



Knox County Health Department

140 Dameron Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37917

MEDIA ADVISORY FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 19, 2021

Contact: Joint Information Center
jicmedia@knoxcounty.org

KCHD's WIC program changes service model due to pandemic, sees increase in participation

Knoxville, Tenn. – At the beginning of the pandemic, Knox County Health Department's Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program pivoted to remote services in order to protect the safety of team members and clients.

Since then, Knox County WIC has grown its participation by nearly 1,600 individuals since this time last year.

"I am very proud of our entire team who, during this highly unprecedented time, have maintained their high standards of dedication to serving WIC customers," said WIC Director Lori Emond. "We know the past year has been difficult for many Knox County families and the services we provide are critically important. We will continue doing everything we can to safely provide these services to all who qualify."

The WIC program is for pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants and children under the age of five who qualify. The program aims to safeguard the health of those who are at nutrition risk by providing healthy foods to supplement diets, information on nutritious eating, breastfeeding support and referrals to health care. WIC food benefits can be used at most grocery stores throughout the State and can be personalized to individual needs.

Prior to COVID-19, Knox County WIC had already transitioned to electronic benefits, and were offering some services via phone. This existing infrastructure enabled the program to be well-positioned to quickly implement a 100% phone service model when it became necessary due to the pandemic.

Following a client's initial phone appointment, WIC staff mail out all the materials clients would ordinarily receive if they were present in the WIC office. For clients who prefer to pick up these materials in person, a curbside pick-up option has been implemented.



Through robust relationships with partners, WIC services are also provided by phone for clients who do not speak English, and for clients who are a part of the deaf community.

KCHD's WIC Program has capacity to service more WIC-eligible families. Those interested in participating may schedule an appointment by calling 865-215-5016 (for Spanish, call 865-215-5418). For those with limited phone access, send an email providing a name and a phone number to makemywicappointment@knoxcounty.org and WIC staff will be in touch to schedule services according to client schedule preference. Once contacted, most eligible clients are enrolled within 2-3 business days.

For more information about Knox County WIC and to see the qualification guidelines, visit WIC's webpage [here](#).

About Knox County Health Department:

The first health department in Tennessee to achieve national voluntary accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is dedicated to ensuring the conditions in which every resident can be healthy. As a chief health strategist for the community and with more than 240 team members, KCHD's broad scope of work includes convening partners to improve community health, identifying community health threats, investigating disease outbreaks, conducting extensive outreach and education, preparing for public health emergencies, providing and connecting the public with medical care, enforcing food safety and air quality laws, and more. For more information, visit www.knoxcounty.org/health.

###

