



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Doug Bolnick, Public Information Officer, (636) 949-7408

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 6, 2016

**EXPANDED INCOME GUIDELINES
QUALIFY MORE FAMILIES FOR WIC**

Free Program Provides Food, Support to Women, Infants and Children

St. Charles County, Missouri – Operated through St. Charles County’s Division of Health Services, the Women, Infants and Children program (WIC) provides specific nutritious supplemental foods and nutrition education at no cost to nearly 2,000 qualifying pregnant and breastfeeding women, postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five each month. For 2016-2017, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) expanded the income eligibility guidelines to offer even more growing families an ability to participate.

“WIC gives growing families a healthy start, with the program tailored to the specific nutritional needs of each family member,” Program Coordinator **Eva Obirek** noted. “It’s important that pregnant or breastfeeding mothers and their children receive proper nutrition and guidance during these crucial developmental periods, and these expansions in the participation requirements will allow more families to receive the help they desire. Families that weren’t previously eligible to join WIC may be able to do so now because of these extensions.”

Studies confirm that women who participate in WIC have fewer low birth-weight babies, experience fewer infant deaths, see the doctor earlier in pregnancy and eat healthier. The primary services provided through this no-cost program are health screening, risk assessment, nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding promotion and referrals to additional health care. By participating, eligible families will receive supplies designed to improve their health and aid in development.

To qualify for this program, participants must meet income guidelines, live in Missouri and be individually determined to be at “nutrition risk” by a health professional. Persons interested in applying for WIC services in St. Charles County should make an appointment by phone at 636-949-7402. Effective through March 31, 2017, the expanded WIC income guidelines are shown below:

Family Size	Annual	Monthly	Weekly
2	\$29,637	\$2,470	\$570
3	\$37,296	\$3,108	\$718
4	\$44,955	\$3,747	\$865
5	\$52,614	\$4,385	\$1,012

*For these guidelines, pregnant women are counted as **two family members** when income eligibility is determined. To view the entire income guideline schedule for larger families, as well as a Spanish language table, please visit http://health.mo.gov/living/families/wic/eligibility_income.php.*

(MORE)

(WIC GUIDELINES – Page Two)

WIC supplemental food packages are specially chosen to provide foods high in protein, iron, calcium and vitamins A and C. Eligible families receive milk and cheese, eggs, whole-grain bread products and hot or cold cereals, 100% fruit juices and fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables. The WIC program recommends breastfeeding and provides breastfeeding support, baby foods and infant cereal. For women who cannot, or choose not to breastfeed, infants may receive supplemental, iron-fortified formula.

To provide accurate information and support to families that do wish to breastfeed their children, the St. Charles County WIC program also offers a Breastfeeding Peer Counseling program and an interactive education program. Trained staff and women in the community with personal breastfeeding experience lead these innovative programs. Peer counselors are women who have breastfed their own babies and have undergone essential training to help assist others. Through regular contact during the pregnancy and after the birth of the child, counselors assist families with resources, training and support. The WIC program also provides families with direct referrals to other agencies that can offer additional assistance.

Funded and administered at the federal level through the USDA and managed at the state level by the Missouri DHSS, Bureau of Nutrition Services and WIC, the St. Charles County WIC program is operated at the Division of Health Services office on the Lower Level at 1650 Boone's Lick Road in St. Charles. For more information, please visit <http://www.sccmo.org/560/Women-Infants-Children-WIC> or call 636-949-7402.

In accordance with Federal law and USDA policy, the St. Charles County Department of Public Health is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington DC, 20250-9410 or call 866-632-9992 (voice) or 800-877-8339 (TTY) or 800-845-6136 (Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

The mission of St. Charles County's Division of Health Services is to promote healthy choices and improve the overall health of the community. To achieve these goals, program services include Immunizations, WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Program, STD Prevention, Treatment and Counseling, Communicable Disease investigation, educational programming, the collection and distribution of birth and death certificates, and much more. For information on programs offered and to discover ways the division assists the community, please visit <http://www.sccmo.org/398/Health-Services-Division> or call 636-949-7400.

###