



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Vermont Ranked Nation's Second Healthiest State Once Again



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Media Contact:

Vermont Department of Health
Communication Office
802-863-7281

BURLINGTON – For the third year in a row, Vermont has been ranked the second healthiest state after Hawaii in the 2015 edition of *America's Health Rankings* from the United Health Foundation.

Vermont has the nation's lowest violent crime rate, second lowest rate of infant mortality, third best percentage of people who have health insurance, third best primary care physician to population ratio, and the fourth lowest rate of children living in poverty. Vermont has the fifth lowest rate of adult obesity, and ranks sixth best for physical activity, and adolescent vaccinations.

"By many public health measures, Vermonters fare well," said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. "At the same time we know that Vermonters are not all equally healthy. Closing the health gap between people with higher education and income and people with less education and income is our collective challenge."

Vermont was ranked among the nation's worst (#44) for disparities in health status, measured as the difference in reported health status of people with more education compared to those with less education.

The Health Department's *State Health Improvement Plan 2013-2017* has three priority goals: 1) reduce the prevalence of chronic disease caused by tobacco use, physical inactivity and poor nutrition, 2) reduce the prevalence of substance abuse and mental illness, and 3) improve childhood vaccination rates.

The smoking rate for adults is now 16.4 percent (#15 of the states), down from 30.7 percent in 1990, 19 percent of adults are physically inactive (#6), 20.6 percent drink excessively (#41). Vermonters report an average of 3.4 days of poor mental health a year (#16), and there are 12.9 drug deaths per 100,000 people (#20). At 71.8 percent, immunizations for young children have improved, rising from #37 in 2014 to #26 in 2015.

"Behaviors like smoking, excessive drinking, inactivity and poor nutrition, are by far the greatest contributors to poor health, and the greatest challenge for us all," said Dr. Chen. "Behavior change is difficult, but we can base our policies and design our environments in such a way as to help make healthy choices the easier choice."

The Health Department is leading Gov. Shumlin's Health in All Policies Task Force to incorporate health considerations into decision-making across all sectors of state government – from health and human services to transportation to housing and community development to education and energy.

Vermont has been ranked as the healthiest or second healthiest state for seven consecutive years.

To read the full report: www.americashealthrankings.org

For the State Health Improvement Plan visit: <http://healthvermont.gov/hv2020/ship.aspx>

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Vermont Department of Health | 108 Cherry Street | Burlington, VT 05402
Voice: 802-863-7200 | In Vermont 800-464-4343 | Fax: 802-865-7754 | TTY/TDD: Dial 711 first
Health Care Provider Infectious Disease Reporting: 802-863-7240 or 800-640-4374
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