Welcome to the first issue of the Eight Northern WIC Program Quarterly Newsletter. Our goal in producing the newsletter is to keep our participants informed and involved. Since we want the newsletter to be as relevant as possible to your needs.

No one has gone unaffected by the coronavirus pandemic, but the Eight Northern WIC program is trying to be as seamless as possible. We’re still providing benefits. Our appointments are done over the phone, so they’re a little bit different from what our normal activities are. But we’re still servicing everybody and giving everybody their benefits.”

Currently, our WIC office has been operating with the stay at home directive but the staff has been in the office four days out of the week with a four (6) hour work schedule. The first two weeks of the month are critical for our participation recertification and new certification. We have instituted procedures to ensure income identity and residency is documented. Clinic services are provided as follows; signage will indicate that the building is closed to the public, but the WIC office will continue services. The sign must include clear directives for participant to call and let staff know they are present. Staff will meet the participant and obtain the documentation in the designated curbside lane. To the best extent possible, staff will maintain the greatest distance between them and the participant. In addition, our office will be mailing voucher checks to the participant and we will be allowing certification from home. All documents for income identity and residency is through email, and/or faxed copies.
DIRECTOR’S CORNER —CON’T

We are two months into an unprecedented stay-at-home initiative here in Eight Northern and the efforts of all have helped keep our number of COVID-19 cases relatively low. Good job everyone!

Although it has been a huge strain on daily life, there are some bright spots in the process. Home gardens around the your area are getting whipped into shape, cooking has been rediscovered. Families are exercising together through daily walks and bike rides. And our children are adapting to remote learning, with a huge amount of parental support. This, for now, is our new normal. Perhaps when we are on the other side of this crisis, we will maintain some of the ways we reconnect-ed with our loved ones—something that often gets lost in the hectic pace of usual daily life.

These are extraordinarily difficult times. There is no simple solution. My sincere hope is that we will all work together toward a better future.

Be Smart, Be Safe and stay healthy!

By Leonard Mirabal

ROLE OF THE WIC PROGRAM

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a public health nutrition program under USDA providing nutrition education, nutritious foods, breastfeeding support, and healthcare referrals for income eligible women who are pregnant or post partum, infants and children up to age 5. WIC safeguards the health of eligible women, infants, and children who are at nutritional risk.

LATEST FROM NATIONAL WIC ASSOC. (NWA)

The latest news from our advocates in Washington is continuance support of WIC Programs throughout the states. National WIC Association (NWA) have and will continue to advocate for these critical priorities in the months ahead.

The HEROES Act includes two provisions specific to WIC program administration. The bill includes an additional $1.1 billion in appropriated funding to ensure adequate resources to meet increased demand. The bill also includes short-term flexibilities for states to increase the value of WIC’s Cash Value Benefit for fruit and vegetable purchases, permitting state WIC agencies to increase the benefit up to $35.00 per month through the end of September 2020. NWA worked closely with legislative staff to develop this provision to meet the needs of both WIC participants and produce growers.

WIC Act Introduced in House

Last week, a bipartisan group of congresswomen introduced the Wise Investment in our Children Act (WIC Act), landmark legislation that would expand access to WIC services and streamline clinic processes. The WIC Act would allow for an extension of child eligibility to age six or the beginning of kindergarten, extension of postpartum women’s eligibility to two years, and extend infant certification periods to two years. While these important provisions were not included in any COVID-related legislation, each of these priorities would enhance WIC’s quality nutrition services by ensuring healthier pregnancies and birth outcomes, improving diet quality for women and children, and streamlining WIC clinic processes at a key period of growth and development. The bill’s introduction now demonstrates that members of both parties in both chambers of Congress are championing these provisions.

LATEST FROM USDA

USDA provided state agencies with notice that all approved waivers for WIC operations through the COVID-19 crisis have been extended through June 30. This decision permits WIC agencies to continue remote or modified operations, mail or remotely issue benefits, and provide expanded food package options for participants. The initial waivers had been set to expire in the next two weeks, even though Congress vested USDA with authority to issue waivers through September 30.
After so many years, we are finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel in transitioning to the EBT card system for our WIC program. On November 15, 2019, FNS granted approval for the six New Mexico Indian Tribal Organization (ITOs) WIC Program to jointly pursue the MOSIAC MIS/EBT system. The ITOs of Eight Northern, Five Sandoval, ACL, Zuni, San Felipe and Santo Domingo requested consideration from FNS to allow them to seek a WIC MIS/EBT replacement project, known as MOSAIC. FNS will work closely with the Indian Tribal organization WIC Director to develop a strategy for the implementation and ongoing support for this new MIS and EBT service to ensure a successful project. Five Sandoval is the lead program manager for the New Mexico IITOs. The ITOs will meet as an workgroup periodically throughout this coming year to formulate the actions to be taken for EBT continuity. Currently, the ITOs have submitted a Request for Proposal (RFP) in the hiring of a Project Manager to oversee the implementation of the MOSIAC EBT system. The EBT Project Manager will assist the ITOs WIC Programs in providing Project Management and WIC EBT expertise to plan, execute, monitor, and close the activities related to the implementation of offline (smart card) WIC EBT. The Project Management services are needed to reasonably ensure the NM ITO WIC EBT Project proceeds without error, delay or interruption in compliance with USDA Food and Nutrition Services.

