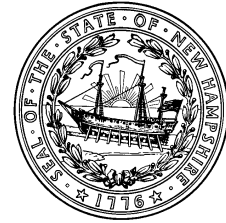


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**PRESS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**According to a Recent Report, Merrimack County is the  
Healthiest in the State; Coos County Still Poorest in Health**  
*New Hampshire Also Announces Release of Its Own Report*

**Concord, NH** – Merrimack County has the healthiest residents in New Hampshire and Coos County remains the least healthy county in the State, according to the third annual *County Health Rankings*, released today by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). Merrimack has replaced Rockingham County, which was ranked the healthiest in New Hampshire in 2011. According to the *Rankings*, residents of Coos County have more than 1 ½ times the rate of premature deaths than residents of Merrimack County.

The *Rankings*, available at [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://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 used five measures to assess the level of overall health or "health outcomes" for New Hampshire by county: the rate of people dying before age 75, the percent of people who report being in fair or poor health, the numbers of days people report being in poor physical and poor mental health, and the rate of low-birthweight infants.

The *Rankings* also consider factors that affect people's health within four categories: health behavior, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment. Among the many health factors they look at: rates of adult smoking, adult obesity, excessive drinking among adults, and teenage births; the number of uninsured under age 65, availability of primary care physicians, and preventable hospital stays; rates of high school graduation, adults who have attended some college, children in poverty; community safety; limited access to healthy foods; rates of physical inactivity; and air pollution levels.

The *County Health Rankings* rank the overall health of nearly every county in all 50 states, using a standard way to measure how healthy people are and how long they live. This year's *Rankings* include several new measures, such as how many fast food restaurants are in a county and levels of physical inactivity among residents. Graphs illustrating premature death trends over 10 years are new as well.

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“This is the third year that this report has been compiled and we are definitely seeing trends, though the order may change from year to year,” said New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Public Health Director Dr. José Montero. “The reports confirm what we have believed, that the health of the residents of Coos and Sullivan Counties lags behind the rest of the State.”

“We believe this report is complementary to the *New Hampshire State Health Profile* the Division of Public Health Services released last year,” continued Montero. “We are also pleased to announce the release of *2011 Snapshot of New Hampshire’s Public Health Regions, Counties, and the Cities of Manchester and Nashua*. This snapshot, a companion document to the *2011 New Hampshire State Health Profile*, is meant to assist community leaders and to identify priority health issues in their communities. We have come a long way in gathering and assessing data on public health here in the Granite State and hopefully people in the public health community statewide will use these reports to take action to improve the health of their communities.”

The *2011 Snapshot of New Hampshire’s Public Health Regions, Counties, and the Cities of Manchester and Nashua* confirms that Coos County fares significantly worse than the State in areas such as obesity, binge drinking, teen birth rates, and access to primary care providers.

Nancy Frank, Director of the North Country Health Consortium notes that work has begun in the North Country to address the data from both reports. “We are now meeting with members of our community in preparation for a day-long North Country Health Improvement Initiative Summit planned for June 14, 2012. The summit will result in action steps to make a real difference in the health of people in our county.”

The *Snapshot Report* is available online at [www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/index.htm#regprof](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/index.htm#regprof). To view the *2011 New Hampshire State Profile*, go to [www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/documents/2011statehealthprofile.pdf](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/documents/2011statehealthprofile.pdf). For more information about the Division of Public Health Services visit the DHHS website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov).

*This report is one of the topics DHHS is focusing on this week in recognition of National Public Health Week; for more information go to [www.nphw.org](http://www.nphw.org).*

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