



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washtenaw Ranks First in Health Factors for Fifth Consecutive Year *National report describes what we know and what we can do to create healthier places to live, work, learn and play*

YPSILANTI, Mich., March 26, 2014 – Washtenaw County ranks first among Michigan counties in “health factors” according to the 2014 *County Health Rankings* released today. This is the fifth anniversary of the *Rankings*, and the fifth consecutive year that Washtenaw County has received the top ranking for health factors.

The *County Health Rankings* are based on the idea that no single thing makes us healthy or unhealthy – rather it is a variety of factors such as physical activity, access to healthy food, education and family and community support combined.

“We are incredibly fortunate to have a solid foundation for building healthy communities in Washtenaw County. There is tremendous work happening and strong partnerships in place,” says Acting Health Officer Ellen Rabinowitz. “At the same time, we know we’re not there yet,” she continued. “The *Rankings* and our own local data can help us fully understand what supports or undermines health in our communities and what we can do about it.”

There are two rankings for each county, one for health factors and one for health outcomes. Health factors include our health behaviors, access to clinical care, social and environmental factors and our physical environments. Health outcomes include how long people live (mortality) and to what degree they report feeling healthy (morbidity). Washtenaw ranks sixth among Michigan counties for health outcomes.

Washtenaw’s overall high rankings provide good information about how we are doing locally compared to other counties and states. Within the county, however, there are significant health

differences when we look at outcomes according to where people live, how much money they earn, their level of formal education or their race/ethnicity. For example, while infant mortality rates have improved overall, black babies under one year still die at almost twice the rate of white babies in Washtenaw. Similarly, how long you live may depend on where exactly you live within the county: The average age of death in Sylvan, York and Ypsilanti Townships starts at 64 years. In contrast, it is over 76 years in Bridgewater Township, Saline and Ann Arbor.

Washtenaw’s own source of county health data, called the Health Improvement Plan (HIP), illustrates these disparities in health. Taken together, the *Rankings* and HIP can help us develop innovative approaches to support health – across our local communities and, often, outside the doctor’s office. In September 2013, Washtenaw County Public Health released “[Building a Healthier Washtenaw: Community Health Assessment and Community Improvement Plan.](#)” The report uses local HIP data, the *Rankings* model of understanding health (depicted below) as well as other sources. It tells the story of our health in Washtenaw, identifies resources and describes work with community partners to set priorities for improving health – especially where disparities exist.

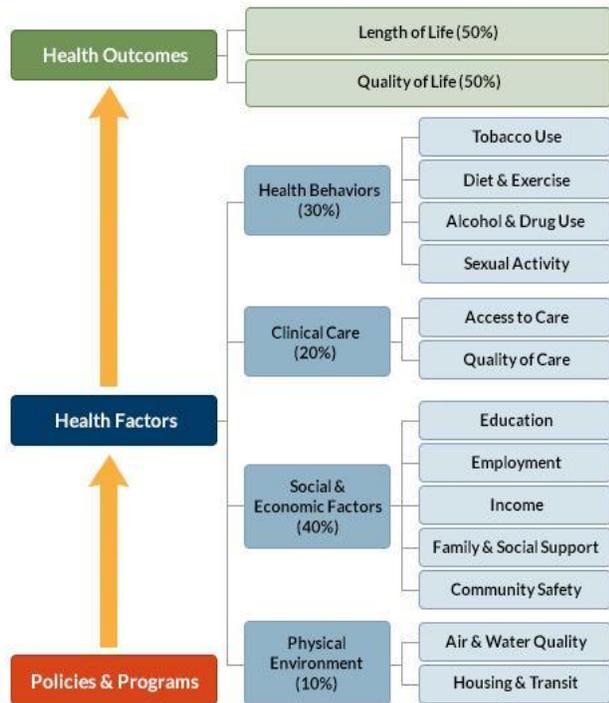
About the County Health Rankings

The *County Health Rankings* are published online at www.countyhealthrankings.org. The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation publish them annually.

Washtenaw County Public Health

Washtenaw County Public Health promotes health and works to prevent disease or injury in our community. Visit us online at <http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>.

More on local HIP data, including maps, tables and presentations is available at <http://hip.ewashtenaw.org>. HIP includes a 2,000 household survey conducted every five years since 1995. It has focused resources, partnerships and health improvement strategies where they can be most effective in Washtenaw County.



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