

Texas Aims to Improve health of Women, Babies

August 6, 2019

Clarissa Ramirez, Hidalgo County WIC Program Director

Contact: Clarissa Ramirez, (956) 381-4646

clarissa.ramirez@wic.co.hidalgo.tx.us

Texas Promotes Breastfeeding, Celebrates Awareness Month

Austin- Hidalgo County WIC Program is highlighting Texas WIC's breastfeeding support program and providing information and breastfeeding help to families at events throughout Texas this month.

August kicks off National Breastfeeding Month, and Texas WIC (<https://texaswic.org>) is adopting the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action's (<http://waba.org.my/about-waba/>) theme "Empower Parents, Enable Breastfeeding!" to celebrate the meaningful contributions that mothers and fathers make to infant health.

"WIC clinics across the state of Texas will celebrate National Breastfeeding Month in August with local events that are open to the entire community. They include many activities to empower families and communities to protect, promote and support breastfeeding," said Edgar Curtis, Texas WIC Director for the Health and Human Services Commission.

Successful breastfeeding takes teamwork to support new moms, and Texas WIC shares information online through its Breastmilk Counts website, support groups, classes and personalized counseling available through local community partnerships that operate WIC clinics across the state. To find a WIC office near you, visit the "Find WIC" page (<https://find.texaswic.org//wicType=Clinic>).

WIC also educates moms on Texas law, which allows women to breastfeed anywhere in public. In 2019, a new law was passed allowing women in Texas to pump breastmilk anywhere in public.

Certified lactation consultants and peer counselors are available at the Texas Lactation Support Hotline, 855-550-6667, to answer questions about breastfeeding. The 24/7 helpline receives approximately 150 calls per week.

Lactation Support Centers are located in Houston, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio and McAllen. Staffed by certified lactation consultants and peer counselors, the Lactation Support Centers act as community training site for WIC staff, dietetic interns and health care professionals, ensuring that local doctors, nurses and hospital staff are trained in breastfeeding best practices. The centers have helped an estimated 20,000 families with breastfeeding since 2018. The newest center in San Antonio recently opened this spring.

Texas WIC staff are trained to provide breastfeeding assistance and help families meet their breastfeeding goals. All major health organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organizations endorse breastfeeding as the ideal choice for babies and recommend exclusive breastfeeding for six months and continued breastfeeding for one year or beyond. Breastfeeding is important for the health of mothers and babies and enhances the wellbeing of families. Hear more about breastfeeding support from WIC clients like Jazmin (<https://youtu.be/cPmtjqEi7a8?list=PLJE6pz0haTBoHvZIGx9OCDuhhkVH9jPK>) and peer counselors like Vanessa (<https://youtu.be/GBIVvUkaEVM?list=PLJE6pz0haTBoHvZIGx9OCD5uhhkVH9jPK>) as they tell their stories on video.

Despite the recommendation to breastfeed exclusively for the first six months, fewer than 50 percent of infants were exclusively breastfed through three months of age in Texas. Awareness and support by parents and parents in the community are critical first steps in enabling mother's effort to breastfeed. For mothers who cannot breastfeed because of other circumstances, Texas WIC can help provide tools to assist families on their path to a healthy lifestyle.

About WIC

WIC, or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, is a U.S. department of Agriculture program that is available to qualified pregnant women, new moms, and children younger than 5. Administered in Texas by HHSC, the program provides nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, referrals and nutritious foods. Texas WIC helps 707,000 clients on average each month with infant, child and prenatal nutrition and breastfeeding support.