

641—73.12(135) Right to appeal—participant.

73.12(1) *Right of appeal.* A WIC participant shall have the right to appeal whenever a decision or action of the department or contract agency results in the individual's denial of participation, disqualification, or termination from the WIC program. All hearings shall be conducted in accordance with these rules.

73.12(2) *Notification of appeal rights and right to hearing.* Each WIC program participant shall be notified in writing of the participant's right to appeal at the time of application and at the time of denial of eligibility or termination from the WIC program and at the time a participant receives a notice of a claim being established for repayment of improperly issued benefits. Appeal and hearing notices shall also be written, posted, and immediately available at contract agencies to explain the method by which a hearing is requested, and that the participant may present arguments at the hearing either personally or through a representative such as a relative, friend, legal counsel, or other spokesperson.

73.12(3) *Request for hearing.* A request for hearing by an individual or the individual's parent, guardian, or other representative must be made in writing or verbally. The request for hearing shall be made to the contract agency within 60 days from the date the individual receives notice of the decision or action that is the subject of appeal.

73.12(4) *Denial or dismissal of request.* The request for hearing shall not be denied or dismissed unless:

- a. The request is not received within the required time frame;
- b. The request is withdrawn in writing by the appellant or a representative of the appellant; or
- c. The appellant has been denied participation by a previous hearing and cannot provide evidence that circumstances relevant to WIC program eligibility have changed in such a way as to justify a hearing.

73.12(5) *Receipt of benefits during appeal.* Participants who appeal the termination of benefits within the 15-day advance adverse action notice period must continue to receive WIC program benefits until the hearing official reaches a decision or the certification period expires, whichever occurs first, provided that subsequent certifications are completed as required. Participants who are terminated because of categorical ineligibility (e.g., a child over five years of age) shall not continue to receive benefits during the administrative appeal period. Participants who are terminated at the end of a certification period for failure to reapply, following notice of expiration of certification, shall not continue to receive benefits during the administrative appeal period. Applicants who are denied WIC program benefits at the initial certification or at subsequent recertifications, due to a finding of ineligibility, shall not receive benefits during the administrative appeal period.

73.12(6) *Hearing officer.* The hearing officer shall be impartial, shall not have been directly involved in the initial determination of the action being contested, and shall not have a personal stake in the decision. If the party filing the appeal objects prior to a scheduled hearing to a contract agency director serving as a hearing officer in a case involving the director's own agency, another hearing officer shall be selected and, if necessary, the hearing shall be rescheduled as expeditiously as possible. Contract agencies may seek the assistance of the state WIC office in the appointment of a hearing officer.

73.12(7) *Notice of hearing.* The hearing officer shall schedule the time, place and date of the hearing as expeditiously as possible. Parties shall receive notice of the hearing at least ten days in advance of the scheduled hearing. The hearing shall be accessible to the party requesting the hearing. The hearing shall be scheduled within three weeks from the date the contract agency received the request for a hearing, or as soon as possible thereafter, unless a later date is agreed upon by the parties.

73.12(8) *Conduct of hearing.* The hearing shall be conducted in accordance with federal regulations found at 7 CFR 246.23. Copies of these regulations are available from the contract agency and the department.

a. At a minimum, the party requesting the hearing or the party's representative shall have the opportunity to:

- (1) Examine, prior to and during the hearing, the documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal;
- (2) Be assisted or represented by an attorney or other person at the party's own expense;
- (3) Bring witnesses;

(4) Question or refute any testimony or evidence, including an opportunity to confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses;

(5) Submit evidence to establish all pertinent facts and circumstances in the case;

(6) Advance arguments without undue interference.

b. If a participant fails to attend the hearing, the agency will reschedule the hearing and give the participant 20 days' notice. The participant may have another person as the participant's designee. If neither the participant nor the designee attends the second hearing, the appeal will be closed.

