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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALAMEDA COUNTY RECEIVES \$50,000 NATIONAL AWARD FROM NACCHO Funding Will Reduce Disparities in Breastfeeding for African Americans in East Oakland

December 12, 2014 (San Leandro, CA) – The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) recently awarded the Alameda County Public Health Department’s Women, Infant & Children (WIC) with a highly competitive award to reduce disparities in breastfeeding through peer and professional support for African Americans in East Oakland.

“WIC knows culture and place matters when supporting mothers to provide the best nutritional start for their infants,” said Jeanne Kettles, WIC Regional Breastfeeding Liaison and Project Coordinator. “Our work to improve the quality and accessibility of breastfeeding care, especially for those whom inequities are most severe, has manifested powerful change: increasing African American breastfeeding by more than 9% and expanding our trained workforce at every level of care.”

Formula feeding of newborns is associated with increased risk of respiratory illness, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), type II diabetes, obesity, and many other chronic illnesses, while breastfeeding offers unique immunological and developmental benefits that only human milk can provide. Poverty, lack of education, and timely appropriate care negatively impact mothers’ abilities to breastfeed their babies. Early supplementation with formula decreases a mother’s ability to make a full milk supply. To protect the health and development of the infant, the American Association of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for at least a year or longer as is mutually desired by the mother and child, with the introduction of additional foods at about 6 months of age.

The 18-month pilot will develop a new Black Infant Health breastfeeding curriculum, provide training of 30 support group facilitators and 12 African American peer counselors, and will coordinate peer and professional breastfeeding support in a neighborhood Lactation Café.

Partners include Women Infants and Children, First 5 Alameda County, California Department of Public Health Black Infant Health Program, Alameda County Maternal Paternal Child Adolescent Health, WIC facilitated African American Breastfeeding Cultural Outreach Taskforce (BCOT), Alameda Alliance for Health, and Room to Bloom.

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WIC is a federally funded health and nutrition program for Women Infants and Children. Participants must meet income guidelines and be pregnant, new mothers, infants or children under the age of five. WIC is an equal opportunity provider.