



PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

Central Michigan District Health Department
"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

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To: All Local Media

From: Kelly Conley, MS, RD; WIC Coordinator

RE: State of the Art Electronic MI-WIC System

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MI-WIC

The Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) is a food and nutrition program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture through the Michigan Department of Community Health. Local agencies, such as local health departments and non-profit organizations, deliver WIC services and benefits to the public. WIC helps to correct or prevent malnutrition in low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, women who recently had a baby, infants and children up to five years old. WIC provides supplemental food, offers professional nutrition education and makes referrals based on health screenings and assessments of need.

The WIC Supplemental Food Program's roll-out of the new management information system for replacing WIC food benefits with an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) System is being implemented currently statewide. Michigan is leading the nation by implementing Electronic Benefit Transfer statewide for WIC participants. Benefits are provided on an EBT card, similar to a debit card, which gives WIC clients significant shopping flexibility that was lacking with WIC food coupons. The six counties in the Central Michigan District Health Department started with EBT in April of 2008.

Meanwhile, WIC started the pilot of its new web-based program information system-MI-WIC (pronounced 'my WIC') on July 28, 2008 in four local agencies. Barry-Eaton, Calhoun, Jackson and Ingham County Health Departments all now use MI-WIC to enroll and certify WIC clients. MI-WIC also includes EBT to provide WIC benefits. The Central Michigan District Health Department has now also been successfully trained and the system went "live" on January 12, 2009 in our six counties.

MI-WIC includes several interfaces to public health and state agency programs such as the Michigan Care Improvement Registry (MCIR) for tracking immunization status, the Department of Agriculture's system of retail vendor licensing, and the state's system for support of high-risk pregnant women and infants. The new system also supports breastfeeding and nutrition education services through a link to the online system for nutrition education, www.wichealth.org and it can record breastfeeding support and education activities in mother's electronic record.

With the implementation of the MI-WIC system, there will be an expansion of the WIC client categories. The five categories currently used PBNIC, for the client types of Pregnant, Breastfeeding, Non-Lactating Post-Partum, Infants, and Children. The new MI-WIC system has been expanded to eleven categories. The new categories will allow for quick identification of a

child's age and the breastfeeding status of women and infants. The program will still only serve pregnant, breastfeeding, post-partum women, infants and children up to the age five.

MI-WIC will replace the current WIC application M-TRACX. By converting to MI-WIC it will allow us to be more efficient in the following areas:

- Implement a workflow-based system with user-friendly computer screens to improve clinic flow in the WIC offices
- Reduce each participants time spent at clinic, increase participant satisfaction, and increase staff time spent with participants
- Implement a system with automated features for certification processing including growth chart plotting, appointment scheduling, food package tailoring, and benefits issuance
- Support the new Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) System
- Integrate with other health and human services systems for better participant management, referrals and other health care needs

Key to enhancing Michigan's program and service delivery will be the interface of MI-WIC with EBT. The Electronic Benefits Transfer feature will make the upcoming implementation of WIC's new food package, which among other things, includes fruits and vegetables, more easily available to clients. Food package rule changes were published in USDA Interim Final Rule, December 2007 to align the WIC food package with current dietary guidelines and recommendations from the Institute of Medicine report "WIC Food Packages: Time for a Change". The new food packages will start to be implemented in August of 2009.

This article has been provided by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the local residents of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon Counties.