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Mid-Michigan District Health Department

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MMDHD hires WIC Peer Counselors

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) has recently implemented a WIC (Women, Infant's, and Children) Peer Counseling program in an effort to increase the number of mothers who breastfeed throughout the district. The goal of the program is to provide education and training in breastfeeding and nutrition-based best practices, which will benefit breastfeeding mothers and their children.

Under the new program, Clinton, Gratiot, and Montcalm County mothers who breastfeed will be served by four new part-time Peer Counselors. Stacy Cartensen is based in the Clinton County Branch Office, Molly Smith is based in Gratiot County Branch Office, and Jessica Gallop and Tamara VanDop are based in Montcalm County Branch Office. All four Peer Counselors have demonstrated that they have the skills and abilities needed to provide quality counseling throughout the community.

A second goal of the program is to decrease the health risks associated with formula feeding by increasing the number of women who exclusively breastfeed their infants for at least six months. This will not only improve the long-term health of both the mother and baby, but should also help lower medical costs, obesity and other chronic health issues associated with formula feeding of infants.

The peer counselors will initially offer timely on-site and phone assistance information to pregnant women and mothers enrolled in the WIC program. As training progresses, the peer counselors may make home visits or offer their assistance at other off-site locations, such as hospitals.

MMDHD also hopes to form partnerships with community organizations to ensure this valuable and effective program is provided to the greatest number of women and babies in the district. MMDHD is working to make organizations aware of this upcoming service and encourages them to refer women to the WIC program and the peer counselors for assistance with breastfeeding.

For more information, please contact Bonnie Havlicek, MMDHD WIC Coordinator at bhavlicek@mmdhd.org or 989-831-3620.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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