
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



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Kent County Holds Tight to 16th in Michigan in Annual Health Rankings

GRAND RAPIDS – For the second year in a row, Kent County maintained its rank of 16th out of 82 counties measured in Michigan in the national **County Health Rankings**. The report was released today by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The ranking is an improvement over 2010, the first year of the report, when we ranked 22nd.

Kent County attained 16th in *Health Outcomes*, which measures how long people live, how healthy people feel, and mental well-being. Our overall Health Factors score improved from 19th in 2012, to 14th in 2014. “We are still struggling with the issue of obesity,” noted Adam London, Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. “Nearly one in three people in Kent County are obese according to Body Mass Index standards. Obesity is a national epidemic that can lead to a variety of chronic illness and disease.”

Issues of concern include:

- 23% of children in Kent County live in poverty, up from 20% last year; the national benchmark* is 13%;
- 17% of Kent County adults admit to heavy or excessive drinking, down from 18% last year;
- The teen birth rate is 38 per 1000 - much higher than the national benchmark* of 20 per 1000;
- Glucose screenings for Medicare recipients with diabetes are 88%, close to the national benchmark* of 90%;
- The physical environment in Kent County, which includes air pollution and severe housing problems, ranked 48th out of 82 counties in the state.

“Kent County is in the process of building a new Community Health Needs Assessment,” London said. “Data like this helps us reach out into the community and show where there are deficiencies, and helps us build plans for a healthier future.”

The annual rankings help health care providers better understand the health problems in our communities. For more information, go to www.countyhealthrankings.org.

**National Benchmark is the 90th percentile, or how the best 10% of counties are doing.*

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.