

P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Kathleen Rowe, MS, RD – 805-981-5268 – Kathleen.Rowe@ventura.org

October 1, 2019

Ventura County WIC Program wins USDA breastfeeding award

OXNARD, Calif. – On Monday, September 30, the Ventura County Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program was presented with the nationally recognized, “Gold Level, Loving Support Award of Excellence” by the United States Department of Agriculture. Ventura County WIC received this award in recognition for providing exemplary breastfeeding programs and support services to clients. The Loving Support Award of Excellence was developed by the USDA to recognize and celebrates local WIC agencies that provide exemplary breastfeeding programs and support services.

“We are very proud to receive this recognition for our efforts to promote breastfeeding,” said Ventura County Public Health Director, Rigoberto Vargas. “We want to also acknowledge the moms who commit to breastfeeding, and the many health care providers and other community partners who promote and support breastfeeding. All of these efforts help Ventura County to move towards our goal to become the healthiest county in the nation.”

The WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program was established in 2011 to help first-time mothers successfully breastfeed during the first six months after delivery of their babies. Peer Counselors provide support through frequent contact with mothers via phone calls, texts and in-person visits. Ventura County WIC serves a diverse population including Spanish and Mixteco-speaking mothers, many of whom work in agriculture. The Ventura County Peer Counselor team is composed of four bilingual female team members, one of whom also speaks Mixteco, and a bilingual International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) who is also a Registered Nurse.

“What makes our program exceptional is that our four peer counselors have a combined total of 82

years of experience working with the WIC Program,” said Ventura County WIC Program Director, Katie Rowe, MS, RD. “They are uniquely qualified to assist our diverse population of mothers who may experience difficulty when beginning breastfeeding.”

Expecting moms are encouraged to sign up for WIC as soon as they know they are pregnant in order to give their baby a healthy start in life. Working families and children under five who have foster parents or guardians can also qualify for the program. Migrant families are welcome to apply as well.

Ventura County WIC has office locations in Oxnard, Ventura, Santa Paula, Fillmore, Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley. To apply for WIC or learn more about the program, call 805-981-5251 or visit www.vchca.org/women-infants-and-children-wic .

#