

**Woman or 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:

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

**Participant  
category and  
priority level**

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

**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 services coordination with WIC will aid the mother/caregiver in developing skills, knowledge and/or assistance to properly care for a total dependent.

**Clarification/  
Guidelines**

Do not assign this risk code based solely on the applicant's age. It is the responsibility of the CA to determine through client interview if the young age of the applicant limits her ability to made feeding decisions and/or prepare food.

**References**

1. Accardo and Whitman B.: children of Mentally Retarded Parents: American Journal of Diseases of Children; 1990; 144:69-70.
2. Pollin, Ernest and Wirth: Mother-Infant Feeding Interaction and Weight Gain in the First Month of Life; J. Am. Diet. Assoc.; 1981; 78:596-601.
3. Grand, Stephen, Dietz: Pediatric Nutrition: Theory and Practice; 1987; pp. 627-44.
4. Institute of Medicine: WIC Nutrition Risk Criteria: A Scientific Assessment; 1996; pp. 321-3.
5. WIC Program regulations: Section 246.7(e)(2).