



NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 5, 2015

Contact: Karrey Britt
Communications Coordinator
Office: (785) 856-7362

**USDA recognizes Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department
for exemplary support for breastfeeding mothers**

Celebrating National WIC Breastfeeding Week by honoring stand-out programs

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack commends state and local agencies of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (more commonly known as WIC) that excel in educating and supporting breastfeeding mothers. Vilsack offers his recognition as part of the first National WIC Breastfeeding Week (Aug. 1-7).

“There is no better food than breast milk for a baby’s first year of life,” Vilsack said. “The work being done by WIC programs to empower mothers to breastfeed — addressing societal barriers, enhancing peer counselor programs, building key coalitions, and more — is absolutely vital and deserves recognition.”

For the first time, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is recognizing exemplary local agencies with the WIC Loving Support Awards of Excellence. Agencies could apply for the honor based on their breastfeeding performance measures, effective peer counseling programs, and community partnerships. Out of 1,900 WIC agencies nationwide, 55 qualified for the award including the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department’s WIC program.

Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department Director Dan Partridge said the national recognition is a reflection of the hard work of WIC Supervisor Jolene Croxell and her staff, who serve about 1,500 clients. “Our strong client focus and the priority we place on prenatal education and support gives moms the confidence they need to be successful with breastfeeding. Our WIC staff are helping our children get off to the best start possible,” Partridge said. The breastfeeding initiation rate for the Health Department’s WIC clients in 2014 was 83 percent, compared to 77 percent in Kansas. The rate for exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months was 25 percent (a Healthy People 2020 goal), compared to 11 percent statewide.

The Health Department’s WIC program also facilitates a monthly breastfeeding support group called Breast Is Best Social. Additionally, WIC staff members participate in the Breastfeeding Coalition of Douglas County.

The WIC program provides nutrition and breastfeeding education as well as nutritious, supplemental food to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five.