WIC Certification Specialist

Purpose

To provide local agencies (LAs) the ability to train staff by offering a paraprofessional training program for WIC Certification Specialists (WCS). The program may be implemented with State Agency (SA) approval.

Authority

7 CFR Part 246.2, 246.7

Policy

The WIC Certification Specialist (WCS) Training Program is available through the SA. A formal application for the WCS program must be completed and approved prior to implementing the training. Upon successful completion of the program the candidate is State Certified as a WCS. The WCS Certificate may be used at any local agency within the State of Texas at the discretion of the LA Director. It does not guarantee employment at another LA, and the credentials do not guarantee the holder will be offered a position as a WCS. A WCS has the credentials to certify applicants/clients for the WIC program.

Procedures

WCS Program Preceptors and Proxies

I. The LA must have a WCS Program Preceptor with adequate hours to train the candidate(s) and provide oversight of the LA’s WCS Program.
   A. The WCS Program Preceptor must be a Registered Dietitian (R.D.) or Licensed Dietitian (L.D.) on staff or working as a consultant for a minimum of 25 hours per month, or a full-time degreed Nutritionist.
   B. A LA may request a waiver for the WCS Program Preceptor required minimum hours, submitted with justification for consideration by the state.
Texas WIC
Health and Human Services Commission

Effective June 1, 2021
Policy No. CS:16.0

II. The LA has an option to request the use of a WCS Program Proxy. A Proxy is a qualified individual, working at the LA or contracted with the LA, who assist the WCS Program Preceptor in the implementation of the WCS Certification Program.
   A. A Proxy is not required for the WCS Program but is an option for LAs who would benefit from additional trainers and support.
   B. All Proxy requests, with description of need, must be submitted to the SA for approval.
   C. Selected Proxies must be a Registered Dietitian (R.D.) or a full-time degreed Nutritionist.
   D. The Proxy is approved to assist with training, but the WCS Program Preceptor must provide the final sign off for all observations and WCS certification.

WCS Program Application & Requirements

I. The LA Director must complete a WCS Program application. Applications may be obtained from the SA WCS Program Coordinator. Applications must be submitted to the WCS Program inbox (WCSProgram@hhs.texas.gov). Once the application is approved, the LA may implement the WCS Program. The WCS Program application is considered active for 2 years. After 2 years, a new WCS Program application must be submitted if additional candidates are to be added to the program.
   A. Candidates must be nominated by their LA Director. LA Directors and WCS Preceptors may develop additional criteria that are over and above the state minimum requirements. The existence of a WCS program at a local agency does not automatically qualify all staff to take the program.
   B. The LA Director or WCS Preceptor must submit all WCS candidates to the SA for approval. Once the candidate has been approved by the SA, the local agency will notify the SA of the candidate(s) training start date.
C. The WCS Preceptor’s signature is required to sign off upon the candidate’s successful completion of the training. At the discretion of the WCS Preceptor, a WCS Proxy’s signature may be used to sign off on the candidate’s successful completion of the training.

D. LA’s must acquire candidate approval from the SA, prior to the start of their training, when adding additional candidates to their existing WCS program. In order to obtain SA approval, the Candidate Profile, Nutritional Pre-Requisite Training and Staff List of Duties by Clinic Site (as needed) must be submitted for each new candidate.

E. LA’s that do not have an existing state approved WCS program who want to hire a certified WCS or certified WCS with a previous, but expired WCS certification, must complete the following procedures:
   1. The LA must submit a program application to the WCS Program inbox (WCSProgram@hhs.texas.gov) for approval to have a certified WCS join their agency and preform WCS job duties.
   2. If the certified WCS’s certification has expired, the LA must submit a program application to the WCS Program inbox (WCSProgram@hhs.texas.gov) for approval. Additionally,
      a. the WCS candidate with the expired certification will have the option to test out of full WCS program requirements if their certification has been expired for less than or equal to 2 years, OR
      b. the WCS candidate may retake the full WCS program to return to active certification status.
   3. If the WCS candidate who maintains an expired certification fails the “test out” option after 1 attempt to test out of the WCS program the WCS candidate will be required to retake the full WCS training program.

II. LAs must provide the WCS candidate with dedicated time during their workday to study in an appropriate workspace.

III. The WCS Preceptor must complete observations of the candidate(s) performing competencies and submit the dates of completion along with
the exam scores to the WCS Program inbox
(WCSPProgram@hhs.texas.gov).

IV. LA’s have the option to have their WCS’s complete formula approval
certification training offered by the SA.
A. Only existing certified WCS’s are eligible.
B. The LA director will select the appropriate candidates.

WCS Candidates

I. WCS candidates must have a minimum of a high school diploma or
equivalent.

II. WCS candidates must have a minimum 3 months working experience in
a WIC clinic before s/she may be considered as a candidate.
A. LA Directors may set higher minimum requirements based on their
agency’s needs.
B. LA Directors may request a work experience waiver for direct hires
from outside WIC with accompanying justification.

III. WCS candidates must complete the training course, including passing
the WCS competency-based exams within a 3-month (minimum) to 9-
month (maximum) time frame. Extensions may be granted by the SA
with appropriate justification from the LA Director and WCS Preceptor.

IV. Upon a WCS candidate’s successful completion of the WCS Program, the
SA will issue a signed certificate of completion. The candidate may then
function as a Certified WCS after the LA Director signs the certificate.

V. Once a candidate becomes a certified WCS, s/he must complete a
minimum 5 hours of continuing education credits (CEC) every fiscal year
beginning the fiscal year after initial certification to maintain WCS
certification.
A. Trainings may include SA trainings, LA trainings or subject
appropriate trainings offered by outside entities.
1. Each training will count towards one hour of credit, unless otherwise specified.
2. LA’s must submit verification of completion to the SA WCS Program inbox (WCSProgram@hhs.texas.gov).

WCS Formula Certification

I. A certified WCS may add formula approval to their certification after successful completion of the Basic Infant Formula module and the WCS Formula Training module. Requests to start formula training must be submitted to the WCS Program inbox (WCSProgram@hhs.texas.gov).

II. The SA will add the letter “F” to the certificate number (e.g. 1234F) and assign the F-WCS credential to identify Formula Certified WCS’s who have completed the required trainings and are now authorized to approve formula (see policy FD:16.0).
   A. A WCS may not contact a client’s Health Care Provider (HCP) for formula approvals except to obtain a missing date, signature or length of issuance for the Medical Request Form for Formula/Food. (see policy FD:16.0)
   B. A Formula Certified WCS (F-WCS) must complete a minimum of one formula training per fiscal year to maintain formula certification and may count towards their continuing education.
      1. Trainings may include but are not limited to new/revised formula trainings, formula conference calls, state conference formula training sessions, subject appropriate trainings offered by outside entities or the LA, or any other related state offered formula trainings or activities.
      2. LA’s must submit verification of completion to the WCS Program inbox (WCSProgram@hhs.texas.gov).

III. The SA will issue a signed certificate of completion indicating the WCS is now formula certified. The candidate may then function as a Formula Certified WCS after the LA Director signs the certificate.