

Woman or Infant/Child of Primary Caregiver with Limited Ability to Make Feeding Decisions and/or Prepare Food

Definition/ cut-off value

Woman (**pregnant, breastfeeding, or non-breastfeeding**), or infant/child whose primary caregiver is assessed to have a limited ability to make appropriate feeding decisions and/or prepare food. Examples may include individuals who are:

- ≤ 17 years of age;
 - mentally disabled/delayed and/or have a mental illness such as clinical depression (diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist);
 - physically disabled to a degree which restricts or limits food preparation abilities; or
 - currently using or having a history of abusing alcohol or other drugs.
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Participant category and priority level

Category	Priority
Pregnant Women	IV or VII
Breastfeeding Women	IV or VII
Non-Breastfeeding Women	VI or VII
Infants	IV or VII
Children	V or VII

Justification

The mother or caregiver ≤ 17 years of age generally has limited exposure and application of skills necessary to care for and feed a total dependent. Cognitive limitation in a parent or primary caregiver has been recognized as a risk factor for failure to thrive, as well as for abuse and neglect. The mentally handicapped caregiver may not exhibit the necessary parenting skills to promote beneficial feeding interactions with the infant. Maternal mental illnesses such as severe depression and maternal chemical dependency are also strongly associated with abuse and neglect. In 22 states, 90% of caregivers reported for child abuse are active substance abusers. Certain physical handicaps such as blindness, para- or quadriplegia, or physical anomalies restrict/limit the caregiver's ability to prepare and offer a variety of foods. Education, referrals and service coordination with WIC will aid the mother/caregiver in developing skills, knowledge and/or assistance to properly care for a total dependent.

References

1. Accardo PJ, Whitman BY. Children of mentally retarded parents. *Am.J.Dis.Child* 1990;144:69-70.
2. Grand RJ, Sutphen JL, Dietz WH. *Pediatric nutrition theory and practice*. Boston: Butterworths, 1987.
3. Institute of Medicine. *WIC nutrition risk criteria a scientific assessment*. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.; 1996.
4. Pollitt E, Wirtz S. Mother-infant feeding interaction and weight gain in the first month of life. *J.Am.Diet.Assoc.* 1981;78:596-601.
5. WIC Program regulations; Sect. 246.7(e)(2).