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## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN ESCAMBIA COUNTY ADDRESSES COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS, RECOGNIZES NEW COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT**



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**Pensacola Fla.** – The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County (FDOH-Escambia) recognizes the value in measuring health outcomes and today acknowledged the 2016 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps tool released by the University of Wisconsin and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This study highlights the many community factors that influence health and uses established data, much of which is available at [www.floridacharts.com](http://www.floridacharts.com).

These rankings are a snapshot of the health of counties across the country and they emphasize that health is not a singular effort but a combined work in progress across all community partners. FDOH-Escambia works in collaboration with local governments, non-profit organizations, health care facilities, business groups, schools, faith-based organizations, and many other stakeholders to improve the health of all people in Escambia County, Florida. These rankings use data related to physical environments, social and economic factors, health behaviors, and clinical care.

FDOH-Escambia's Director, John J. Lanza, MD, PhD, MPH, FAAP, remarks: "We have been monitoring the annual reports since the first rankings for Florida counties were published in 2010. I am pleased to say that this year we have seen improvements, from the 2015 report, in over half of the measures used to establish the rankings. These improved measures serve as indicators that the Community Health Improvement Plan implemented by FDOH-Escambia and other community organizations through the Partnership for a Healthy Community is impacting our residents' health and length of life."

In Escambia County, Florida, the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is designed to address specific opportunities for improved health that have been identified by the community. FDOH-Escambia collaborates, through the Partnership For A Healthy Community (the Partnership), with the Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County (FDOH-Santa Rosa), Escambia Community Clinics, Baptist Health Care, Sacred Heart Health System, the University of West Florida, and other such stakeholders to complete a Community Health Assessment (CHA) every three to five years. These stakeholders use the assessment to develop and implement the improvement plan and to then monitor progress. The last CHA prepared by the Partnership was finalized in 2012, followed by a CHIP in 2013. Partnership stakeholders have just completed a new assessment for the community comprised of both Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. This document can be viewed at [pfahc.org](http://pfahc.org), a link to which can be found at [EscambiaHealth.com](http://EscambiaHealth.com).

The 2016 CHA continues the previous assessment's focus on three community health priorities for the two-county area: reducing tobacco use, improving the number of residents at a healthy weight, and increasing access to health care for all residents. Additionally, infant mortality and sexually transmitted diseases have been identified as health concerns in Escambia County, Florida.

Debra M. Vinci, DrPH, RDN, Associate Professor of Health Promotion at the University of West Florida and Chair of the Partnership's Healthiest Weight and Nutrition Work Group notes: "Overweight and obesity along with lifestyle behaviors including poor diet and physical inactivity are associated with increased risks for many chronic diseases, such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure, which not only interfere with an individual's quality of life from a health standpoint, but can also lead to increased financial costs both for that individual and their community."

Partnership President and Escambia Community Clinics Director, Chandra Smiley, MSW, commends the partnership approach: "There is great value in addressing these issues together. By collaborating and communicating with other health organizations in our community, we have a greater collective impact on these priority issues and can offer better opportunities for our residents to receive quality health care and adopt habits that will improve their individual health, the effect of which will improve our community's overall health status."

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 Florida Department of Health works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.

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