

For immediate release

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New Report Reveals Health Status of County Population

Local health officials today released a report that provides a snapshot of the health of Lewis and Clark County residents. It will be used to help focus local efforts to improve overall health.

The 2015 Community Health Report is the result of a year's collaboration between Lewis and Clark Public Health and St. Peter's Hospital. It includes comparative data for the county, state, and nation, as well as data on emerging trends at the local level. It also includes results from recent surveys of local residents, in which they provided their perceptions of the county's most pressing health needs.

"One of the hallmarks of public health is that it's evidence-based," said Melanie Reynolds, health officer for Lewis and Clark County. "These data give us a snapshot of the health of our county with regard to chronic disease, communicable disease, environmental health, mental health, and oral health. The results are intriguing and sometimes troubling."

The report is available online at www.stpetes.org/CHNA and www.LewisAndClarkHealth.org.

The report will serve as the basis for a community health-improvement planning process that the county and hospital expect to launch together around the first of the year. Representatives of a wide variety of organizations that address health in some way will be invited to participate. Government, business, schools, medical providers, nonprofit groups, and social service agencies are among those who will be asked to take part.

"Understanding the health needs of our community is an important first step to improving the health status of our community," said Nate Olson, president and CEO of St. Peter's Hospital. "Just as important is what we do with this information. With all the resources and expertise in the Helena area working together, we can make real improvements in the health of the people we serve."

Highlights from the Report

- Adults in Lewis and Clark County are more likely to commit suicide than Americans in general. High school students are more likely to attempt suicide.
- Lung cancer, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are more common here than in the state and nation as a whole.
- High school students in Lewis and Clark County are less likely to binge drink than teens elsewhere in Montana, but they're more likely to text or email while driving.
- Adult residents binge drink more than the state and national averages.
- The county has one of the lowest death rates from unintentional injury in the state.

- Fewer county residents live in poverty than do other Montanans and Americans.
- Adults are less likely to get a flu shot than Montanans and Americans in general.

The Next Step

“This report is just a first step toward making our county a healthier place to live, work, and play,” Reynolds said. “Now we need to map out strategies for addressing these issues and improving our public health.”

If you have a comment about the report or would like to be involved in a community discussion of how to improve health, contact **publichealth@lccountymt.gov**.