

3.7 Caseload Management

The Caseload Management functional area is intended to support the tracking and analysis of caseload allocations and actual participation in the WIC Program. It collects and stores information on caseload allocations to local agencies, monitors actual participation against assigned caseloads, and conducts caseload reallocations. Caseload management functions can be part of the WIC IS, another State financial system, or a spreadsheet application.

Caseload Management is comprised of the following functions:

- Capture and Maintain Caseload Data
 - Capture Data on Potentially Eligible Population
 - Capture Historical Participation Data
- Allocate Caseload
 - Determine Maximum State Caseload
 - Prepare Local Agency Caseload Allocation Estimates
 - Record Caseload Allocations
- Monitor Caseload
 - Track Actual Participation
 - Conduct Caseload Reallocations

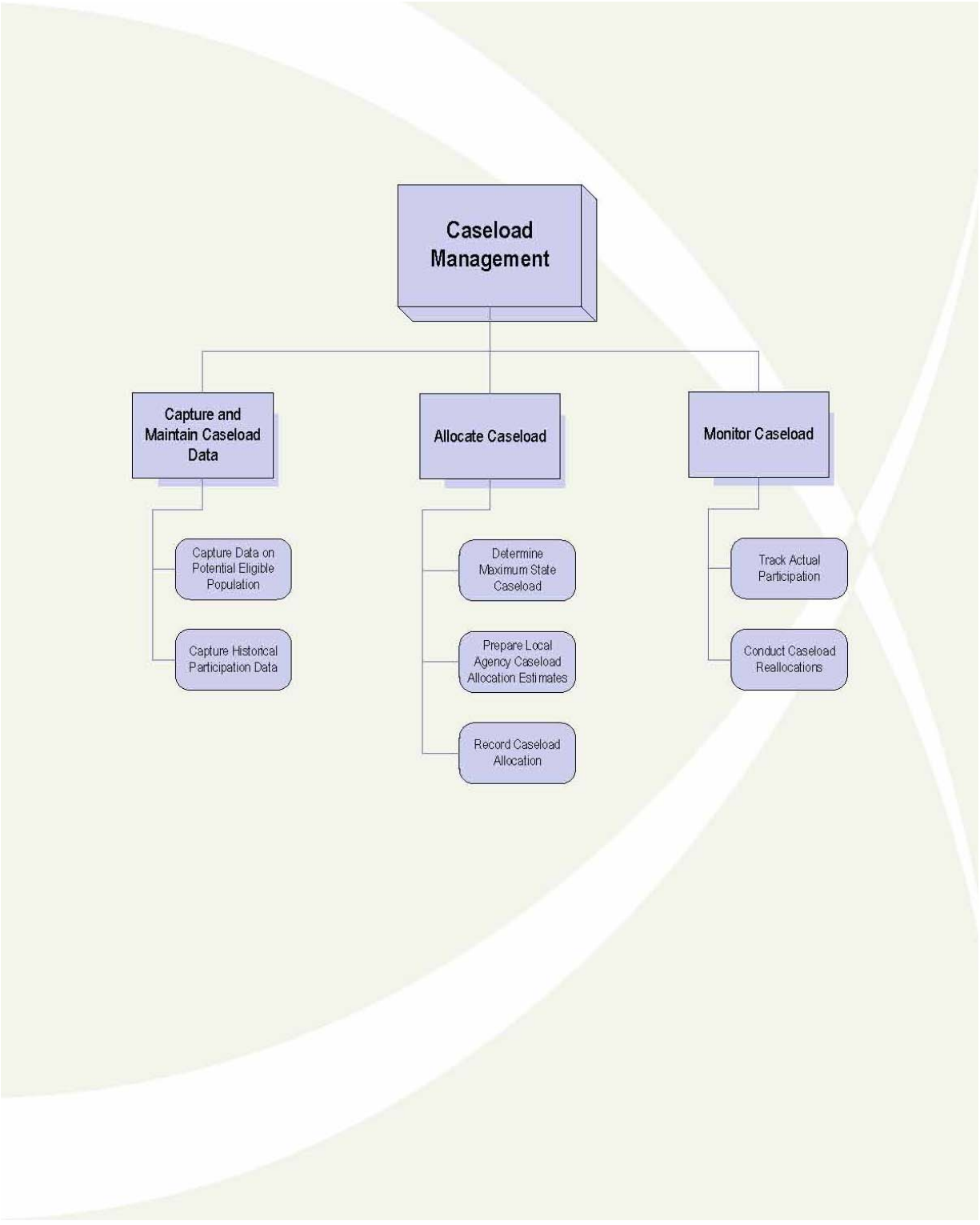


Exhibit 3-7: Functional Decomposition Diagram – Caseload Management

3.7.1 Capture and Maintain Caseload Data

In order to perform caseload allocations, the State agency needs State and local agency data on the potentially eligible population and historical participation. Under this function, the State agency determines the total number of caseload slots it can allocate to local agencies based on projected participation and expenditure data.

