



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

LORETTA J. FUDDY, DIRECTOR
Phone: (808) 586-4410
Fax: (808) 586-4444

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HAWAII RISES TO SECOND HEALTHIEST STATE IN NATION

HONOLULU – United Health Foundation today ranked Hawaii as the second healthiest state in the nation behind Vermont. Hawaii moved ahead of one other state this year from last year’s health ranking of third. In its 23rd year, the annual *America’s Health Rankings* is the longest running comparative health index of states. For overall health, Hawaii consistently ranks in the top five states each year.

“This year’s improved ranking is encouraging and reflects the efforts of Governor Abercrombie and the work of the department to improve the health of our state,” said Health Director Loretta Fuddy. “The state has taken many positive steps in the last year, but chronic disease and obesity are still major growing concerns, especially when it comes to our children. We must turn the tide on these issues for our next generation.”

The report noted that while Hawaii has one of the lowest obesity rates in the nation, there are still roughly 234,000 obese adults in the state. Also noted were an improvement in infant mortality from 7.6 to 5.8 deaths per 1,000 live births, and a decrease in preventable hospitalizations from 32.2 to 25.0 discharges per 1,000 Medicare enrollees. While the prevalence of diabetes in Hawaii is below the national median at 8.4 percent, the state’s climbing rate reflects the troubling nationwide trend of increasing chronic disease. According to the report, roughly 90,000 adults in Hawaii are living with diabetes. Additional areas of high concern for the state include the rate of health disparities among ethnicities and rural areas.

(more)

This includes higher rates of tobacco use and obesity among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.

“Because the measures used in the rankings reflect the condition of the ‘average’ resident, the report can mask serious health disparities within our island state,” said Director Fuddy. “In Hawaii there are often startling differences between ethnic groups and rural areas of the state that should not be ignored.”

"Hawaii's positive ranking is encouraging, but there are areas that will require our continued attention as we work collaboratively with our partners in the healthcare industry and the federal government toward the implementation of the Affordable Healthcare Act," said Beth Giesting, who was appointed by the Governor as Hawaii's Healthcare Transformation Coordinator. "It is important that we identify what is working well, while zeroing in on where we can improve as a state. This will require Hawaii continuing to be a leader in shaping its healthcare future, as exhibited in October when the state proactively selected its healthcare benchmark benefits package."

America's Health Rankings include measures of behavior, community and environment, public and health policies, clinical care, and health outcomes to describe the health and wellness of each state compared to the other states. Updated each year since 1990, the rankings are sponsored by United Health Foundation and conducted in partnership with the American Public Health Association and the Partnership for Prevention. The 2012 report released today is available at www.americashealthrankings.org/rankings.

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For more information regarding this news release, contact
Janice Okubo
Communications Office
Phone: (808) 586-4445