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## Press Release

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### **Local WIC Coordinator Heather Peterson chosen as local and state proponent for National WIC Association**

**Reno County, Kansas – December 15, 2022**

Heather Peterson, RDN, LD WIC Coordinator at the Reno County Health Department, has been chosen by the National WIC Association to be the local and state proponent for the new updates to the WIC Food Package. Peterson has been the Kansas representative to the National WIC Board for the past four years and during that time she has represented families in Reno and McPherson Counties.

Peterson has a passion for helping families through the WIC program. Peterson said, “I absolutely adore talking with families, helping them learn to eat healthy. I enjoy talking with mothers, helping them to breast feed their babies to get them off to a good start.” Peterson said that the WIC program has an economic impact on Reno County with foods purchased locally giving a boost to local vendors.

The USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service has announced proposed changes to the foods prescribed to participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, known as [WIC](#). The WIC food packages are specifically designed to supplement the foods and beverages participants already consume and fill in key nutritional gaps to support healthy growth and development.

WIC is enhancing participants’ purchasing power and providing more flexibility with the updated food packages. A proposed change includes increasing cash-value benefits for fruits and vegetables, offering other forms such as canned or frozen. For example, Peterson said that part of the proposed changes being recommended are that participants would be able to exchange the juice benefit for additional fresh fruits and vegetables. “This is a request we receive from a lot of WIC families; they want to reduce the sugary beverages offered in their home,” said Peterson. An additional change being proposed would be adding a new option to offer tuna or salmon to children over the age of two, pregnant women and postpartum women.

“Growing healthy kids is expensive. We know the benefits of eating fresh fruits and vegetables, but anyone that has been to the grocery store lately can see that \$1 doesn’t buy many bananas. The WIC food package is based on scientific evidence that promotes healthy pregnancies and supports the needs of infants and children as they grow. We strongly support the USDA’s efforts to update the WIC food packages and bolster the WIC benefit to strengthen the program’s proven public health outcomes,” said Peterson.

To explore these significant changes, go to: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/news-item/usda-0250.22>

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