

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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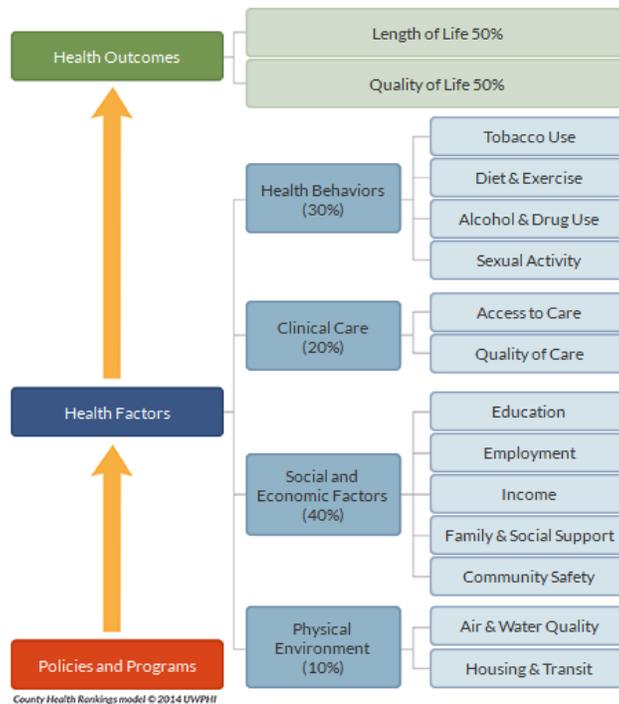
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**Eau Claire County ranked 21<sup>st</sup> in Health Outcomes in the State**

Eau Claire, WI – Eau Claire County ranked 21<sup>st</sup> out of 72 counties for health outcomes and 17<sup>th</sup> for health factors, according to the seventh annual *County Health Rankings*, released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI). The *Rankings* are available at [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org).

Please see the attached press release related to the 2017 *County Health Rankings* released today by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). The *Rankings* are based on the model below and emphasize that many factors, if improved, can help make communities healthier places to live, learn, work and play.



## Key Findings from 2017 County Health Rankings:

### Areas for Improvement:

- Eau Claire County has high rates of adult smoking (18%) and excessive drinking (27%). Out of 72 counties, Eau Claire ranks 57<sup>th</sup> in adult smoking and 71<sup>st</sup> in excessive drinking.
- Nearly 1 in 3 Eau Claire County adults are obese. While this ranks 15<sup>th</sup> out of 72 counties, it is above the national benchmark.
- Eau Claire County ranks 70<sup>th</sup> out of 72 counties for income inequality.
- 16% of households in Eau Claire County have at least 1 severe housing defect, which ranks the county at 54<sup>th</sup>.

### Areas of Strength:

- Eau Claire has improved in measures related to clinical care. The county ranks 10<sup>th</sup> out of 72 in this area.
- Low rates of uninsured residents coupled with high numbers of healthcare providers per person as well as positive screening rates for diabetes and breast cancer indicate a strong healthcare system in our county.
- Eau Claire County is 10<sup>th</sup> in unemployment rate. Only 3.9% of the labor force is unemployed.

## Ongoing community initiatives to address these factors:

The *Rankings* have become an important tool for communities that want to improve health for all. **Eau Claire County** has a number of initiatives underway to expand health opportunities for residents. To learn more about the current activities, please visit Eau Claire Healthy Communities' website: [www.ehealthycommunities.org](http://www.ehealthycommunities.org).



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***New Rankings Show Eau Claire County among the Healthiest Counties in Wisconsin***  
*Improvements shown in clinical care faced with lagging rates of tobacco and alcohol use*

**Princeton, N.J. and Madison, Wis.** – Eau Claire County ranked 21<sup>st</sup> out of 72 counties for health outcomes and 17 for health factors, according to the seventh annual *County Health Rankings*, released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI). The *Rankings* are available at [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org).

“Eau Claire County continues to do well in the *Rankings* but we recognize that ongoing collaborative efforts are essential to build a community where the healthy choice is the easy choice,” said Lieske Giese, Eau Claire City-County Health Department director/health officer.

