FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 26, 2020

Missouri to resume Food Stamp interviews since USDA has not acted on waiver request

JEFFERSON CITY, MO —

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has not responded to Missouri's request to continue to waive required interviews for Food Stamp/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for new applicants and recipients undergoing recertification. Due to COVID-19, the USDA previously approved Department of Social Services (DSS) waiver requests to temporarily suspend interviews. Without USDA approval of a waiver, Missouri must resume the interview requirement beginning July 1. For the health and safety of Missourians, the Family Support Division is conducting the Food Stamp/SNAP interviews by telephone only for July. Once the client has submitted an application or recertification, the Family Support Division will call to conduct the interview. A household that fails to comply with the interview requirement could be denied or lose a Food Stamp/SNAP benefit. As of May 31, 2020, there are 367,610 Missouri households receiving SNAP benefit.

"It is vital for Missourians applying for SNAP benefits or those due for SNAP recertification to participate in the interview process to get or continue to get a SNAP benefit," said **Jennifer Tidball, Acting Director, Department of Social Services**. "In July alone, over 16,000 SNAP households are due for recertification and the Family Support Division (FSD) is required to conduct interviews with each of those households before July 15th. As Phase 2 of the Show Me Strong Recovery Plan continues we hope more Missourians will be able to return to work, but the DSS remains committed to helping Missourians during this uncertain time."

On July 1, FSD is launching a new Food Stamp interview phone number 1-855-823-4908 dedicated only to customers who missed the FSD call or those who need to call FSD for their Food Stamp interview. This will streamline the Food Stamp interview process and allow Missourians with other questions to more easily get through on 1-855-FSD-INFO. Missourians who have questions can use the **DSS Virtual Assistant (https://info.mo.gov/dss/chatbot/)** to get immediate answers to basic questions that are not specific to an individual's case 24 hours a day or can call 855-FSD-INFO or 855-373-4636 Monday through Friday, 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. On July 11, Saturday hours resume 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Please note state offices, including the FSD Customer Service Center, are closed July 3-4.

The **Missouri Services Navigator (https://mo.servicesnavigator.org/s4s/WhereILive/Council?pageId=1&lockla=true)** has information on over 2,800 programs and services available in the state. Missourians in need of information on Food Stamp, Medicaid, Child Care Subsidy, LIHEAP, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefit programs can visit **dss.mo.gov (https://dss.mo.gov/)**. Missourians can also apply for those services 24/7 online by visiting **MyDSS.mo.gov (https://mydss.mo.gov/)**, or

sending completed applications and verification documents by email to **FSD.Documents@dss.mo.gov (mailto:FSD.Documents@dss.mo.gov)**, or by fax to 573-526-9400.

The Department of Social Services is committed to the "**Show Me Strong" Recovery Plan (https://showmestrong.mo.gov/)** and serving the needs of Missouri citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic. **SkillUp (https://mydss.mo.gov/food-assistance/missouri-employment-training-program)** and **Missouri Work Assistance (MWA) (https://mydss.mo.gov/missouri-work-assistance)** are free programs available to all Food Stamp/SNAP and TA recipients that help low-income Missourians with career planning, overcoming challenges to work, as well as getting and keeping a job. Information regarding the department's response to the pandemic is available online **https://dss.mo.gov/covid-19 (https://dss.mo.gov/covid-19)**.

The mission of the Department of Social Services is to empower Missourians to live safe, healthy, and productive lives. Visit **dss.mo.gov (https://dss.mo.gov/)** to learn more about the Department of Social Services and follow us on **Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/MOSocialServices/)** and **Twitter (https://twitter.com/DSS_Missouri)**.

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Media Contact

Rebecca Woelfel

Rebecca.Woelfel@dss.mo.gov (mailto:rebecca.woelfel@dss.mo.gov)