

503 Presumptive Eligibility for Pregnant Women

Definition/Cut-off Value

A pregnant woman who meets WIC income eligibility standards but has not yet been evaluated for nutrition risk, for a period of up to 60 days.

Participant Category and Priority Level

Category	Priority
Pregnant Women*	IV
<i>*Up to 60 days certification</i>	

Justification

In some cases, State or local agencies may not have the essential equipment or staff onsite to perform the necessary bloodwork assessment for pregnant women. There has been some concern that the bloodwork data requirement could be an impediment to the enrollment of eligible pregnant women early in pregnancy. Early enrollment is an important WIC Program objective, as well as a legislative requirement.

In response to these concerns, Congress amended the Child Nutrition Act in 1994 to allow State agencies to consider pregnant women who are income eligible for the WIC Program to be presumed to be nutritionally at risk and thus eligible to participate in the Program. These women may be certified immediately upon application without the results of a nutrition risk evaluation. However, the nutrition risk evaluation must be completed no later than 60 days from the date the pregnant woman is certified for participation. Ideally, States should complete the full nutrition risk assessment at certification or at the earliest possible date thereafter. This would allow the WIC staff to initiate appropriate counseling on nutrition and diet, as well as complete appropriate health care referrals, at the earliest opportunity. This information is also invaluable in developing an appropriate food package for the pregnant woman.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prenatal Nutrition Surveillance System User's Manual. Atlanta: CDC, 1994.
2. WIC Program Regulations; Sect. 246.7 (e)(1)(iii).

Clarification

The requirement to complete a nutritional assessment of a WIC applicant who has been certified based on this criterion within 60 days of the certification does not affect the 90-day windows that are allowed for an applicant to provide proof of pregnancy (See WIC Policy Memorandum #92-13, dated July 8, 1992) or for the use of previously taken blood tests (See WIC Policy Memorandum #96-4, dated December 29, 1995).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines a trimester as a term of three months in the prenatal gestation period with the specific trimesters defined as follows in weeks:

Specific Trimesters Defined (weeks)	
First Trimester	0-13 Weeks
Second Trimester	14-26 Weeks
Third Trimester	27-40 Weeks

Further, CDC begins the calculation of weeks starting with the first day of the last menstrual period. If that date is not available, CDC estimates that date from the estimated date of confinement (EDC). This definition is used in interpreting CDC's Prenatal Nutrition Surveillance System data, comprised primarily of data on pregnant women participating in the WIC Program.