The Project Manager will be hired and we can implement the EBT Card System at Eight Northern. Day-to-day project management will be performed by the NM ITO Project Manager services acquired through this Request For Proposal. The initial contract term shall be a period of two (2) years. The first phase will be planning. It is expected to take be 6 months to complete. By August we should have our kick-off meeting, so we are waiting for that period of time to come in this project.
COVID-19, PREGNANCY AND BREAST-FEEDING

We do not currently know if pregnant people have a greater chance of getting sick from COVID-19 than the general public nor whether they are more likely to have serious illness as a result. Breast milk protects against many illnesses and is the best source of nutrition for most infants. In limited studies, COVid-19 has not been found in breast milk. Your doctor can help you make the right decision for you and your baby. Based on available information, pregnant people seem to have the same risk as adults who are not pregnant.

However, we do know that

- Pregnant people have changes in their bodies that may increase their risk of some infections. Pregnant people have had a higher risk of severe illness when infected with viruses from the same family as COVID-19 and other viral respiratory infections, such as influenza.

PREGNANT PEOPLE SHOULD PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM COVID-19

- Avoid people who are sick or who have been exposed to the virus.

RISKS TO THE PREGNANCY AND TO THE BABY

- Pregnant people have had a higher risk of severe illness when infected with viruses from the same family as COVID-19 and other viral respiratory infections, such as influenza.
- It is always important for pregnant people to protect themselves from illnesses.

MOTHER-TO-CHILD TRANSMISSION

- Mother-to-child transmission of coronavirus during pregnancy is unlikely, but after birth a newborn is susceptible to person-to-person spread.
- A newborn is susceptible to person-to-person spread.
- A very small number of babies have tested positive for the virus shortly after birth. However, it is unknown if these babies got the virus before or after birth.
- The virus has not been detected in amniotic fluid, breast-milk, or other maternal samples.

BREASTFEEDING IF YOU HAVE COVID-19

- Breast milk provides protection against many illnesses and is the best source of nutrition for most infants.
- You, along with your family and healthcare providers, should decide whether and how to start or continue breastfeeding.
- In limited studies, COVID-19 has not been detected in breast milk; however we do not know for sure whether mothers with COVID-19 can spread the virus via breast milk.
  - If you are sick and choose to direct breastfeed:
    - Wear a facemask and wash your hands before each feeding.
  - If you are sick and choose to express breast milk:
    - Express breast milk to establish and maintain milk supply.
    - A dedicated breast pump should be provided.
    - Wash hands before touching any pump or bottle parts and before expressing breast milk.
    - Follow recommendations for proper pump cleaning (Español) after each use, cleaning all parts that come into contact with breast milk.
    - If possible, consider having someone who is well feed the expressed breast milk to the infant.

-https://www.cdc.gov/
“The most enduring thing I can say to any moms struggling with breastfeeding is if you’re determined, keep fighting for your goal. It can be an uphill battle sometimes but don’t give up on yourself”.

-Stephanie Leno

Meet our Breastfeeding mom of the Quarter! Stephanie is the proud mother of 4-month-old Jaxx Leno. She has been exclusively breastfeeding Jaxx for 4 months now and loves the bond she gets to share with Jaxx. Stephanie says, “Jaxx is supper attached to me, not only because I am her walking milk bag but because we get to spend an immense amount of uninterrupted time together.

Stephanie’s biggest influence is knowing the foundation that she is setting for her baby and for her body. Stephanie says she is, “proud to have been able to get to this point of fully breastfeeding Jaxx for 4 months! She is a great role model for new mothers who are having issues with milk supply.

Breastfeeding is not easy. It requires women’s time and investment and can be a steep learning curve. The biggest challenge Stephanie faced was not having a large milk supply. She says, “It’s taken me 3 months to build up my supply. I started out with only pumping about 1 1/2 oz, and now I get anywhere from 2-4 oz depending on the session. The best thing that has worked for me is my morning oats, homemade bone broth (at lunchtime), 96 oz to 1 gal of water a day, and Legendary milk supplements.” She recommends following your routine daily she says, “it may sound like a lot but when it’s for your little one, nothing is too much for them.”


**WIC Office is Open**

WIC is here for you during the COVID-19 outbreak. Call our Office to find out how to renew your benefits online or over the phone. Also, you can get breastfeeding advice, nutrition counseling, referrals, and other WIC services remotely.

We are offering curb side service. Simply drive-up to the office, call us, and let us know you are here. Staff will come out to your vehicle.

If you make a appointment; WIC staff will be taking safety precautions when allowing you in the building. One person at a time. This means you and your child ONLY (No additional children or family members). You must wear a mask and DO NOT come if you are sick, have a fever, or have traveled out of the state.

Additionally, we have pampers wipes, and disposable face mask available for those in need. We have a limited amounts and sizes available.

Please contact our office if you are obtaining those items, please call at (505) 692-6400.

**Pictures Wanted**

We are putting together a slide show for USDA showing how you have been coping during this outbreak. W are asking you to share your pictures of how you are dealing during this pandemic. Photos can include playing with your kids, teaching, social distancing, mask wearing, and routines, anything showing how your family is coping with this pandemic. We are giving a $35.00 gift cards to Walmart for participating. You

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