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For Immediate Release

MCHD WIC reopens to new participants on Aug. 1; 100% on Sept. 1

MORGANTOWN, WV (July 13, 2021) — Monongalia County Health Department’s Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) will reopen for in-person visits on Aug. 1 to allow new participants to enroll in the federally-funded food assistance program.

MCHD WIC, which operates in six counties — Monongalia, Preston, Marion, Harrison, Doddridge and Taylor — has been conducting services virtually since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020.

Like many others dealing with the pandemic, technology has come in handy so that the program, officially titled the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, could continue to operate.

Food supplement funds were already loaded onto Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, and WIC also had already implemented an app called Pacify that provides 24/7 breastfeeding support for mothers prior to the pandemic. And signups and counseling took place over the phone.

However, “We’ve missed seeing our participants face-to-face,” said Cami Haught, MCHD WIC’s program director.

That will change Aug. 1, when offices in Morgantown, Kingwood, Fairmont, Bridgeport, West Union reopen to new participants, who will be able to meet with WIC staff in person to find out if they qualify and to learn about the benefits they will get if they do.

“And then, on Sept. 1, we will be opening 100%,” Haught said.

WIC offers nutritional counseling and benefits, breastfeeding counseling and support and health screenings, immunizations and referrals, to those who qualify. In addition to meeting income guidelines, those who would qualify are:

- Pregnant women;
- Women breastfeeding an infant up to the infant's first birthday;
- Postpartum women up to six months after delivery or end of pregnancy;
- Infants up to their first birthday;
- Children from age 1 until their fifth birthday.

Income guidelines are updated yearly and are generous. Gross annual income for a family of one is \$23,828 or under; for two, \$32,227; for three, \$40,626 and for four, \$49,025. The full list is available at monchd.org/wic-eligibility-guidelines.html.

For those interested in signing up when offices reopen, here's what they can expect from that initial visit.

“New participants come in and bring their pay stubs,” Haught said. “If they are on Medicaid, they will automatically qualify.”

After qualifying, all participants — mothers and children — move on to the lab, where a technician gets a weight, height and performs a finger stick to get iron levels.

“Then they see a nutritionist, and they're going to ask them some questions about their diet and fruit and vegetable consumption, and dairy consumption and sweetened drinks, if they smoked or consumed alcohol before or during the pregnancy,” Haught said.

The nutritionist will then go over the nutrition package with the participant. Foods that can be purchased with WIC benefits have been expanded in recent years and include not only fresh fruits and vegetables, beans, peanut butter, cheese and dairy and bread items, but also frozen fruits and vegetables, a wider selection of whole grain options and breakfast cereals and yogurt.

And about two years ago, Once Upon a Farm products, created by actress and West Virginia native Jennifer Garner, also made it to the WIC list.

Finally, if the participant is or will be breastfeeding, she would meet with a breastfeeding counselor. “If they are pregnant, they talk about breastfeeding and what to expect, and if she

has delivered, they can help with latching and positioning,” Haught said. “And they can check if the baby is receiving enough breast milk.”

After that initial assessment, the participant will have an appointment every three months. Every other appointment is an online assessment, so participants generally only need to visit their local WIC office twice a year.

MCHD also will resume free breastfeeding classes. Generally, these have been open to anyone, not just WIC participants. But because class size will be limited at first because of the pandemic, anyone interested in attending should call MCHD WIC at 1-800-675-5181 to find out if there is room.

To celebrate WIC’s reopening, weekly drive-through events have been held every Thursday in July at each MCHD WIC location. The next one will take place from 4 to 6 p.m. Thursday, July 15, at the Blueville Church of the Nazarene in Taylor County. After that, events will take place from 3 to 6 p.m. July 22 at Clarksburg City Park for the Harrison and Doddridge county locations; and from 3 to 6 p.m. July 29 at MCHD WIC in Morgantown.

Participants will receive a goody bag filled with items, including a WIC cup and a book, such as “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” or “Monsters Don’t Eat Broccoli.”

“We just want to get people excited about being able to come to the clinic again and to let more people know that we are here,” Haught said. “We want to encourage everyone to come out and get signed up on the program if they do qualify.”

For up-to-date information on health and wellness in Monongalia County, check out monchd.org and follow the health department on Facebook and Twitter @WVMCHD and on Instagram at #wvmchd.