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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: June 19th, 2020

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WIC Provides Valuable Services to Eligible Families During COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, more families than ever are finding it harder to put healthy food on their dinner tables. For young children, a lack of good nutrition can put them at risk for health problems and problems in school. North Carolina's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) helps low-income families meet the nutritional needs of pregnant and post-partum women, infants and children up to age 5.

Studies show that children who participate in WIC are more likely to receive regular preventive health services and are better immunized than children who did not participate in WIC. "While adding more fruits and vegetables to these families' diets is an important part of the program, participants get more than food from WIC," said Health Director Robert Wittmann. "WIC offers families nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding promotion and support, supplemental foods, and healthcare referrals."

The North Carolina WIC Program currently serves an average of over 200,000 participants each month and those numbers have remained steady throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

WIC Participants receive helpful one-on-one counseling with a nutrition professional. Nutrition education may be offered by trained staff on topics ranging from healthy drink choices to grocery shopping on a budget.

Breastfeeding promotion and support is an important part of the WIC Program. All WIC agencies have trained staff ready to assist moms in making informed decisions about how they feed their babies. WIC also teaches moms the basics of breastfeeding.

Better educated moms mean healthier babies. Medicaid beneficiaries who participated in WIC had lower infant mortality rates than Medicaid beneficiaries who did not participate in WIC. WIC participation also decreases the incidence of low birth weight and pre-term births.

"WIC is so much more than people realize," said Wittmann. "The nutrition education and healthy foods that WIC provides really give children a healthy start in life, which is important."

With the recent passage of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127) to assist with the COVID-19 public health emergency, WIC has received an increase in national funding for the program as well as increased ability to

"To Protect and Promote Health through Prevention and Control of Disease and Injury."
<http://www.moorecountync.gov/health/>

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provide states with the flexibilities they need to support mothers, infants and children that rely on WIC. Section 2203 of the Act provides certain statutory waiver authorities necessary in a public health emergency to encourage social distancing and reduce in-person visits to the WIC clinic. State agencies now have the ability to:

- Waive the physical presence requirement for all individuals seeking certification or recertification in the WIC Program; and
- Defer anthropometric (i.e., height/length and weight) and bloodwork requirements which are used to determine nutritional risk.

With those social distancing considerations in mind, at this time, all Moore County WIC applications and appointments are completed by telephone. This includes all WIC education and counseling services which can be offered to participants via phone or through other online/virtual platforms.

The WIC Program is available at the Moore County Health Department. For more information about WIC or to make an appointment please call 910-947-3271. You may also visit the WIC Website at www.nutritionnc.com. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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