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Douglas County rises in health rankings to 17th in Kansas

(Lawrence) – Douglas County improved six spots to No. 17 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. The county returned to the top 20 after a one-year absence.

The No. 17 ranking is based on length and quality of life. Here's how Douglas County fared:

- Length of life — No. 3, up three spots from 2018.
- Quality of Life — No. 74, down six spots from 2018 and 46 spots from 2017. This includes residents reporting having days of poor mental and physical health and low birth weights.
- Health Factors — No. 19, up three spots from last year.

Included in the Health Factors ranking are measures of health behavior, clinical care, social and economic status and physical environment. Of these, clinical care reached the highest ranking at No. 4, and physical environment had the lowest ranking at 85.

The *Rankings* identify areas where the county falls behind state averages. These areas include: excessive drinking, alcohol-impaired driving deaths, sexually transmitted infections, high school graduation rates, income inequality and severe housing problems. The *Rankings* also highlight some differences in health outcomes between racial groups in Douglas County, including that black children are more likely to be in poverty than white children.

Work is under way to address these issues. Primarily, a multi-sector, multi-jurisdiction steering committee in 2018 developed the county's five-year Community Health Plan that with an encompassing focus on health equity will address: behavioral health, safe and affordable housing, nutrition and physical activity and poverty and jobs.

"The *Rankings* report shines a light on the roots of our community tree that persistently hold us back. It is no accident that these issues are major elements of the Douglas County Community Health Plan," said Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department Director Dan Partridge. "Supporting and taking action guided by the CHP is one of the best ways to help our neighbors realize better health outcomes."

Douglas County is faring better than the state average in several areas. These include: adult smoking, teen births, violent crime, flu vaccinations and preventable hospital stays.

The report ranked Johnson, Nemaha, Pottawatomie, Wabaunsee and Riley as the healthiest counties in Kansas. Those listed as the least healthy were: Montgomery, Wyandotte, Greenwood, Labette and Chautauqua counties. The report is available at countyhealthrankings.org. For more data and information about the health of Douglas County, visit ldchealth.org/communityhealthplan.

About the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department

The nationally accredited Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department has served the Lawrence and Douglas County community for more than 120 years. Its mission is to advance policies, practices and programs that promote health for all, prevent disease and protect the environment.

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