

Administration Volume  
Certification Section

3.02100 Determining Household Size

Authority 2019 7 CFR 246.2, 246.7(d) & (h), WIC Policy Memo 99-4, FNS Instruction 308-3, WIC Policy Memo 2013-3

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Revised

**POLICY:** The local agency (LA) shall determine income eligibility (See policy 3.02000.) of all applicants at each certification. The LA staff must interview the applicant to determine the household size to ensure proper income eligibility determination.

The LA shall reassess and verify WIC participant income eligibility during the current certification period if the LA receives information that the household size has changed. Reassessment of income eligibility is not required when 90 days or less remains in the current certification period.

**PROCEDURES:**

- A. For the purpose of determining household size, the words household, family, and economic unit can be used interchangeably to refer to a person or number of persons who usually live together (although not necessarily) and share economic resources and consumption of goods or services.
- B. To be a household, a family or individual (including a minor) must have its own source of income.
- C. Two separate households may reside in the same residence if their production of income and consumption of goods are not shared. Shelter received from another does not have to be considered in determining shared income, food, and resources. It is possible to establish that more than one household lives in one residence through appropriate questioning which helps to make a reasonable determination that there is general economic independence of the households (i.e., both households have their own income *and* pay a proportionate share of household, living, and personal expenses).
- D. Special circumstances:
  1. Pregnant women may be counted as two persons in the household.
    - a. The household size should not be automatically increased. Household size should only be increased if the pregnant woman did not meet the income guidelines during the initial determination.
    - b. The pregnant woman must be given the option to deny the increase in household size for religious, cultural, or other reasons.
    - c. An increase in household size for a pregnant women must be documented electronically in the participant folder because it affects the income eligibility determination.

2. Children living with someone other than their parents or legal guardians:
  - a. A child is generally considered a member of the household in which he or she is residing.
  - b. Foster child

A foster child is considered a separate household from the foster family if the child remains the legal responsibility of the court or other agency. A foster child is considered a household of one.
  - c. Adopted child

An adopted child or a child for whom a family has accepted legal responsibility is considered a member of the household in which he or she resides.
  - d. Divorced families

A child can be counted as a member of only one household. Children are considered a member of the household of the parent or guardian who has legal custody. When custody of a child is shared, the child shall be considered a member of the household in which he or she lives a majority of the time (i.e., more than 50 percent). When a child lives with each parent or guardian 50 percent of the time, the child shall be considered a member of the household of the parent or guardian who applies for WIC services first.
  - e. Separated families

An absent parent will not be considered part of the household if the other parent is receiving no monetary support.
  - f. Institutionalized persons

An individual or family residing in an institution is a separate household from others living in the same institution. If a parent is paying the support of a child residing in an institution, the child is counted as a member of the household.
  - g. Military personnel

Military personnel serving overseas or assigned to a military base, even though they are not living with their families are considered members of the household.

Children in the temporary care of friends or relatives as a result of military service personnel being deployed overseas should choose one of the following options that best suits the situation of the WIC participant:

    - a) Count the deployed parent(s) and the children as one household as would have been the case prior to the deployment.
    - b) Count the children as a separate household.
    - c) Consider the children to be part of the household of the

person(s) they are residing with.

3. Students

- a. Students temporarily away at school are counted as members of the household if the family provides support.
- b. A student who is temporarily away from school receiving no support from parents is considered to be living as a separate household.