easily transportable.
- A medical condition that requires confinement to bed rest.
- A serious illness or condition:
 - A newly discharged premature infant
 - An individual with a severe medical condition
- Infectious diseases, e.g. measles, tuberculosis, flu, chicken pox, etc.
- Recuperation from major illness or injury, e.g. cancer treatment, burns, etc.
- Natural disasters, e.g. flood, hurricane, blizzard, etc.

All waivers of the physical presence requirement must be documented in CT-WIC on the Cert Action screen by a WIC staff. Documentation must include one of the following waiver codes:

- MC: medical condition (the condition should be specified on the certification form)
- ND: natural disaster
- OHC: ongoing healthcare
- WPC: working parents or caretakers
- IU8W: infant under 8 weeks of age