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## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN ST. LUCIE INVITES GOVERNMENTS TO APPLY FOR DESIGNATION AS A HEALTHY COMMUNITY CHAMPION

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**St. Lucie County, FL** – Healthy Community Champions 2019 application released. The Florida Department of Health has released its [2019 Healthy Community Champions application](#) for municipal and county level governments statewide. Health is supported by a variety of factors that reach far beyond health care and public health activities. Governments that have taken a Health in All Policies approach to community planning may apply for this two-year designation with opportunities to receive technical assistance to further the adoption and implementation of health in all policies.

“In our current health improvement plan, eating healthier, increasing physical activity and reducing chronic diseases are key concerns. Local governments are our partners and have been instrumental in supporting these priorities. The Healthy Community Champion Recognition program is an opportunity to commend them for the tremendous work they have done to improve the health of their residents. When a community is healthy, it continuously thrives, evolves, improves and expands its resources,” said Clint Sperber, Health Officer for the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County.

Obesity is now classified as an epidemic with only 34.5% of adults in Florida and 31% of those in St. Lucie at a healthy weight. In St. Lucie, 68% of residents are considered overweight or obese according to 2016 data. America's Obesity Crisis highlights that excess weight is linked to 64% of Type 2 diabetes, 73% of kidney disease, and 75% of osteoarthritis cases.

Chronic diseases have a considerable economic impact on individuals and communities, including direct medical costs, work absences, lost wages, reduced productivity of patients and their caregivers, and more. Many are seriously impacted by factors such as the availability and accessibility of healthy food, and safe available spaces for physical activity.

County and municipal governments play an important role in decreasing the prevalence of unhealthy weight in their jurisdictions. Local governments can implement a variety of policies that have been shown to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, improve community preparedness, prioritize employee wellness, and participate in community outreach and engagement. These “best practice” policies are reflected in the Healthy Community Champions criteria.

The Centers for Disease Control established [Health in All Policies](#) as a framework to encourage the integration of health considerations in all policy making across sectors, including non-profits and faith-based organizations, transportation, childcare, housing, education, families, employers and more. Health in all Policies represents an approach to addressing the social determinants of

health which are key drivers of health outcomes and health inequities. Resources and the application for this Community Champion recognition can be found at [www.healthiestweightflorida.com/recognition.html](http://www.healthiestweightflorida.com/recognition.html). For more local information, please contact Jennifer Harris at: 772- 785-6184, [Jennifer.Harris@FLHealth.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Harris@FLHealth.gov) or Stefanie Myers at: 772-873-4923, [Stefanie.Myers@FLHealth.gov](mailto:Stefanie.Myers@FLHealth.gov).

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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### **About Healthy St. Lucie**

In June of 2015, the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County met with community partners to begin work on a Community Health Improvement Plan for 2016-2019. This meeting launched the **Healthy St. Lucie Coalition** to promote health where we live, learn, work, and play. The new health assessment and improvement plan for 2020-2025 will begin in July of 2019. To learn more about Healthy St. Lucie, please visit [www.healthystlucie.org](http://www.healthystlucie.org).

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