

University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute
Wisconsin County Health Rankings
September 10, 2008 Teleconference Summary

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After introductions we discussed the Outcomes ranks for 2008 (distributed by email on September 8).

Health outcomes ranks are based on an average of z-scores for two measures:

- 1) years of potential life lost (YPL) and
- 2) General Health Status (percent reporting fair/poor health).

One of the questions concerned the major changes in the rankings of some counties. The counties with larger shifts included Florence which went from #16 to #51, Vilas which went from #62 to #40 and Trempealeau which went from #61 to #50. UWPHI staff explained that the larger changes in the outcomes rankings were due to improvements in the quality of the self-reported health status measure – one of the two measures that is combined to create the outcomes ranking. The health status measure is based on results combined from the Family Health Survey and the Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). Seven years of survey data are combined to achieve at least 50 survey responses from each county. However, the relatively small sample size for some counties has often resulted in significant shifts in results from year to year.

With funding from the Wisconsin Partnership Fund, the Department of Health Services was able to increase the sample size for BRFSS for the past 3 years so that samples of close to 100 interviews were achieved for each county, regardless of their size. For some counties this caused a relatively large shift in the percentage of people who described their health as “fair or poor.” Though the oversample has created significant changes in ranks for some smaller counties, we are more confident in these estimates than those based on years of BRFSS data with no oversample. Current funding for BRFSS oversampling ends this year, so oversampling will discontinue after the 2008 data collection.*

Several other questions were raised about telephone survey data (e.g., how is sampling done? How will cell phones affect survey response and data quality?) so UWPHI will be publishing a brief FAQ about telephone surveys on its web site to answer these questions.

Other discussion topics include the physical environment measures to be included in this year's Rankings. Per request, UWPHI will provide more explanation on the nitrates measure. An article on the physical environment measures was recently published in the Wisconsin Medical Journal (authored by Jessica Athens, Pat Remington and DHS staff) – the article will be made available.

The other major topic of discussion addressed the following tentative schedule for the Rankings release:

1. Next teleconference scheduled for Thursday, October 23, 11 AM to noon.
 - a. Health officers will be sent a draft of entire Rankings prior to the call
2. County Snapshots and Full Report will be available by the end of October.
3. The actual release date for the 2008 Rankings is yet to be determined: it is likely to be the week of Nov. 17. A press release will be sent to the media 2-3 days prior to the release date so that the media have an opportunity to contact local health officers for input into their coverage. Health officers are urged to notify UWPHI if they know of any particular dates during the week of November 17 when significant numbers of health officers may be unavailable to take media calls.
 - a. One more conference call will be held to discuss the Rankings release strategy. The call's date and time is also TBD, but will be the week of Nov. 10 or Nov. 17.
4. Print copies will be available by end of November.

*Additional Information: in addition to the self-reported health status measure, BRFSS data are used for some of the health determinant measures. In prior years, sample sizes have not always been large enough to allow published estimates of these other measures for smaller counties. Due to the increased sampling, samples are large enough (>50) this year to publish survey-based estimates for almost all counties. The only exceptions are:

- **Menominee County** has no published estimate for: no health insurance, did not receive needed care, no recent dental visit, physical inactivity, and low fruit/veg consumption.
- **Iron County** has no published estimate for no health insurance.