

PRESS RELEASE

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**NJ Department of Health Commissioner Mary O'Dowd Visits
Mercer County WIC Program**



(From left) CHSofNJ Director of Maternal/Child Health, Family and Community Support Services Maritza I. Raimundi-Petroski, Mercer WIC Program Administrator Kelly Mannherz, CHSofNJ President and CEO Donna C. Pressma, NJ Department of Health Commissioner Mary E. O'Dowd, US Department of Agriculture Administrator of Food and Nutrition Service for the mid-Atlantic region Pat Dombroski, and Acting NJ WIC Director Sylvia Dellas at CHSofNJ's Mercer County WIC office in Trenton.

Trenton, NJ (July 29, 2014) - The Children's Home Society of New Jersey's Mercer County Women Infants and Children (WIC) program welcomed NJ Department of Health Commissioner Mary E. O'Dowd, the US Department of Agriculture's Administrator of Food and Nutrition Service for the mid-Atlantic region Pat Dombroski, and Acting NJ WIC Director Sylvia Dellas yesterday (July 28, 2014) for a visit as part of NJ State's 40th Anniversary celebration of the WIC Program.

Commissioner O'Dowd, who has been entrusted by Governor Christie to protect the public's health, promote healthy communities and continue to improve the quality of health care in New Jersey, spoke with Mercer County WIC participants to discuss the positive impact the WIC program has had on each of their families. "We're excited to be a part of WIC's 40th Anniversary Celebration campaign, and to provide the opportunity for our WIC families to share their personal experiences with Commissioner O'Dowd," said Kelly Mannherz, Mercer WIC Program Administrator. She continued, "The Commissioner has been a strong supporter of WIC since her appointment in 2011, and her commitment to our efforts to ensure that Mercer County women and children receive the nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and nutritious foods they need to help them live healthy lives is greatly appreciated."

The Commissioner presented a new video highlighting WIC's history and how it has expanded over time to better support pregnant women, postpartum and breastfeeding mothers, and their children up to age 5. The video will be shared with WIC agencies, healthcare providers and local health departments, and posted on the Department's new WIC webpage as part of a public education campaign to increase awareness of the program; it is estimated that nearly 40,000 women and children in New Jersey are eligible to receive WIC benefits, but have yet to enroll (according to a WIC staff review of NJ birth/infant death data & Census data). Through an active public education campaign, the Department aims to reach those families so they can benefit from all that the WIC program has to offer.

The Commissioner announced that in addition to the video message, the Department is placing WIC advertisements on NJ Transit trains, busses and stations, and Department leaders will attend events at WIC Clinics and farmers' markets through this week to ensure more women know about this important program. The Department hopes to increase enrollment in the WIC program and provide more families with access to healthy foods, nutritional education, and breastfeeding support. CHSofNJ and its Mercer County WIC program are proud to partner with the Department of Health in this important outreach effort.

About The Children's Home Society of New Jersey

The Children's Home Society of New Jersey is a nonprofit child and family serving agency whose mission is to save children's lives and build healthy families. Founded in 1894, the agency protects abused or neglected infants and at-risk children by insuring stable, permanent, and loving homes for each and every child it serves. All services are confidential and most are free. For more information, visit our website at www.chsofnj.org.

About The NJ Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program

New Jersey WIC Services provide supplemental nutritious foods to pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants and children up to age five. WIC services include nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding promotion and support, immunization screening and health care referrals. Enrollment is open to all eligible applicants. WIC service agencies are conveniently located throughout New Jersey. For more information, visit <http://www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/wic/> or call the Family Health Line toll free at 800-328-3838.

About the USDA

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