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News Release

For Immediate Release

Continued Budget Cuts Impact Public Health Services

Continued funding constraints from both state and local sources are resulting in changes to fees and services provided by the Springfield-Greene County Health Department.

As of this week, **the department is asking non-Greene County residents to pay an administration fee of \$30 per dose for immunizations given by department staff.** Some immunizations consist of multiple doses. Although they are a minority of those served, the department gives immunizations to people who live outside of Greene County on a regular basis because it offers a greater variety of shots – especially for international travelers – and more regular clinic hours than surrounding communities. Children 18 and under who do not live in Greene County are asked to pay a \$15 fee per visit, regardless of the number of shots.

Also this week, the new 2012-2013 state budget includes a 17 percent reduction in funding to local public health agencies (LPHAs) compared to last year in exchange for carrying out some state-mandated services. These arrangements are outlined yearly in the "core" services contract between the state and LPHAs. Governor Jay Nixon also withheld an additional \$564,098 in General Revenue funds for statewide LPHA funding. All of this continues a downward trend, as LPHAs in Missouri are now seeing their lowest level of state funding in more than a decade.

Because of reduced funding for the core contract, **the state no longer expects LPHAs to conduct certain services on its behalf, including lodging inspections and providing support for trucking accidents where food shipments are involved.** After July 1, these functions will be conducted by state employees of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. Although the core contract makes up only about 2 percent of the total health department budget, any cut at this point has an impact given the overall budget situation in recent years. An approximately \$76,000 cut this year from Greene County resulted in the elimination of animal control services outside of Springfield city limits.

"Funding for public health is a three-legged stool built on local, state and federal funds," said Kevin Gipson, Director of Health. "All three funding streams are vital to protecting public health in some way. The nature of public health funding is very fragmented, and changes in funding certainly do impact services."

A recent survey conducted by the National Association of County and City Health Officials found that 57 percent of all local health departments cut programs in 2011, more than any previous year since the start of the recession in 2008.

Missouri is no different. According to a report released in March by the Trust for America's Health, 40 states cut public health budgets in the last year. Missouri made cuts in 2003, 2004 and

2010. During that time, the state population has grown by 7 percent, and the population of Greene County has grown at more than twice that rate, at 14.5 percent. Missouri currently ranks No. 43 in receiving federal funding for public health, according to the Trust For America's Health report.

With such a dismal funding track record, it may come as no surprise that Missouri also ranks at or near the bottom of many national lists on a variety of health and healthcare issues.

"We understand that both the Governor and Legislature have very tough choices to make," Gipson said. "However, the days of absorbing these kinds of cuts without a noticeable loss of services have passed."

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