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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lee/ Hendry/Glades County Health Departments Revising WIC Program

- First Change to Food Program in 30 years -

Fort Myers, FL – Over 22,000 women, infants and children enrolled in the Lee/ Hendry/ Glades County Health Department's WIC program will receive the new, nationally revised WIC food package beginning today. This is the first change to the WIC food package in nearly three decades.

"This new food package will allow women and children in our community access to more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Also, we will now be able to offer ethnic foods which is so important for the diverse population we have here in Lee, Hendry and Glades Counties" said Shannon McEwen, WIC Director for the tri-county program.

This new change will allow for greater flexibility in the food choices such as the addition of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, baby food fruits and vegetables, and 1-percent or fat free milk. Also, supplies of baby formula are now based on the age and breastfeeding regime of the infant.

Eligible women and children participating in the WIC program receive food checks that specify which nutritious food items can be purchased; these WIC food checks can be redeemed at any of the 75-plus authorized grocery stores in the area. In addition to offering supplemental healthy foods, WIC provides the following additional services at no cost: nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding support, and referrals for health care.

To be eligible for WIC – the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children – you must be a pregnant or breastfeeding, a woman who has recently been pregnant, an infant, or a child under age 5. In addition, the applicant must have a low or moderate income, live in Florida, and have a nutrition need that can be helped by WIC foods and nutrition counseling.

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Another way applicants can be income-eligible for WIC is if they are currently receiving Medicaid, Temporary Cash Assistance, or food stamps. Applicants do not have to be on a public assistance program to qualify for WIC. Emphasis is also placed on reaching migrant populations, as well as reaching and enrolling eligible women in their early months of pregnancy so that WIC's benefits can begin as early as possible.

Anyone interested in WIC services should call (239) 344-2000 to make an appointment at any of our seven locations covering the tri-county area.

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