In some State agency systems, caseload allocation and assignment is maintained as part of the WIC IS. In other State agency systems, caseload allocation and assignment is maintained elsewhere but depends on the WIC IS for providing the data necessary to conduct the caseload allocation analysis. For example, data captured through the system may be extracted and exported into a PC-based spreadsheet application. The functionality described below for obtaining data required for caseload allocation analysis may occur in the WIC IS or an alternative system.

3.7.1.1 Capture Data on Potentially Eligible Population

FNS annually provides the State agency with its Federal food grant level and an estimate of the potentially income eligible infant and children population in the State. The State agency can use this data, along with data available from State data sources (e.g., the number of persons served by Medicaid, the Food Stamp Program, TANF, etc.), to estimate the number of persons that may apply for WIC in the State and its local agency service areas. The State agency needs to consider the impact of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) on its potentially eligible population in areas where both WIC and CSFP operate.

FNS also provides an estimate of the State agency's federally projected average monthly participation for the fiscal year based on the State agency's actual closed-out food package costs for April through March of the prior fiscal year adjusted for inflation. This participation estimate provides a benchmark for the State agency to use in its caseload estimates. In addition, if the State agency estimates that it can serve more participants than its federally projected average monthly participation, the State agency may submit a plan to convert food grant funds to NSA grant funds to cover the additional cost of serving more participants.

The system should capture data on the potentially eligible WIC population.

Inputs:

Caseload- Local Agency Potentially Eligible Population

Caseload- State Agency Federal Participation Estimate

Caseload- State Agency FNS Potentially Eligible Population
Caseload- State Agency State Potentially Eligible Population

Process:

- Add, update, or delete potentially eligible population data
- Update the Caseload - State Agency and Caseload - Local Agency data stores

Outputs:

Screen display or report of potentially eligible population data

Implementation Approaches

- ▶ The system could collect information from other programs to determine a potentially eligible population in a State or local agency service area.
- ▶ The system could use data, such as historical certification, enrollment, participation, and food instrument redemption rates, to determine what percentage of the potentially eligible population to use for caseload estimates.

3.7.1.2 Capture Historical Participation Data

To prepare for allocations to local agencies, the State agency must consider historical participation data that may influence caseload allocations. These data may include each local agency's prior year caseload allocations, actual participation levels by participant category (pregnant, breastfeeding, postpartum, infant and child), priority levels served, applicants on waiting lists, and migrant participants.

The system should have a way to capture historical caseload information to use in making caseload allocations/projections.

Inputs:

Participant Category Code
Participant Priority Level Code
Participant Residential Status Code
Participant Status Code
Participation Actual
Participation Month
Participation Projected

Process:

- Retrieve participation data for each local agency from the Caseload- Local Agency and Participation data stores
- Update the Caseload- Local Agency data store

Outputs:

Screen or report of local agency historical participation profile

Implementation Approaches

- ▶ The system could use a variety of data, such as Prior Year Caseload level, Participation by Participant Category, Waiting List Applicants, Participation by Priority Level, and Local Agency Migrant Participation, to calculate caseload estimates.

3.7.2 Allocate Caseload

The State agency must now assign the caseload levels based on greatest population need and the extent to which the local agency has reached the potential eligible population in its service area. The State agency may also want to consider the ability of the local agency to serve a particular caseload level given its current or anticipated staffing level and clinic capacity. Additionally, the State agency must ensure that enough caseload is allocated to expend at least 97 percent of its food funds without overspending its food grant.

During the year, the State agency may need to recalculate its caseload allocations and increase or decrease the caseload assignments of its local agencies in response to a variety of circumstances, such as unexpected increases in food costs or receipt of additional Federal food funds through periodic reallocations. The WIC IS should alert the State agency if it appears that significant underspending or overspending may occur, so the State agency may take appropriate actions to address the situation.

3.7.2.1 Determine Maximum State Caseload

The system should calculate the maximum number of participants the State agency can serve on a monthly basis.

