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Families and Farmers Benefit from Butte County WIC Program

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. – As of July 1st, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program recipients now have greater access to fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmer’s markets throughout Butte County. Formerly, WIC recipients were given a one time, annual voucher for use at certified farmer’s markets through the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). The new change will allow recipients to use their monthly fruit and vegetable checks, also called Cash Value Vouchers (CVVs) at farmer’s markets allocating \$8/month per child and \$10/month for mothers.

“Butte County WIC has been participating in the Farmers Market Nutrition Program for over two decades. However, this program only provides \$20.00 per family once per year to use at the markets”, explains Vimlan VanDien, WIC Program Manager for Butte County. The change in CVVs will allow families to shop at the farmers market on a monthly basis. WIC staff worked closely with farmer’s market managers to ensure a successful rollout of the program.

This change will encourage recipients to shop at farmers markets on a regular basis, assuring consistent access to fresh produce which is nutritionally superior to canned or frozen fruits and vegetables. The benefits of this program reach beyond the program recipients, with potential to generate thousands of dollars a year to local farmers. In 2014, the county’s redemption rate was 61% for the annual FMNP voucher, which generated approximately \$17K to local farmers. The CVVs redeemed at grocery stores brought in an average of \$24,000 per month. Even if only 20% of the CVV were redeemed at the farmers market, it would generate up to \$50K a year for the local farmers.

WIC is the supplemental nutrition program for low-income pregnant and postpartum women, infants and children up to age 5. Participants enrolled in the program receive nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and monthly checks that are used to purchase healthy foods at authorized grocers. WIC provides access to these essential nutrients that participants may otherwise go without.

In 2005, the Institute of Medicine recommended that the WIC food basket be revised with a greater focus on fruits and vegetables in order to better meet the dietary guidelines for Americans. California began issuing CVV in October 2009. While all other monthly WIC vouchers are for a specific quantity of food (i.e., one loaf of bread), CVV checks were structured differently – as a specific dollar amount – in order to grant participants more flexibility in the fruits and vegetables they purchase with their CVVs.

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For further information regarding this release, contact Lisa Almaguer, BCPHD Communications Manager.
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