
CLEVELAND COUNTY

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact:
DeShay Oliver, PIO
Cleveland County Health Department
704-484-5199
Deshay.oliver@clevelandcounty.com

Annual Rankings Give North Carolina Counties Roadmap to Improve Health

(Shelby, NC)—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 84 according to the annual *County Health Rankings* released by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Although Cleveland County's health ranking regressed from its 2013 ranking of 83, our county's scores improved in many measureable health outcomes that are used to determine the overall rankings. Our ranking in the category of Morbidity/Quality of Life improved from a score of 82 in 2013 to a score of 74 in 2014. This improvement is marked by decreases in the percentages of self-reported poor or fair health and poor physical health days, as well as a decrease in low birth weight. Cleveland County also displays a significantly improved ranking in the category of Health Behaviors, moving from a ranking of 72 in 2013 to a score of 54 in 2014. Health indicators supporting this improvement in ranking include decreases in the percentages of adult smoking and adult obesity.

Following two years of regression in our county's Health Behaviors rankings from 2011-2013, we are pleased to see an improvement in our Health Behavior ranking this year in 2014. This improvement in Health Behaviors and the health indicators that contribute to it support the continued efforts of public health and the prevention field to influence healthy behaviors through prevention programming and environmental/policy changes.

Contributing to Cleveland County's regression in health rankings from 83 in 2013 to 84 in 2014 are the health outcomes that fall under the category of social and economic factors, decreasing from a score of 72 in 2013 to a score of 78 in 2012. Health indicators contributing to this regression include a decrease in the high school graduation percentage and an increase in the percentage of children living in poverty. This speaks to the impact our environment and social/economic status can have on our quality of life and health. However, many factors impacting this health outcome can be very difficult to target and change. Despite this, these *Rankings* should help serve as a "call to action" for our community so we may work together to develop programs and initiatives that help address the multiple influences on our county's health.

This is the fifth 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. 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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