

University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute
Wisconsin County Health Rankings
October 23, 2008 Teleconference Summary

County/Regional Office Staff

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UWPHI

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After introductions, we discussed the “glossy” 12-page Rankings publication for 2008.

The *Rankings* model, data sources, and publication format are mostly unchanged:

- Health care quality now includes both outpatient and inpatient indicators
- BRFSS used oversamples in rural counties in 2006 and 2007, so we have better coverage of rural counties, and our estimates are more accurate
- Instead of using 2000 Census for children in poverty, we now use 2005 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates for this indicator
- The publication has been shortened from 16 to 12 pages; the only elements removed were the Tables of Outcomes and Determinants ranks listed alphabetically by county. The Methods section was condensed to 1 page since the full detail is available in the separate Full Report. This year, there will be only one “Special Feature”

Accessing Rankings materials on the UWPHI web site:

- To get to the all the complementary Rankings publications, go to the “Publications” tab at the top of the page, select “Wisconsin County Health Rankings” on the left sidebar, and then select the year of publication you’re interested in (also listed on the left sidebar). You can also follow this link:
http://pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi/research/wi_county_rankings.htm
- Clicking on the Rankings graphic on the homepage will bring you to the 2007 “glossy” version of the Rankings.
- We recognize that the Rankings materials can be a little difficult but this means that the general public does not access the materials before they’ve been released.

Questions re: Special Feature on Leading Causes of Mortality:

- Are the values age-adjusted mortality rates per 100,000 population?
UWPHI response: Yes, the details are in the text but we will also add a header to the table to make that clear.

Recommendations for use/additions to the Rankings

- Barb Theis recommends looking at counties' ranks over time, identifying counties that have improved markedly in rank, and then contacting public health officials in those areas for information on programs and policies.
UWPHI Response: We will consider including a table of all counties' Outcomes and Determinants ranks from 2004–2008 in this year's *Full Report*. However, Pat Remington emphasized the importance of looking at the point estimates for indicators (rather than ranks) to determine absolute improvement.

- Dennis Hibray is interested in looking at poorer performing counties over time: Why are Menominee and Marquette always ranked poorly? Are they improving in an absolute sense (instead of relative to other counties)?
UWPHI Response: Regarding absolute versus relative change in traditionally poor-performing counties, we will consider a Special Feature on this topic in the future.

- Barb also noted that the way mortality is presented (Years of Potential Life Lost) makes it difficult to encourage the business community to become involved in community health improvement. She calculates years of productive life list for the working-age population to stimulate business interest.
UWPHI Response: Last year the Rankings included a Special Feature on mortality by lifestage, in which "working-age adults" are examined separately. We will consider the possibility of creating more targeted communication pieces for the various constituents (business, education, maternal/child health programs, etc.) in the future.

- Discussed aligning Wisconsin's 2020 Health Goals to the individual indicators in the Rankings, then including those 2020 goals in the County Snapshots.
UWPHI Response: Good idea, but should be presented to the 2020 planners from a non-PHI staff person. Barb Theis offered to talk to the 2020 planners about this recommendation.

Key Dates for Rankings Release

- By Nov. 14 (Friday): UWPHI will have a PDF of the 2008 "glossy" report and a link to the County Health Snapshots sent to local health officers, consortium epidemiologists, and the regional officers.

- Nov. 17 (Monday), 3–4 PM: Final teleconference with health officers prior to the release; will discuss media strategy and address any final questions.

- Nov. 18 (Tuesday): Press releases will be sent to the media, with an embargo until 12:01 AM on Nov. 20 (Thursday)

- Nov. 19 (Wednesday): UWPHI will do a call with the media at 11 AM; local health officers should be prepared to field calls from the media regarding the results for their county.

- Nov. 20 (Thursday): Rankings are released at 12:01 AM