

**LEE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
309 S. Galena Avenue, Suite 100
Dixon, IL 61021
815-284-3371**

To: Area Media
From: Lee County Health Department, Kathy Schutz, RN
Date: March 2, 2010
Subject: WIC Program Changes

WIC PROGRAM ADDS HEALTHIER MIX OF FOODS.

This article was adapted from a **USA Today** article by Wendy Koch

Millions of women and children are eating more fruits, vegetables and whole grains in a public health campaign that Illinois joined in August.

In the largest overhaul since it began in 1974, the federal Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program has begun giving vouchers for a wider variety of food to its 9.3 million low-income participants – mothers, infants and children up to 5 years old.

Until now, WIC vouchers brought only milk, cheese, juice, cereal, eggs and peanut butter or dried beans or peas.

“It’s a huge change,” says undersecretary Kevin Concannon of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which runs the program. He says the improved mix of foods will lower health-care costs, partly by reducing obesity. Nearly half of U.S. newborns are in WIC, available to families with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.

The change doesn’t increase monthly benefits, which average \$43 per person, but provides a cash-value voucher for produce that is worth \$6 for each child and \$10 for women. Other vouchers will allow the purchase of whole-grain foods and will reduce the amount of dairy products.

WIC is available to any pregnant or breastfeeding woman, infant or child under age five who meets the income guidelines. Please call the Lee County Health Department WIC office at 815-284-3371 to get more information and income guidelines.