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Report ranks Douglas County as seventh healthiest in Kansas

(Lawrence, KS) – Douglas County moved up one spot to the seventh healthiest county in Kansas, according to the *County Health Rankings* report released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. When it comes to health outcomes — length of life and quality of life — Douglas County has ranked among the state's Top 10 counties since the report was first published in 2010.

The report also ranks counties based on the factors that influence health outcomes: behavior, clinical care, social and economic status, and physical environment. Douglas County ranked No. 17, down six spots from last year.

The *Rankings* show where we live matters to our health. Good health allows people to fulfill their potential and thrive. The *Rankings* also make it clear that good health is influenced by many factors beyond medical care such as education, jobs, affordable housing, access to healthy foods and opportunities for exercise. “Your ZIP code is a better predictor of how well and how long you will live than your genetic code,” said Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department Director Dan Partridge.

While Douglas County ranked high overall, the report helps identify areas where the county falls behind state averages. These areas include sexually-transmitted infections, excessive drinking, high school graduation rate, income inequality and severe housing problems.

“These issues are complex and there’s no simple fix,” Partridge said. “The Health Department’s motto is ‘healthier together’ because it takes everyone working together across sectors to make progress toward better health for everyone in our community.”

An example is LiveWell Lawrence, a coalition of about 150 people who are working to making it easier for Douglas County residents to eat healthy foods, be physically active and live tobacco-free. The *Rankings* show the county is improving and faring better than the state when it comes to physical activity and adult smoking rates. The Health Department facilitates the coalition, which supports efforts such as tobacco-free parks and campuses, raising the purchasing age for tobacco products, completion of more trails and sidewalks and participation in Be Active Safe Routes, Lawrence’s Safe Routes to School program.

“We use this report to build on our successes and mobilize community leaders to take action and implement programs and policy changes in areas we need to improve here in Douglas County,” Partridge said.

The report is available at countyhealthrankings.org. The report ranked Johnson as the healthiest county in Kansas and Labette as the least healthy.