73.12(9) *Decision.* Decisions of the hearing officer shall be in writing and shall be based on evidence presented at the hearing. The decision shall summarize the facts of the case, specify the reasons for the decision, and identify the supporting evidence and pertinent regulations or policy. The decision shall be issued within 45 days of the receipt of the request for a hearing, unless a longer period is agreed upon by the parties.

73.12(10) *Appeal of decision to the department.* If either party to a hearing receives an unfavorable decision, that decision may be appealed to the department. Such appeals must be made within 15 days of the mailing date of the decision. Appeals shall be sent to the Division Director, Division of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention, Iowa Department of Public Health, Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0075.

73.12(11) *Contested case.* Upon receipt of an appeal that meets contested case status, the appeal shall be forwarded within five working days to the Iowa department of inspections and appeals pursuant to the rules adopted by that agency regarding the transmission of contested cases. The information upon which the adverse action is based and any additional information that may be provided by the aggrieved party shall also be provided to the Iowa department of inspections and appeals.

73.12(12) *Receipt of benefits during appeal to the department.* If the decision being appealed concerns disqualification from the WIC program, the appellant shall not continue to receive benefits while an appeal to the department of a decision rendered on appeal at the local level is pending.

73.12(13) *Hearing.* Parties shall receive notice of the hearing in advance. The administrative law judge shall schedule the time, place and date of the hearing so that the hearing is held as expeditiously as possible. The hearing shall be conducted according to the procedural rules of the Iowa department of inspections and appeals found in 481—Chapter 10.

73.12(14) *Decision of administrative law judge.* The administrative law judge's decision shall be issued within 60 days from the date of request for hearing. When the administrative law judge makes a proposed decision and order, it shall be served by certified mail, return receipt requested, or delivered by personal service. That proposed decision and order then becomes the department's final decision without further proceedings ten days after it is received by the aggrieved party unless an appeal to the director is taken as provided in subrule 73.12(15).

73.12(15) *Appeal to director.* Any appeal to the director for review of the proposed decision and order of the administrative law judge shall be filed in writing and mailed to the Director, Iowa Department of Public Health, Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0075, by certified mail, return receipt requested, or delivered by personal service within ten days after the receipt of the administrative law judge's proposed decision and order by the aggrieved party. A copy of the appeal shall also be mailed to the administrative law judge. Any request for an appeal shall state the reason for appeal.

73.12(16) *Record of hearing.* Upon receipt of an appeal request, the administrative law judge shall prepare the record of the hearing for submission to the director. The record shall include the following:

a. All pleadings, motions, and rules.

b. All evidence received or considered and all other submissions by recording or transcript.

c. A statement of all matters officially noticed.

d. All questions and offers of proof, objections and rulings thereon.

e. All proposed findings and exceptions.

f. The proposed decision and order of the administrative law judge.

73.12(17) *Decision of director.* An appeal to the director shall be based on the record of the hearing before the administrative law judge. The decision and order of the director becomes the department's

final decision upon receipt by the aggrieved party and shall be delivered by certified mail, return receipt requested, or by personal service.

73.12(18) *Exhausting administrative remedies.* It is not necessary to file an application for a rehearing to exhaust administrative remedies when appealing to the director or the district court as provided in Iowa Code section 17A.19. The aggrieved party to the final decision of the department who has exhausted all administrative remedies may petition for judicial review of that action pursuant to Iowa Code chapter 17A.

73.12(19) *Petition for judicial review.* Any petition for judicial review of a decision and order shall be filed in the district court within 30 days after the decision and order becomes final. A copy of the notice of appeal shall be sent to the department by certified mail, return receipt requested, or by personal service. The address is: Division Director, Division of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention, Iowa Department of Public Health, Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0075.

73.12(20) *Benefits after decision.* If a final decision is in favor of the person requesting a hearing and benefits were denied or discontinued, benefits shall begin immediately and continue pending further review should an appeal to district court be filed. If a final decision is in favor of the contract agency, benefits shall be terminated, if still being received, as soon as administratively possible after the issuance of the decision. Benefits denied during an administrative appeal period may not be awarded retroactively following a final decision in favor of a person applying for benefits.

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