Economic Unit for Income

Purpose
To establish a consistent method of determining income eligibility.

Authority
7 CFR Part 246.7; USDA FNS Instruction 803-3; 25 TAC §31.22

Policy
Income eligibility for WIC services shall be based on the total income of the economic unit.

Definitions
Economic Unit means all persons, related and/or unrelated, living together in the same dwelling, with the exception of the following special situations: pregnant woman, infants/children placed through Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS), e.g., foster/kinship, and individuals who qualify as a separate economic unit.

Procedures
I. When determining an applicant's income eligibility for WIC services:
   A. Determine economic unit size by counting all persons living in the dwelling, with the following exceptions:
      1. pregnant women;
      2. individuals who reside in institutions;
      3. infants/children placed through DFPS; and
      4. individuals who qualify as a separate economic unit.
   B. Determine total economic unit income by counting all incomes of all members of the unit.
C. Compare the total economic unit income for the economic unit size with the Texas WIC Income Guidelines (see Policy CS:12.0).

D. Record unit size and income(s) in Family Page of the MIS.

II. For a pregnant woman, with the exception that she qualifies as a separate economic unit, increase her family size by the number of children she expects to give birth to. If she is expecting one child, count her as two individuals; if she is expecting twins, count her as three individuals. Any unborn fetus(s) shall be counted as part of the household size.

III. Individuals residing in institutions (e.g., homes for battered women, drug treatment centers, intermediate care facilities for mentally retarded or mentally ill persons, half-way houses, etc.) that meet the conditions specified in Policy CS:35 are considered a separate economic unit which consists of the applicant and family members residing in the institution.

IV. An infant/child placed through DFPS shall be considered a separate economic unit (a one-person economic unit).

A. The income of the child shall be the payments made by DFPS or another outside source for the care of the child. Note: If a foster child receives income, whether from a job or outside financial resource, it must be counted in the income determination.

B. Income reassessment during an active certification for an infant/child who is later adopted is not required if 90 days or less before expiration for certification period.

V. When determining economic unit size:
A. Do not include members who have been absent from the economic unit for more than six months, unless the member continues to exercise customary family responsibilities, i.e., financially contributes to family.

B. You may include persons temporarily absent if the following circumstances exist:
   1. other members still consider the economic unit to be the principal residence of the absent member; and
   2. the absence does not exceed six months (except in the case of school or military service); and
   3. the absence is for a purpose such as school, training, employment, hospitalization, institutionalization, military service etc.; and
   4. the absent member continues to exercise customary family responsibilities, e.g., a parent continues providing support, physical care, planning, etc.

VI. On an exception basis, a separate economic unit (SEU) may be identified within a dwelling;
   A. if the applicant indicates that he/she should be counted as a separate group/economic unit; and
   B. the applicant verbally confirms that the unit usually purchases or intends to purchase and prepare food separately; and
   C. the unit meets the minimum income requirements.
   D. LA staff shall identify the household as a SEU in the Family Page of The MIS.

VII. Do not certify the following as a Separate Economic Unit:
    A. minor children who live with their parents;
    B. a child under age 18 who lives with adult household members who serve as managing conservators; That is,
       1. the household member(s) provides more than half of the child's total support; and
2. the family states that the child is under parent or guardian control.
C. spouses: two people who are legally married, and/or two persons who live together and represent themselves as married.