

County Health Rankings: What You Can Do

Everyone can help spread the word and ensure that the Rankings are used effectively in their communities. Here are three steps you can take to get involved:

1. Learn about the health of your county

- **Visit the *County Health Rankings* website.** Use the data and the *County Health Calculator* to find out how healthy your county is and why.
- **Start a conversation.** Talk to your friends, colleagues, neighbors and family members about the health of your community and discuss ideas for making it a healthier place to live, learn, work and play.
- **Meet with local leaders and community residents** to discuss barriers to health and ways to overcome them. Host a town hall meeting or invite people to one that's already been scheduled.

2. Get the word out

- **Share the *County Health Rankings* data with people in your community.** Introduce it a local Chamber of Commerce breakfast or an urban planning meeting. Post information about the data on a list-serv, Web site or e-newsletter. Let your friends and colleagues know about the *Rankings* through Facebook and Twitter.
- **Get policy-makers to pay attention.** Tell them about their county (or counties) ranking and open a dialogue about ways to improve health in your community.
- **Tell your story through the media.** Write an op-ed or talk to local media about the *Rankings* and what needs to be done to improve the health of your community.

3. Take action!

- **Contact your local public health department** about participating in a local task force or, if none exists, organize one to tackle the pressing issues in your community.
- **Be an advocate.** Step out as a spokesperson about the *Rankings* and the health issues you care about. Rally other community leaders to take action.
- **Share your resources.** Offer your time, staff and/or funding to community partners. These resources can help support community plans and programs aimed at tackling factors that are barriers to good health.

Visit the *County Health Rankings* website to find data and tools that will help you take action: www.countyhealthrankings.org



County Health Rankings

Mobilizing Action Toward Community Health

Other Ways to Get Involved: What Specific Sectors Can Do

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EDUCATORS

- **Distribute the *Rankings* data** to principals, teachers, parents, local universities and school/education advocates to help more people understand the connection between education and health.
- **Seek new opportunities to build health services, policies and programs.** Identify opportunities that not only help children stay healthy but also help them to be successful in school.
- **Talk to public health department officials** about making sure community health plans include goals for improving educational outcomes, such as higher graduation rates.
- **Identify strengths and weaknesses of the education system in your county or state.** Mobilize other community leaders to work with you to improve educational achievement in your community.
- **Speak at or co-sponsor a town hall meeting** about the most pressing issues for parents, teachers and administrators.
- **Communicate your message broadly.** Write an op-ed in the local newspaper or speak to elected officials about the link between education and health.



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Translating Research into Policy and Practice

PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

- **Health departments can use the *Rankings* to attract attention to their current health improvement activities.** The report can also help shed light on the need for action and additional resources to move current efforts forward.
- **Use the *Rankings* to re-invigorate your efforts to remove barriers to health** or to make better health a priority in your community. The *Rankings* are an excellent tool to help bring new partners to the table.
- **Use the report to guide future community planning**, such as setting 2015 or 2020 community-wide health goals.
- **State health departments can provide county health departments with access to data** that can be used to direct their health improvement efforts to the areas that need it most. States also can help counties share best practices and direct more resources toward the efforts of counties that need extra help.
- **Meet with policy-makers** about programs and policies that are needed to improve health. Discuss ideas to help fund these initiatives, such as re-aligning budgetary priorities to meet the most pressing health needs.
- **Meet with local leaders and community residents** to discuss barriers to health and ask for their input about ways to make your community healthier.
- **Create a task force to look at the root causes behind poor health in your county** and create an actionable plan to tackle them. Be sure the plan involves key local leaders from a variety of fields.
- **Talk to local media** about the *Rankings* and what needs to be done to improve the health of your community. Call your local newspaper, send out a press release, make staff available for interviews or set up meetings with newspaper, radio and TV reporters.

ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS

- **Use information from the report to help guide your response to the problems your constituents tell you about every day.** Mobilize other community leaders by convening a meeting of important stakeholders, including those from education, public health and other sectors, to identify the most pressing issues and set an agenda for action.
- **Host or sponsor a hearing and/or town hall meeting about the *Rankings*.** Encourage discussions about ways to make your state or community healthier.
- **Reference findings from the report to push for policy changes that can improve health,** such as supporting better early childhood education, providing more walking paths and enacting smoke-free laws.
- **Be an advocate.** Step out as a spokesperson for the *Rankings* and rally other community leaders to take action on the most pressing health issues.
- **Contact your local and state health departments.** Find out how they plan to respond to the *Rankings* and how you can participate. For example, join a local task force or, if none exists, organize one to tackle the pressing issues in your community.
- **If you're a state official, use the report to identify counties with the greatest needs.** Take action to re-direct resources.
- **Write an op-ed about the *Rankings*** and what needs to be done to improve the health of your community.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

- **Work with your local or state health department** to coordinate efforts in response to the *Rankings*.
- **Be a spokesperson** for the *Rankings* and the health issues you care about. Rally other community leaders to take action.
- **Meet with local businesses, schools and other community decision makers.** Suggest solutions for improving health, such as supporting more pre-school education, providing more walking paths, promoting access to healthier foods and enacting smoke-free policies. Encourage decision-makers to support the most pressing policy changes.
- **Meet with your local legislator** to explain how the *Rankings* highlight the many factors that influence health. Discuss steps that can be taken at the local level to address the most pressing issues.
- **Invite policy-makers** to sponsor or attend a briefing on the *Rankings*.



BUSINESS LEADERS

- **Make your business a healthy place to work.** Offer physical activity plans and smoking-cessation programs to your employees, make healthy foods available in your cafeteria, and motivate employees to make healthy choices through financial incentives.
- **Encourage employee fitness.** Subsidize gym memberships, provide onsite facilities and make stairwells accessible.
- **Educate all managers about the link between employee health and productivity.**
- **Step out as a leader** in businesses efforts to prevent illness and promote health.
- **Sponsor community programs or volunteer at community events** aimed at tackling factors that are barriers to good health.



HEALTH CARE SECTOR

- **Talk about the *Rankings* with your colleagues, staff and patients.**
- **Share information with peers in the health care profession.** Speak about the *Rankings* and pressing health issues in your state and community with members of local medical or hospital associations or other member organizations, such as a medical society or professional nursing organization.
- **Take action in your health care setting.** If you're associated with a hospital, talk to the hospital board about the report. Identify steps that board members can take to lead efforts that will address the most pressing issues in your community.
- **Offer your time, staff and/or funding to community partners.** Present at town hall meetings and sponsor community programs aimed at tackling factors that are barriers to good health.

GRANTMAKERS

- **Convene** stakeholders, including community members, to discuss the *County Health Rankings*
- **Assess** the factors impacting health in your community in conjunction with a range of other partners
- **Educate** the community about evidence-based and promising practices to improve health
- **Encourage and foster** multi-sector partnerships to implement solutions
- **Support** programs, practices and policies to address issues identified in community health assessments
- **Collect data** to provide access to reliable, consistent local data to track change over time and measure results of efforts
- **Disseminate** experience and learning to other grantmakers
- **Get policymakers to pay attention.** Tell them about how their county or counties ranked and open a dialogue about ways to improve health in your community