Inputs:

- Caseload- State Agency Caseload Achievement Rate
- Caseload- State Agency Caseload Growth or Reduction Rate
- Caseload- State Agency Month

Caseload- State Agency Total Monthly Caseload

Process:

- Adjust monthly State agency caseload with any caseload achievement rate factor
- Adjust monthly caseload to allow for participation levels fluctuations and/or targeted growth or reduction rates
- Store maximum State agency caseload level by month in Caseload-State Agency data store

Outputs:

Screen showing monthly state caseload target

Implementation Approaches

- ▶ Local agencies often do not serve the full caseload allocation, so the State agency may wish to use a caseload achievement rate adjustment to inflate caseload slots allocated. For instance, if local agencies have reached a historical average of 95 percent of their caseload allocation, the State agency may wish to inflate the caseload allocation by a 5 percent caseload achievement rate adjustment to ensure that local agencies reach 100 percent of the caseload allocation.
- ▶ If the State agency expects fluctuations in month-to-month participation (e.g., due to serving migrant participants) or anticipates it will need to increase or decrease from its current participation level to fully use its food grant, the system could factor this into the monthly allocations. The system could then store the monthly State agency caseload for each month in the Federal fiscal year.
- ▶ The State agency could use the system to compare its caseload estimate with its federally projected average monthly participation.

3.7.2.2 Prepare Local Agency Caseload Allocation Estimates

After its maximum monthly caseload level is determined, the State agency typically allocates the caseload among its local agencies so that they know how many participants they can serve each month. Local agency caseload allocations are typically determined by the State agency on the basis of a variety data, including current and historical participation, categorical participation, no-show rates, food instrument redemption rates, caseload target rates, historical and projected migrant participation, CSFP participation in the WIC service area, and the number of persons on waiting lists.

It should be noted that some State agencies choose to perform centralized caseload management without assigning specific caseload allocations to the local agencies. In these systems, local agencies generally are allowed to serve as many participants as they can support.

Participants may be accepted at all priority levels. The State agency monitors the total caseload and issues statewide directives to either increase outreach or stop accepting new cases according to the availability of funds. To operate the WIC Program in this manner, it is important for the State agency to have accurate and timely participation and expenditure data and to know, with relative precision, the lead times needed to achieve an increase or decrease in total caseload.

It is possible to automate the process by which the State agency determines its caseload allocations for each local agency by devising an allocation formula that accounts for all the factors in this process. Each State agency usually has a unique method of determining caseload allocations. Consideration is usually given to factors such as current local agency caseload allocation, percentage of assigned caseload served, historical participation trends, number of eligible participants in the local agency service area, coverage of potential eligibles, local agency participant growth rate, participant-to-staff ratios, current waiting list by category and priority, severity of health risk among the local agency's target population, and local agency staffing levels and clinic capacity.

The system should automatically calculate local agency caseload allocations based on a formula that establishes the relationship between a set of factors determined by the State agency. If the system automatically allocates and assigns caseload to local agencies, it must be possible to manually override and update the formula and the caseload assignments to accommodate factors that may not be accounted for when the formula was initially built into the system.

Since Federal grant reallocations can occur at any time during the year, the system must permit updating of data for calculating caseload allocations upon request. The system should also have the flexibility to make adjustments that are required because of differences between the State and Federal fiscal years. The total sum of all local agency caseload allocations should not exceed the maximum caseload allocation for the State.

Inputs:

Caseload- Local Agency Caseload Achievement Rate

Caseload- Local Agency Caseload Growth or Reduction Rate

Caseload- Local Agency Monthly Caseload Assignment

Caseload- Local Agency Prior Year Caseload Level

Caseload- Local Agency Total Actual Local Agency Monthly Participation

Caseload- State Agency Total Monthly Caseload

Other Caseload Allocation Parameters to use "what if" capability

Process:

- Retrieve data from the Caseload- State Agency and Caseload- Local Agency data stores
- Assign caseload to local agencies according to the State caseload allocation formula
- Provide “what if” analysis capability to demonstrate the impact on caseload allocation by changing the formula and/or data used for calculating State and local caseload allocations

Outputs:

Screen display or report showing proposed caseload allocation by local agency

3.7.2.3 Record Caseload Allocations

The division of the caseload allocation process into two steps, analysis and approval, provides State agencies with the flexibility to determine whether it is appropriate to modify caseload assignments on the basis of changes suggested by the system model. State agencies should make this decision before such changes are officially stored or announced to local agencies.

After receiving State agency approval, the system should store the caseload allocation data either as recommended by the system or as manually entered by the State agency. This information will be used for notifying the local agencies of their individual allocations and tracking assigned caseload against actual participation.

