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N E W S

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**HEALTH RANKINGS REPORT GIVES OHIOANS A COUNTY-BY-COUNTY SNAPSHOT OF HOW
MULTIPLE FACTORS INFLUENCE THEIR HEALTH**

ODH to Engage State and Local Partners to Seek Creative Ways to Improve Health Outcomes

COLUMBUS – The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute today released its *2009 County Health Rankings Report*. The *County Health Rankings* are the first to rank the overall health of the counties in all 50 states – more than 3,000 total – by using a standard formula to measure how healthy people are and how long they live.

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) will be working with local health officials across the state to engage communities on the challenges identified in Ohio’s report, which ranks all 88 counties within the state. The report also looks at various health factors, which include adult smoking, binge drinking, teenage pregnancy, rates of high school graduation, number of children in poverty, rates of violent crime, access to healthy foods, air pollution levels, and number of liquor stores within a given geographic area.

“I encourage community leaders to not only acknowledge the county’s challenges and take steps to improve them, but also to celebrate their strengths and build upon them,” said ODH Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D. “By joining together I believe we can make Ohio a better place to live, learn, work, and play.”

Over the next few months, ODH will be convening public health officials and community leaders, statewide, to join in a constructive dialogue regarding the best ways to improve Ohio’s well-being. ODH and local health departments will use the county health rankings in addition to the 2008 Healthy Ohio community profiles, which were created by ODH to provide residents with an in-depth look into what is making their community unhealthy.

“The County Health Rankings Report highlights how important other factors such as education and employment are to the overall health of a community,” Jackson said. “ODH will be working with our partners at the state and local level to identify creative and cost-effective solutions to the challenging health issues facing Ohio’s communities.”

The online report, available at www.countyhealthrankings.org, includes a snapshot of each county in Ohio 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 Ohio by county. They are: The rate of people dying before age 75; the percent of people who report being in ‘fair’ or ‘poor’ health; the number of days people report being in ‘poor’ physical and/or ‘poor’ mental health; and, the rate of low-birth weight infants.

Editor's Note- There will be a media availability conference call on this topic, today from 2 to 3 p.m., media please call 1-800-510-7500 and enter participant code – 7655733#. Staff from ODH, The Health Policy Institute of Ohio and the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners will be available to answer questions.

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