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Rockingham and Grafton Counties Rank Healthiest in the State in Annual Report

Steps New Hampshire Is Taking to Address the Issues

Concord, NH – Rockingham County is joined by Grafton County this year as the healthiest counties in New Hampshire in the sixth annual *County Health Rankings*, released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI). Coos and Sullivan Counties ranked the lowest for Health Outcomes, which measures how healthy a county is, and Health Factors, which look at the influence on health in any given county.

The *Rankings*, available at www.countyhealthrankings.org, include a snapshot of each county in New Hampshire with a color-coded map comparing each county's overall health ranking. Researchers looked at the length and quality of life to determine Health Outcomes. Health Factors include measures of health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment.

Since 2013, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has provided funding to 13 agencies across the State to convene a Public Health Advisory Council. The purpose of these Advisory Councils is to develop and implement a range of public health improvement activities. Advisory committees are made up of community leaders, local health and public health entities, concerned citizens, and experts who make up the public health system in their region. The first step toward improving the health of a community is to utilize data, such as the *County Health Rankings*, to develop a common understanding about the most important health needs across the State.

Each of the Advisory Councils is currently developing a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP process allows community partners to work to improve health in their region by establishing common health priorities. Once priorities are established, the Advisory Councils will identify specific strategies to implement while engaging local agencies to work collaboratively to implement these strategies. *County Health Rankings* are part of the data that helps illustrate key health issues and their root causes as the Advisory Councils are assessing the health of their region.

“Having Community Health Improvement Plans in place in each of our 13 public health regions will help to ensure a coordinated, collaborative approach among local agencies whose work impacts the health of the public,” said Dr. José Montero, Director of Public Health at DHHS. “This increases the effectiveness of their efforts to target a few key areas based on local priorities and the capacity to take action. These plans will also align with the priorities established in the State Health Improvement Plan so that both state and local partners are addressing those areas where we can most improve the health of our communities.”

More information about the Public Health Advisory Councils, including a list of contacts in each region, visit <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/rphn/index.htm>. For more information about the DHHS Division of Public Health Services, visit www.dhhs.nh.gov.

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