An easy-to-use snapshot that compares counties within states, the *Rankings* show that where you live influences how well and how long you live. The local level data makes it clear that good health is influenced by many factors beyond medical care including housing, education, jobs, access to healthy foods, and more. This year we took a closer look at premature deaths – or deaths that occur among people under age 75. Exploring Wisconsin’s premature death trends from 1997 to 2014, we find 39 counties have seen improvements in premature death rates, while five have seen worsening rates and the rest saw no change.

The *Rankings* Key Findings Report reveals that drug overdose deaths are fueling a dramatic increase in premature deaths nationally because of an increase in deaths among 15 to 44 year olds. From 2014 to 2015, 85 percent of the increase in premature deaths can be attributed to a swift increase in deaths among these younger populations. The *Rankings* Key Findings report reveals that while myriad issues contributed to the rise, the drug overdose epidemic is the leading cause of death among 25- to 44-year olds and is a clear driver of this trend. Drug deaths are also accelerating among 15- to 24- year olds, but nearly three times as many people in this age group die by homicide, suicide, or in motor vehicle crashes.

For Eau Claire County, the rankings show that the county lags behind state and national trends in adult smoking and excessive drinking rates. 18% of adults in the county are current smokers, and 27% engage in excessive drinking, which rank 54<sup>th</sup> and 71<sup>st</sup> respectively. The county also struggles with adult obesity as nearly 1 in 3 adults are obese.

Despite relatively low rankings in health behaviors, Eau Claire County ranks 10<sup>th</sup> out of 72 counties for measures of clinical care. Low rates of uninsured residents coupled with high numbers of healthcare providers per person as well as positive screening rates for diabetes and breast cancer indicate a strong healthcare system in our county.

Eau Claire County continues to struggle with housing and economic inequality. Approximately 1 in 6 households have at least 1 severe housing defect, which ranks 54<sup>th</sup> out of 72, and the county has one of the worst rates of income inequality in Wisconsin. For this measure Eau Claire County ranks 70<sup>th</sup>.

“The *County Health Rankings* show us that where people live plays a key role in how long and how well they live,” said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, RWJF president and CEO. “The *Rankings* allow local leaders to clearly see and prioritize the challenges they face — whether it’s rising premature death rates or the growing drug overdose epidemic — so they can bring community leaders and residents together to find solutions.”

According to the 2017 *Rankings*, the five healthiest counties in Wisconsin, starting with most healthy, are Ozaukee County, followed by Kewaunee County, St. Croix County, Taylor County, and Washington County. The five counties in the poorest health, starting with least healthy, are Menominee County, Milwaukee County, Sawyer County, Adams County, and Washburn County.

This year’s *Rankings* also introduce a new measure focused on young people, those 16 to 24, who are not in school or working. About 4.9 million young people in the U.S. — 1 out of 8 — fall into this category. Rates of youth disconnection are higher in rural counties (21.6 percent), particularly those in the South and West, than in urban ones (13.7 percent).

“Young adults who are not in school or working represent untapped potential in our communities and our nation that we can’t afford to waste,” said Julie Willems Van Dijk, PhD, RN, director of the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*. “Communities addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, and education can make a difference creating opportunities for all youth and young adults. The *County Health Rankings* are an important springboard for conversations on how to do just that.”

The *Rankings* have become an important tool for communities that want to improve health for all. **Eau Claire County** has a number of initiatives underway to expand health opportunities for residents. The Eau Claire City-County Health Department and Healthy Communities Coalition are working to address many of the issues highlighted in the rankings including safe and healthy housing, alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, and many others. To learn more about the current activities, please visit Eau Claire Healthy Communities’ website: [www.ehealthycommunities.org](http://www.ehealthycommunities.org).

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### **About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are working with others to build a national Culture of Health enabling everyone in America to live longer, healthier lives. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org). Follow the Foundation on Twitter at [www.rwjf.org/twitter](http://www.rwjf.org/twitter) or on Facebook at [www.rwjf.org/facebook](http://www.rwjf.org/facebook).

### **About the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute**

The [University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute](http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu) advances health and well-being for all by developing and evaluating interventions and promoting evidence-based approaches to policy and practice at the local, state, and national levels. The Institute works across the full spectrum of factors that contribute to health. A focal point for health and health care dialogue within the University of Wisconsin-Madison and beyond, and a convener of stakeholders, the Institute promotes an exchange of expertise between those in academia and those in the policy and practice arena. The Institute leads the work on the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* and the *RWJF Culture of Health Prize*. For more information, visit <http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu>.