



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Vermont Ranked Healthiest State for Seniors



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BURLINGTON – Vermont is the healthiest state for seniors, rising from fourth place last year, according to the third edition of United Health Foundation's **America's Health Rankings® Senior Report: A Call to Action for Individuals and Their Communities**.

"Vermont's seniors should be congratulated for doing a lot of things well to stay healthy, such as low rates of physical inactivity, hospital readmissions, and half of all our seniors rank their health as either very good or excellent," said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. "As always, there are also areas we need to improve such as a high prevalence of chronic drinking, low hospice care use, and a high rate of falls."

Vermont ranked among the top 10 states in 21 of 43 overall measurements that included behaviors, community & environment, policy, clinical care, and outcomes. New Hampshire ranks second, improving one spot from last year. Minnesota fell to third after being ranked first for two years in a row, while Hawaii (4) and Utah (5) round out the top five states. Louisiana ranks 50th as the least healthy state for older adults, followed by Mississippi (49), Kentucky (48), Arkansas (47) and Oklahoma (46).

Vermont's strengths include low intensive care unit (ICU) use and ready availability of home-delivered meals. This is due, in part, to the efforts of the state's area agencies on aging, according to Susan Wehry, MD, commissioner of the Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living. Vermont also has the nation's best Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment, which demonstrates that seniors are aware of and using the program.

"Increasing participation in the supplemental nutrition program for those over 60 who live in poverty has been a top priority of the Agency of Human Services," said Commissioner Wehry, "and to now rank number one for participation is a huge accomplishment. I'm grateful to all our partners who helped us achieve this milestone. Vermont has always been a tight-knit community state. We take care of each other, and we take care of our seniors."

The Departments of Health, and Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living began collaboration on a screening and brief intervention, referral substance abuse project (SBIRT) targeting older adults to help address chronic drinking among seniors in Vermont.

Nationally, Dr. Chen said the fact that more seniors received the flu vaccine compared to last year, rising from 60.1 percent of seniors in 2014 to 62.8 percent this year is encouraging, because they are particularly susceptible to flu and flu-related complications.

"Every Vermont senior should get vaccinated against the flu," Dr. Chen said. Vermont ranked 18th for flu vaccines for seniors at 65 percent.

To read the full report visit: <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/reports/senior>

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