



Winnebago County

Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Winnebago County Health Department's WIC Program Is Gold Awarded Winner

WINNEBAGO COUNTY – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food, and Nutrition Services recently awarded the Winnebago County Health Department's Woman, Infants, and Children's Supplemental Nutrition Program (WIC) a Gold Award for its breastfeeding program. WCHD staff Julie Sterling and Kassie Permenter accepted the award on behalf of WCHD.

The award was established by the USDA to recognize local WIC agencies that have provided exemplary breastfeeding promotion and support in their communities. Local WIC agencies work towards the award model to strengthen their breastfeeding support activities and ultimately increase breastfeeding initiation and duration rates among WIC participants.

Breastfeeding is the best source of nutrition for most infants with breast milk uniquely tailored to meet the health needs of growing babies. Breastfeeding also reduces the risk for certain health conditions for both babies and mothers. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 60% of mothers stop breastfeeding sooner than planned due to a lack of support.

The WIC program supports mothers throughout their breastfeeding journey and creates a safe, supportive environment for moms who choose to breastfeed. WIC provides nutrition and breastfeeding education, supplemental foods to promote a healthier diet, and lactation specialists for comprehensive breastfeeding assessment needs. WIC peer counselors who are paraprofessionals with personal breastfeeding experience also provide give basic breastfeeding support and encouragement. Support services like WIC's peer counseling program has been shown to increase breastfeeding initiation and duration rates among participants.

"Achieving the status of Gold Award Winner for our WIC program's peer counseling service recognizes the exceptional breastfeeding support and counseling provided to families in our community. This exemplary service has resulted locally in increased breastfeeding initiation and duration rates among our WIC participants from 2020 to 2021, said Winnebago County Health Department Administrator Dr. Sandra Martell. "Improving access to breastfeeding support for moms in our community is just one small step toward our larger goals of improving maternal and child health, keeping all moms and babies alive, and confronting health disparities that challenge families in our communities."

To enroll in WIC, call the Winnebago County Health Department at 815-720-4000.

For more information about the USDA's WIC Breastfeeding Award of Excellence program, go to <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/breastfeeding-priority-wic-program>

For more information on the Winnebago County Health Department, go to www.wchd.org.

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USDA recognizes and celebrates
Winnebago County Health Department

for their exemplary breastfeeding peer program and support services with a

**Gold Breastfeeding
Award of Excellence**

August, 2022



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WIC BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

LEARN TOGETHER. GROW TOGETHER.

