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## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN MARION COUNTY ADDRESSES COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS



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**Ocala, Fla.**—The Florida Department of Health in Marion County recognizes the value in measuring health outcomes and today acknowledged the 2016 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps tool released by the University of Wisconsin and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This study highlights the many community factors that influence health and uses established data, much of which is available from the department at [www.floridacharts.com](http://www.floridacharts.com).

“Improving health is a team effort, and Marion County is improving health through partnerships and a community-centered approach,” said Erin Hess, Health Officer at the Florida Department of Health in Marion County. “The 2015 Community Health Assessment is providing data to help us address our most pressing health challenges. The new Marion County Health Alliance is using the data to set priorities: obesity prevention, smoking cessation, diabetes prevention, emergency room utilization for mental and dental health, and educating residents on treating and preventing chronic diseases. This is a marathon, not a sprint, but the result will be a healthier community.”

These rankings are a snapshot of the health of counties across the country and they emphasize that health is not a singular effort but a combined work in progress across all community partners. The department works in collaboration with local governments, non-profit organizations, health care facilities, business groups, schools, faith-based organizations and many other stakeholders to improve the health of all people in Marion County. These rankings use data related to physical environments, social and economic factors, health behaviors and clinical care.

In Marion County, the 2015 Community Health Assessment has gone beyond the data analyzed in the County Health Rankings report, identifying specific opportunities for improved health. The department has partnered with many stakeholders through the Marion County Health Alliance, and the health assessment will help the alliance develop a community health improvement plan.

“We believe there are long-term community benefits to be gained by encouraging healthy lifestyles,” said Kathy Bryant, chairman of the Marion County Board of County Commissioners. “Marion County has implemented its own ‘Health Happens’ employee wellness program to promote healthy weight, improve job performance, decrease work absenteeism and improve overall health. Every step guides us closer to a healthier community.”

“The city of Belleview has a strong commitment to improving the health of our citizens,” said Belleview Mayor Christine Dobkowski. “With the aid of initiatives such as Measure up Marion and the Healthy Weight Community Champion recognition program, we are confident that we will make positive strides in helping all of our citizens live healthier, happier lives.”

Last week, the Florida Department of Health became the first integrated department of health in the nation to achieve national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board. Public health departments play a critical role in protecting and improving the health of people and communities. The seal of accreditation signifies that the Florida Department of Health has been rigorously examined and meets or exceeds national standards that promote continuous quality improvement for public health.

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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