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News Release

For Immediate Release

Federal Budget Sequestration's Impact on WIC

With the threat of the federal sequester looming over many government agencies and programs, the health department's Women, Infants & Children program wants to remind the community that it will continue to serve the public should the sequester go into effect on Friday.

Like much of the rest of the nation, those who administer WIC programs cannot be entirely sure of the effects the sequester will have. According to the National WIC Association, WIC is susceptible to about a 5 percent cut nationwide should sequestration run the full term of the remainder of the current fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30. WIC is administered by state and local health departments but funded primarily at the federal level through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The Missouri Department of Health and Human Services has said it will likely be able to absorb the initial budget reductions at the state level thanks to advance planning for the sequester. The Springfield-Greene County Health Department does not anticipate a reduction in services in the near term. The longer term picture is not as clear, however, should Congress fail to implement a new spending plan in place of the sequester.

"Right now we want to let our participants, our partner grocery stores and the entire community know that we will continue with services as usual," said Mary Ellison, WIC coordinator for the health department. "We've taken a few phone calls from participants who were concerned that WIC is simply going away –that is not the case at all."

Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Education and Supplemental Food Program serves to safeguard the health of eligible women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk. WIC is designed to improve the nutritional health of pregnant women, breastfeeding moms, infants, and children with the goal of improving the overall health of families. WIC also provides vouchers to purchase nutritious supplemental foods like milk, eggs, cheese, fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads, cereal, peanut butter and beans at participating local grocery stores.

For more information, or to schedule an interview with WIC Coordinator Mary Ellison, contact: Mike Brothers, public information administrator, (417) 874-1205 or mbrothers@springfieldmo.gov.