

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

MEDIA RELEASE

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN PINELLAS COUNTY ADDRESSES COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS

The Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County (DOH-Pinellas) recognizes the value in measuring health outcomes and today acknowledged the *2015 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* tool released by the University of Wisconsin and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This study highlights the many community factors that influence health and uses established data, much of which is available from the department at www.floridacharts.com. The 2015 rankings per county and state around the nation are at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

Out of Florida's 67 counties, Pinellas ranks 33rd in health outcomes—how long we live—and 19th in health factors—what affects our health.

“The 2015 County Health Rankings demonstrate that Pinellas County is a healthier place and that we've increased our length of life,” said Claude M. Dharamraj, MD, MPH, FAAP, DOH-Pinellas' director. “For those who are in the low-income population, access to care has improved, there are fewer who are uninsured and there are more doctors, dentists and mental-health providers to serve them. As a public-health agency, access to care is one of our core functions, and this has been strengthened by a close partnership with the Pinellas Board of County Commissioners, which funds many health programs that have made a difference.”

“We are proud to work with our community partners to improve the health of all people,” said John Morroni, Chairman of the Pinellas Board of County Commissioners. “Making Pinellas County a great place to live, work and visit is as important as making it one of the healthiest places in our state.”

The county ranks 7th in the state in clinical care, but 30th in socioeconomic factors, including children in poverty, which has a worse rate; however, unemployment, high-school graduation rates and violent crime have improved.

The Board of County Commissioners funds the Primary Care Program that provides health services to low-income, uninsured adults. It has also increased funding for adult dental services and has organized a task force that includes DOH-Pinellas to address gaps in mental-health services.

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“From dental initiatives for children to the Medical Home program that provides health services to uninsured, very low-income adults, Pinellas County Human Services continues to work closely with DOH-Pinellas to create a healthier county,” said Lourdes Benedict, the department’s director. “Our partnership is strong because we collaborate on so many initiatives to improve our community’s access to care.”

These rankings are a snapshot of the health of counties across the country and they emphasize that health is not a singular effort but a combined work in progress across all community partners. The department works in collaboration with local governments, non-profit organizations, health care facilities, business groups, schools, faith-based organizations and many other stakeholders to improve the health of all people in Pinellas County. These rankings use data related to physical environments, social and economic factors, health behaviors and clinical care.

Pinellas’ Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is designed to address specific opportunities for improving health that have been identified by the community. The department has partnered with many stakeholders to implement the CHIP and collaborates regularly to track progress. The Pinellas CHIP’s health priority areas are access to care; behavioral health; health promotion and disease prevention and healthy communities and environments.

Among the many partners working on the Pinellas CHIP is the Juvenile Welfare Board.

“The Vision of the Juvenile Welfare Board is that children in Pinellas County will have a future of more successful and satisfying lives through the efforts of our partners in the community,” said Dr. Marcie A. Biddleman, Executive Director of the Juvenile Welfare Board. “We continue to work with [DOH-Pinellas] on programs that create stronger families and provide a framework of health and achievement for all children.”

The Florida Department of Health works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

For information about DOH-Pinellas, go to www.PinellasHealth.com.

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