Inputs:

Caseload- Local Agency Month

Caseload- Local Agency Monthly Caseload Assignment

Clinic Identification Number

Local Agency Identification Number

Process:

- Collect and store local agency caseload allocation in Caseload- Local Agency data store
- Compare sum of local agency caseload allocations to maximum state allocation

- Update Caseload–Local Agency data store with monthly caseload assignment

Outputs:

Screen or report of caseload by local agency

Notification to each local agency of their allocated caseload

3.7.3 Monitor Caseload

After the caseload has been allocated, it is important to track actual participation levels against the assigned caseload levels so that the State or local agency can make adjustments in response to various changes or trends observed over the course of the year. The need for adjustments to assigned caseload levels may be due to local agency performance or to external trends that influence State expenditure patterns.

3.7.3.1 Track Actual Participation

This function addresses current enrollment (i.e., the number of persons authorized to receive benefits) and participation (i.e., the number of persons that actually received benefits) for the specified time period. Some State agencies use a calendar-month certification and food benefit issuance system,, while others use a rolling-month system, which assigns a rolling-month cycle (e.g., the 12th of one month to the 11th of the next month) to participants based on the day of the month that they are certified. The State agency WIC IS must count actual participation in a way that ensures that participants are only counted once during the report period.

The system should retrieve assigned caseload data and compare it to actual participation data on a month-by-month and annual basis, in accordance with regulations.

Inputs:

Caseload- Local Agency Caseload Achievement Rate

Caseload- Local Agency Caseload Growth or Reduction Rate

Caseload- Local Agency Total Actual Local Agency Monthly Participation

Food Instrument Valid Start Date

Food Instrument Identification Number

Participant Certification Start Date

Participant Certification End Date

Participant Identification Number

Process:

The following analyses may be made for each local agency.

- Calculate caseload achievement rate and current rate of change (from previous months) in caseload achievement rate
- Store in Caseload- Local Agency data store
- Update Participation data store

Outputs:

Screen display or report on local agency caseload utilization

Implementation Approaches

- ▶ The system must track participation by tracking food benefits issued to participants. For breastfed infants or breastfeeding mothers who receive no supplemental foods or food instruments, the system could produce a non-negotiable food instrument to trigger the participation count function.
- ▶ Regardless of whether the State agency uses a calendar-month or rolling-month certification and food benefit issuance cycle, the system must only count an individual participant once in the participation count for the report month.
- ▶ For State agencies using a rolling-month issuance cycle, the system would have to include date parameters that allow the State agency to track and report participation in accordance with Federal regulations, which require the State agency to report participation and expenditure data by calendar month for the Federal fiscal year.
- ▶ The system could notify the State agency if local agencies are above or below their average monthly caseload assignment by a certain percentage. When a local agency has reached its maximum caseload level, the system could automatically warn the agency against accepting additional applications. Alternatively, when a local agency is significantly below its caseload assignment, the State agency can consider reallocating a portion of its caseload to another local agency that needs additional caseload.
- ▶ The system also could provide information on key trends that may impact a State agency's decision to perform caseload reallocations among local agencies. Such data may include an increase or decrease in no-show or food instrument redemption rates, exceeding target participation for particular participant categories, trends in breastfeeding rates, or trends in certification expirations.

3.7.3.2 Conduct Caseload Reallocations

The State agency needs to carefully monitor both State and local agency participation and expenditure trends throughout the year to ensure it does

not overspend or significantly underspend its food funds. If some local agencies are under or over performing, a reallocation of caseload may be warranted. Similarly, the State agency may need to adjust its caseload allocations due to funding and expenditure trends. Expenditures could be impacted by funding increases or decreases, infant formula rebate changes, significant changes in food prices, a decision to convert food funds to NSA funds, or shifts in the number of applicants in the various priority categories⁵⁰.

The system should support the reallocation of caseload as necessary.

Inputs:

Caseload- Local Agency Month

Caseload- Local Agency Monthly Caseload Assignment

Clinic Identification Number

Local Agency Identification Number

Participation Actual

Participation Month

Process:

- Monitor participation, food package costs, and expenditure data for significant changes from the original data used to allocate caseload
- If significant changes occur, input the necessary updated data and recalculate caseload allocations
- Collect and store local agency caseload allocation in Caseload-Local Agency data store
- Compare sum of local agency caseload allocations to the State agency total caseload allocation
- Update Caseload–Local Agency data store with monthly caseload assignment

Outputs:

Screen display or report with updated caseload allocations

Implementation Approaches

- ▶ The system could use the participant priority system to manage caseload.

⁵⁰ Some State agencies recommend that budgeting and caseload reallocation be done by a financial management system instead of the WIC IS because of the many external variables that impact caseload management decisions.