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St. Louis County to Provide Menstruation Hygiene Products to Inmates Free of Charge

St. Louis County, MO (Nov. 7, 2019) – St. Louis County Executive Sam Page signed an executive order Thursday that will provide individuals at the St. Louis County Justice Center with no-cost menstrual hygiene products for the duration of their custody.

This policy change is the outcome of a partnership between St. Louis County and Missouri Appleseed, a nonprofit dedicated to providing solutions to problems at the intersection of public health and criminal justice.

In September, the County’s Department of Justice Services (DJS) and Missouri Appleseed conducted a survey among Justice Center staff and inmates to identify unmet feminine hygiene needs for those in custody.

Seventy-five percent of respondents reported using homemade hygiene products. Nearly one-third of respondents reported developing vaginal infections as a result of lack of access to hygiene products.

“These survey responses identified an unmet need that had direct and adverse consequences for menstruating individuals’ health,” County Executive Page said. “This policy change ensures individuals in custody at the Justice Center can receive the products they need to manage their menstrual hygiene needs without compromising their health.”

“We are pleased that County Executive Sam Page and Lt. Colonel Troy Doyle are continuing to make incarcerated women’s health and dignity immediate priorities,” Liza Weiss, Executive Director for Missouri Appleseed, said. “We hope other Missouri counties will adopt similar policies.”

“I’m proud to have worked with the Page administration, Missouri Appleseed, and other advocates to make this happen,” said District 5 Councilwoman Lisa Clancy. “This is an important step toward our efforts to improve health care and promote dignity for people in County custody.”

Only two states – neither of which are Missouri – require the provision of no-cost menstrual care products to their incarcerated population. As of August 2017, the Federal Bureau of Prisons mandated that women incarcerated in federal centers receive, free of charge, a variety of menstrual products.

St. Louis County is proud to proactively hold its Justice Center to a higher than required standard for the wellbeing of those in its care. These changes at the Justice Center elevate St. Louis County policies up to federal standards.

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