**DHHR’s West Virginia WIC and Bureau for Social Services Celebrate National Adoption Month**

CHARLESTON, WV – The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and DHHR’s Bureau for Social Services are highlighting services available to children in foster care and increasing awareness of adoption issues as part of National Adoption Month.

WIC provides health care referrals, nutrition education, and benefits to purchase nutritious foods for pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age 5. All children in foster care younger than age 5, or children in foster care who are expectant or new moms, are automatically eligible for WIC. According to DHHR’s Bureau for Social Services, 6,803 youth are in foster care as of October 2021.

“All children need love, support, and a sense of belonging that families can provide,” said Jeffrey Pack, Commissioner of the Bureau for Social Services. “This is why each year, DHHR focuses outreach and awareness-raising efforts in November to support caregivers and families working each day to find permanency for children in foster care, and ensure they know programs like WIC are available.”

Research shows children participating in WIC have better outcomes in the future than eligible children not participating in WIC. Children enrolled in WIC have better vocabularies when they reach school age, reduced rates of anemia and obesity, higher rates of immunizations, and improved diets and intake of important vitamins and nutrients.

“Foster and adoptive parents have a unique opportunity to help children develop the skills and resources necessary to lead a healthy life,” said Heidi Staats, Director of the WV WIC Program. “Since eating habits are established very early in life, it is important to teach good nutrition as early as possible. Like good communication and problem-solving skills, healthy eating is an important skill that helps children grow and prevents them from developing health problems later in life.”

All WIC services are confidential and free of charge. To find a WIC clinic, text “localwic” and the zip code to 67076 or visit dhhr.wv.gov/wic. Visit https://www.missionwv.org/request-information for information on how to become a foster or adoptive parent in West Virginia.

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