



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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WIC and other public health services available for Katrina evacuees

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health announces that its WIC (Women's, Infants and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program) and family planning clinics statewide are accommodating patients from Louisiana and Mississippi.

"If you or anyone you know has been affected by the Hurricane Katrina disaster and are in need of family planning services, please call 1-800-545-1098 or visit a local health department clinic," said Dr. Thomas Miller, Assistant State Health Officer for Personal and Community Health.

WIC provides nutrition education, breastfeeding education and supplemental nutritious food to pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants and children up to age 5. Program participants must be of low or moderate income and have a nutritional risk. All pregnant women, infants or children under 5 who have no family income due to Hurricane Katrina will be income eligible.

WIC patients from Louisiana and Mississippi must have refrigeration capability at their temporary residences so that WIC food items such as milk, eggs, cheese and infant formula can be safely stored. If there are Louisiana or Mississippi participants who will be in Alabama for an extended period of time, these participants can be transferred to the Alabama WIC Program.

WIC participants from Louisiana who have food instruments from their home state may use them in Alabama food stores through the end of September 2005. WIC vendors have been notified about this change through their corporate offices and the Alabama Grocer's Association.

The health department's Family Planning Program has services available for all women and men of childbearing age in local county health clinics throughout the state. Family Planning Program services are available free of charge to evacuees through Nov. 30, 2005. Evacuees in need of contraception to prevent unintended pregnancy will be provided a maximum of three months' supply (such as pills, patch, condoms or injection) without a full physical exam.

If there are individuals from Louisiana or Mississippi who plan to remain in Alabama permanently or for an extended period of time, they may qualify for free birth control services through Alabama's Family Planning Medicaid Waiver Program, PLAN *first*. PLAN *first* is for women between the ages of 19 and 44 who meet income requirements. The toll-free number for PLAN *first* is 1-888-737-2083. Services are also available on a sliding fee scale, based on income, for those who do not qualify for PLAN *first*.

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