

# **CLEVELAND COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **County Health Rankings Show Where We Live Matters to Our Health**

(Shelby, NC)—Each year, the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute in partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation release the *County Health Rankings*. These rankings compare the overall health of nearly every county in the nation, with the goal of showing that where you live influences how well and how long you live. With a ranking of 1 indicating the healthiest county and a ranking of 100 indicating the least healthy county in North Carolina, Cleveland County received a ranking of 86 according to the 2015 annual *County Health Rankings*.

Although Cleveland County's health ranking regressed from its 2014 ranking of 84, our county's scores improved in many measureable health outcomes that are used to determine overall rankings. Our ranking in the category of Health Factors improved from a score of 66 in 2014 to a score of 55 in 2015. The Health Factors ranking is comprised of indicators that impact health behaviors, clinical care, and social and economic factors. Notable improvements in the category of health behaviors include a decrease in the sexually transmitted infections rate from 518/100,000 in 2014 to 511/100,000 in 2015. Additionally, our teen births rate improved from 55/1,000 in 2014 to 53/1,000 in 2015. Improvements in these health indicators support the continued efforts of public health and the prevention field to influence health behaviors through evidence-based prevention curricula and environmental and policy changes.

In the category of clinical care, we observed an improvement in preventable hospital stays among Medicare patients, decreasing from 60/1,000 in 2014 to 55/1,000 in 2015. The category reflecting the most improvements is the social and economic factors category, marking improvement in the following indicators: high school graduation rate, completion of some college, unemployment rate, children living in poverty, children in single-parent households, and injury deaths. Improvements in the social and economic factors should be celebrated, as these indicators can be the most difficult to target and change.

Despite these successes, the county health rankings indicate areas of needed improvement. Contributing to Cleveland County's regression in health rankings from 84 in 2014 to 86 in 2015 are health outcomes that fall under the category of physical environment, regressing from a score of 89 in 2014 to a score of 94 in 2012. Regressions in this category include an increase in drinking water problems and severe housing problems. Also contributing to the county's regression in health rankings are the indicators in the categories of length of life (increasing from 84 to 85) and morbidity/quality of life (increasing from 74 to 75). The number of premature deaths increased from 9,594 in 2014 to 9,767 in 2015. Furthermore, the percentage of babies born with a low birth weight increased minimally from 9.6% in 2014 to 9.7% in 2015. All other health indicators in these categories remained unchanged from 2014 to 2015.

This is the sixth year of the *County Health Rankings*, the most comprehensive report of its kind to rank the overall health of nearly every county in all 50 states by using a standard way to measure how healthy people are and how long they live. The *Rankings* help everyone see how where people live, learn, work and play influence their health and behaviors.

The *Rankings* are available online at [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org). For additional information on Cleveland County's health ranking, or for assistance in interpreting the data available on the *County Health Rankings* website, you may contact the Cleveland County Health Department at the contact information above.

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