

**Definition**

Family/Economic Unit: is defined as a group of related or nonrelated individuals, who usually (although not necessarily), are living together and whose production of income and consumption of goods are related.

An individual does not have to receive cash to be part of the economic unit of others. It is the pooling of income or sharing of the goods and services that creates an economic unit.

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**Determining  
Family Size/  
Economic Unit**

All members of a family or economic unit are to be counted in the family size.

All residents of a homeless facility or an institution shall not be considered as members of a single family, but rather each family, within the homeless facility or institution, shall be considered a separate economic unit.

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**Determining  
Family Size in  
Unusual  
Situations**

There are many different family configurations in communities today and it would be impossible to address all of them in one procedure. The most common situations found in Nebraska are addressed later in this procedure. WIC staff must assess all situations on an individual basis and determine, to the best of their ability, using the information provided in this procedure, the actual family size. In unique situations where no previous experience is available and no guidance is provided, staff should contact the State WIC Office for help in determining the family size.

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**Determining Family Size/Economic Unit For:**

**Children**

A child is counted in the economic unit of the parent or guardian with whom he/she lives.

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**Child Residing  
In a School or  
Institution**

If the parent or guardian is supporting the child, they are counted in the economic unit of the parent or guardian, since the family continues to provide the economic support of the child.

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**Foster Child**

A foster child who is living with a family, but who remains the legal responsibility of the State of Nebraska or another agency, is considered a household of one.

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<b>Adopted Child</b>	An adopted child or a child for whom a family has accepted the legal responsibility is counted in the economic unit of the family with which she/he resides.
<b>Pregnant Woman</b>	A pregnant woman is assessed based on the family size increased by the number of expected births, unless the applicant has a religious or cultural objection that precludes this. If she is expecting one child, count her as two, if she is expecting twins, count her as three, and so on.
<b>Families With a Pregnant Woman</b>	The increased economic unit applies to all other family members applying for WIC when determining economic unit.
<b>Joint Custody</b>	<p>Joint physical custody situations vary among families. The child is counted in the family size of the parent or guardian with whom the child lives the majority of the time or the parent who has legal custody.</p> <p>If the parents/guardians equally share custody, the child is counted as part of both the mother's and the father's households when determining WIC family size for each parent. <b>Remember: The child can only participate in WIC with one parent.</b></p> <p>Example: Jose's parents are divorced and share custody equally. Dad applied for WIC for Jose in June and received benefits. In October, Jose's mother applied for WIC for Jose. Mom should be told that Jose is already participating. Mom and dad must make arrangements to share WIC benefits. Nebraska WIC does not issue partial food packages to each parent, based on the amount of time they each have the child.</p> <p>Example: Michael's parents share equal custody. Mom applies for WIC for Michael in April. They have a family size of two, mom and Michael. In July Michael's stepmother applies for WIC for herself. Her family size is four, herself, the unborn baby, Michael's father, and Michael.</p> <p>Staff should ask to see the court papers, which outline the custody provisions of the divorce or separation.</p>
<b>Unmarried Couple Living Together</b>	If they meet the definition of one economic unit, then both parties are counted in the family size along with any children who may be living in the household.

**Minor Living  
With Parents  
or Other  
Family Unit**

If the minor can provide proof of current eligibility in an adjunct program they are counted as an economic unit which includes themselves and their children.

If a minor lives with a family unit (relatives, friends, etc.) then the following questions should be asked to determine if the applicant is a separate economic unit.

- Is the applicant an emancipated minor? See form in Section B of this procedure manual.
- Does the applicant have a source of income?
- Is the applicant paying for their portion of the rent and groceries using their own income?
- Is the applicant exchanging work for the ability to live in the home?

If it is determined that the applicant is not a separate economic unit then the family size would be all persons living in the household.

If it is determined that the applicant is a separate economic unit, then only the applicant and their children would be counted in the economic unit.

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**More than  
One Family  
Living In The  
Same  
Household**

If the family applying for WIC benefits receives partial or total support, including, but not limited to shelter or food, from another family living in the same household, the combined family size would be used.

If the family applying for WIC benefits lives under the same roof with another family unit, but receives no support (including, but not limited to shelter or food) from the other, each family will be considered a separate economic unit.

Questions to ask which may help determine if a single or separate economic unit:

- Does the family have a source of income?
- Does the family provide a service (i.e. babysitting, cooking, etc.), to be allowed to live with the other family?
- Is this a temporary situation? (i.e. they are waiting for an apartment to become available, they are waiting to receive ADC or other assistance.)
- Is the family paying their own portion of the rent and groceries using their own income?

**Children of  
Military  
Personnel Who  
Are in The  
Temporary  
Care of  
Relatives or  
Friends**

To determine economic unit for military families when military personnel are serving overseas or assigned to a military base and temporarily absent, the following options exist:

**Option 1:** Ask the following question to determine if this option may be used:

Is the total income of the family known?

YES – Count the absent parent(s) and their child(ren) as an economic unit.

NO – Go to option 2.

**Option 2:** Ask the following questions to determine if this option may be used:

- Are the spouse/child(ren) receiving an allotment from the absent parent(s)?

YES – Count the spouse/child(ren) as a family unit.

NO – Determine who is paying the expenses for the family/child(ren). Consider option 3.

- Are the individuals who the child is staying with receiving any income for the support of the child?

YES – Count the child(ren) as a family of one, two, three, etc.

NO – See option 3.

**Option 3:** When staff is unable to use Options 1 and 2, then they should consider the child(ren) part of the economic unit of the person(s) they are residing with.

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**Documenting  
Family Size**

Family size should be documented in the correct field of the computer screen for each individual applying for the WIC Program.