



News Release

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USDA Recognizes Exemplary Support for Breastfeeding Mothers ***MATURA Action Corporation and Pottawattamie County WIC Honored as a Model Programs***

August 11, 2021 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has awarded ***MATURA Action Corporation and Pottawattamie County WIC*** with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Gold Premiere *Breastfeeding Award of Excellence* for exemplary efforts in supporting breastfeeding WIC mothers. These awards are part of USDA's National WIC Breastfeeding Week, celebrated August 1-7.

WIC serves millions of low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women and their young children. The hard work and effort that occurs at the State and local levels supports all of the WIC participants, and the exemplary breastfeeding programs and support services are celebrated each August with the Breastfeeding Awards of Excellence.

Pottawattamie County WIC is located in Council Bluffs, the most populous city in Southwest Iowa, and a primary city of the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area. They serve about 2000 ethnically diverse WIC participants annually, with approximately 160 pregnant and breastfeeding mothers receiving support through the Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program.

MATURA is a community action agency located in Creston that provides WIC and Breastfeeding Peer Counseling services for 10 rural counties in southwest Iowa. Because of being in such a rural setting, they understand the importance of building partnerships with a variety of other programs in communities to decrease breastfeeding barriers for WIC families. MATURA Peer Counselors provide breastfeeding support to approximately 300 pregnant and breastfeeding women a year.

WIC agencies that have operated a peer counseling program for at least one year and meet all of the required core components of the **WIC Breastfeeding Model for Peer Counseling**, including recruiting and hiring from WIC's target population, and being available to WIC clients outside usual clinic hours, are eligible to apply for the award.

The award program was established to recognize local WIC agencies that have provided exemplary breastfeeding promotion and support activities. The intent is to highlight successful models and motivate other local agencies to strengthen their breastfeeding promotion and support activities and ultimately increase breastfeeding initiation and duration rates among WIC participants. Awards are given at three levels of performance: Gold, Gold Premiere, and Gold Elite.

The WIC Program serves to safeguard the health of low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating including breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to health care. More information about the WIC program can be found at www.fns.usda.gov/WIC.

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