



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System to Survey Kent County Residents

GRAND RAPIDS – Starting this week, people in Kent County will be receiving letters and phone calls asking families to take part in the Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). This health survey is the largest conducted telephone survey in the world. The survey will help the KCHD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to track critical health issues, as well as creating and evaluating public health programs in Kent County. *Issues and Answers*, a phone marketing research firm, will be conducting the survey on behalf of the Kent County Health Department (KCHD).

The BRFSS collects data on the six individual-level behavioral health risk factors associated with the leading causes of premature mortality and morbidity among adults: 1) cigarette smoking, 2) alcohol use, 3) physical activity, 4) diet, 5) hypertension, and 6) safety belt use. By collecting behavioral health risk data at the state and local level, BRFSS has become a powerful tool for targeting and building health promotion activities. As a result, BRFSS users have increasingly demanded more data and asked for more questions on the survey.

The BRFSS has a set of core questions that are asked to all participants, but the KCHD is able to add additional questions to the survey to get more localized data about Kent County's health risks and concerns. Staff use data from the BRFSS in establishing baselines and setting goals for health. "Nationally, the BRFSS has led to programs encouraging early detection of certain cancers, as well as changing unhealthy behaviors, such as tobacco use," says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer for KCHD. "We hope that the survey can help us to determine which issues are most prevalent in Kent County, so we can take action to help assist to change those unhealthy behaviors.

Participants of the survey will be chosen at random and will be asked about a variety of health topics, such as tobacco use, alcohol use, diet, physical activity and many other issues. The data received from the interviews will then be analyzed by race, ethnicity, gender, education, income, location, etc. Data from the BRFSS will be used for the Kent County Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan.

(www.kentcountychna.org.)

While in the past the survey was only conducted through a land-line telephone number, the survey will include cell phone users as well. This is due to the increase in households that only have cell phones. By incorporating cell-phone-only users as well as landline users, the survey hopes to add more diversity. Learn more about the BRFSS at <http://www.accesskent.com/Health/brfs.htm>.

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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.