



Health and Human Services **MEDIA RELEASE**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2016

Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County addresses County Health Ranking

2016 Report show benefits of sustaining community collaborations

SARASOTA COUNTY— The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) recognizes the value in measuring health outcomes using a variety of data tools. Today, Sarasota County Health and Human Services officials acknowledged the 2016 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps tool, released by the University of Wisconsin and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This study is the seventh in a series of annual reports highlighting the many community factors influencing health and measures progress using established data sources, many are available from the department at www.floridacharts.com

“We are pleased with the gains our county has made in the rankings,” says DOH-Sarasota Health Officer/Administrator Chuck Henry, who also serves as the Director for Sarasota County Health and Human Services. “Residents and visitors alike stand to benefit from the expansive and long-standing collaborations in our community aimed at fostering healthy environments and healthy lifestyles.”

These rankings, which address physical environments; social and economic factors; health behaviors, and access to clinical care, are a snapshot of the health of counties across the nation. The report reinforces the benefit of community collaborations since health and well-being is not the result of one single effort but rather the dynamic achieved through the collective and ongoing efforts of many community partners. Through collaboration with local governments, non-profit organizations, health care facilities, business groups, schools, faith-based organizations and many other stakeholders, the department works to improve the health of all people in Sarasota County.

Local health officials say a preliminary version of the 2016-2020 Sarasota County Community Health Improvement Plan is currently being shared with many stakeholders for feedback on the plan’s three priority health areas—healthy weight, behavioral health and access to care. These priority areas were identified in the recently released Community Health Assessment comprised of resident surveys, interviews with community leaders and a review of existing data sources.

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MEDIA NOTES:

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“We all stand to benefit when we recognize that health and well-being is everyone’s business. Healthy weight, which is linked to prevention of many chronic health conditions, was the basis for establishing the Healthy Sarasota County Collaborative,” says the organization’s former chair Janet Kahn who also serves as executive director for the Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County. “We work to promote sustainable changes in health behavior through education and designation programs supporting healthy environments in child care centers, schools, worksites and primary care clinics so the healthy choice is the easy choice.”

“Our community encourages healthy lifestyles and with support from Sarasota County Health and Human Services has established linkages making it easier for people to get help with mental health and substance abuse issues. This is evident in the quality of life measures in this year’s ranking,” says Coastal Behavioral Health Executive Director Jack Minge. “We remain committed to reducing barriers so behavioral health services are more accessible to a larger segment of our community.”

Dr. Linda Stone, Chief Executive Officer for the Community Health Centers of Sarasota County, the lead partner in Sarasota County’s Federally Quality Health Center agrees. “As a safety net provider of primary health care to the uninsured and underinsured, we are committed to treating the whole person.” It is gratifying to see an improvement in the number of people experiencing “poor mental health days” in this year’s County Health Ranking. We continue to partner with First Step of Sarasota and Centerstone of Florida in providing counseling and medication support to help more people experience greater levels of wellness.”

For more information about the 2016 County Health Rankings, visit www.countyhealthrankings.org.

Last week, the Florida Department of Health became the first integrated department of health in the nation to achieve national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board. Public health departments play a critical role in protecting and improving the health of people and communities. The seal of accreditation signifies that the Florida Department of Health has been rigorously examined and meets or exceeds national standards that promote continuous quality improvement for public health.

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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Sarasota County prohibits discrimination in all services, programs or activities.

View the complete policy at www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx



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