



Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

September 28, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Request for WIC Flexibility in Response to COVID-19

1320  
Braddock  
Place  
Alexandria,  
VA  
22314

**TO:** Jesus Mendoza, Jr.  
Regional Administrator  
Western Regional Office

This letter is in response to the September 23, 2020 correspondence from Guam WIC requesting program flexibility in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) as a result of significant impacts to providing WIC program services to participants due to COVID-19.

Guam WIC requests a waiver of the separation of duties requirement, as outlined in 7 CFR 246.4(a)(27). Pursuant to the authority granted in section 2204(a)(1) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127), USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approves the request to waive the requirement that prohibits a single employee from determining eligibility for all certification criteria and issuing food instruments, cash-value vouchers or supplemental food for the same participant until 30 days after the end of the nationally-declared public health emergency under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d).

Given the recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to control the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic through means of social distancing, USDA FNS understands that normal clinic operations and processes are impeded and many clinics are closed. As a result, Guam WIC reports that many staff are teleworking; therefore, certifications and recertifications are being conducted over the phone by a single staff member. The services required to coordinate separation of duties at this time would impart a significant administrative burden and result in a delay in or inability to provide WIC services. A waiver of the separation of duties requirement removes a requirement that under current circumstances could prevent or impede the provision of essential WIC program services to participants.

This waiver is only applicable to regulations at:

- 246.4(a)(27)(iii), which requires the State to prohibit a single employee from determining eligibility for all certification criteria and issuing food instruments, cash-value vouchers or supplemental food for the same participant.

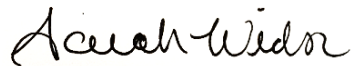
This waiver does not apply to the prohibitions against certifying oneself or close friends and relatives as defined at 7 CFR 246.4(a)(27)(i) and 7 CFR 246.4(a)(27)(ii).

The State agency will submit an amendment to its State Plan to include updated policies and procedures that reduce conflict of interest when the competent professional authority is both determining eligibility and issuing benefits, including an updated plan on conducting file reviews in these instances.

The waiver authority at section 2204(b)(1) of P.L. 116-127 requires the State agency to submit a report which includes a summary of the use of this waiver and a description of whether this waiver resulted in improved services to women, infants and children. The State agency shall provide the Regional Office with this report no later than 1 year after the date of approval.

USDA FNS appreciates Guam WIC's commitment to addressing the operational challenges impeding the delivery of WIC benefits to women, infants, and children in need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Widor".

SARAH WIDOR  
Director  
Supplemental Food Programs Division