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Health Secretary Announces New Mexico to Receive Funding for Nutrition Education Program State to Help Existing Clients in Women, Infants, Children Program

(Santa Fe) – Health Secretary Alfredo Vigil, MD announced today that New Mexico will receive about \$546,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Food and Nutrition Education Program. The funding is a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The stimulus funding will help the Department of Health meet the needs of existing clients in the WIC program, pregnant women and children up to age 5 whose families earn low incomes. WIC provides supplemental food to program participants, along with nutrition education, information on breastfeeding and referrals to health and social programs. The funding will help the Department serve almost 1,600 women and their families.

“This money will help mothers who earn low incomes receive supplemental food and nutrition education to get their families off to a healthy start in life,” Dr. Vigil said.

WIC’s mission is to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk and reduce food insecurity statewide. The Department’s WIC program currently serves about 67,000 women and children each month.

In October of 2009, the program will begin offering the new federal food package, which will include a variety of new food choices, including oatmeal, whole wheat tortillas, whole grain cereals and fresh, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables. The new foods provide specific nutrients to aid proper growth and development.

The WIC program is developing a new cooking curriculum to expand families’ healthy cooking skills while they incorporate the new WIC foods into their daily diets. The WIC’s website (NMWIC.org) will feature recipes for downloading along with valuable nutrition education.

The new food package also provides incentives for breastfeeding mothers. They will receive more variety and larger quantities of food. WIC’s clinic staff receives training in breastfeeding management so they can educate pregnant mothers and support breastfeeding mothers by providing a breast pump, individual counseling and group discussion sessions.

For more information about WIC’s services, look up NMWIC.org.

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