The Colorado Health Foundation™

Disparities Cast Shadow on Colorado's Health Report Card Grades

DENVER, CO – Released today, the 2015 Colorado Health Report Card reveals high grades for the health of Coloradans over 18 when compared to other states, but shows a significant need for improvement when it comes to the mental and physical health of Colorado's children. Moreover, the Health Report Card's data shines a light on disparities in the physical and mental health of Coloradans across race, ethnic and economic status.

The Colorado Health Foundation, in partnership with the Colorado Health Institute, released the ninth annual Health Report Card at a presentation for legislators and policy makers at the state Capitol, signaling the start of a series of in-depth reports to be released throughout 2015. The Health Report Card ranks Colorado with other states among 38 health indicators that span five life stages. This year's Health Report Card also features "deep dive" workbooks focused on specific health indicators.

This year, Colorado's grades highlight the struggle to give our youngest residents a healthy start. Following are grades by life stage:

- *Healthy Beginnings*: C, with a ranking of 24th among states and showed no overall improvement;
- *Healthy Children*: C, with a ranking of 24th, up from 25th last year;
- *Healthy Adolescents*: B, with a ranking of 16th, down from 15th;
- *Healthy Adults*: B+, with a ranking of 13th, up from 15th; and

- *Healthy Aging*: A-, with a ranking of 10th, up from 12th last year.

“The Colorado Health Report Card shows that Colorado adults are some of the healthiest in the nation,” said Rahn Porter, interim CEO and CFO of the Colorado Health Foundation. “Yet in the health of our children, our future, we are lagging behind. By working now to improve our grades, we will bolster the prosperity of the state and, more importantly, the long-term outcomes of our kids.”

Adults in Colorado top the charts with low obesity and diabetes rates and high levels of physical activity. Likewise, Colorado’s older adults do well when compared to other states. For example, they ranked 2nd in the nation for having participated in physical activity over the last 30 days and 13th for reported poor physical health.

In adolescents, disturbingly, symptoms of depression rose to 24.3 percent this year from 21.9, lowering the state’s ranking in this area from 4th to 9th. However, Colorado teens showed significant improvement in other areas. Sexual activity dramatically decreased with only 23.3 percent of teens reporting they have been sexually active in the last three months. The shift led to Colorado’s leap from 14th to best in the nation on this health indicator.

“This new Colorado Health Report Card shows that we are making slow but steady progress,” said Michele Lueck, president and CEO of the Colorado Health Institute. “But a closer look at the data reveal pervasive health disparities. Many vulnerable Coloradans are having a tough time making the grade, health-wise. Our grades will only improve if we successfully address these health equity issues.”

The Health Report Card shows significant disparities in the health of Colorado's residents. Colorado’s black infant mortality rate is two times that of white infants; the rate of Hispanic women not receiving prenatal care after the first trimester sits at 21 percent compared to 13 percent of non-Hispanic mothers; and the 21.6 percent of children living in low-income families are less likely to have a medical

home, preventive dental care or participate in physical activity than kids in higher income families.

Adults and older adults living on low wages also see worse health outcomes when compared to higher wage earners. While only 15 percent of seniors with an annual income of $75,000 or more report poor health, the percentage quickly increases through the income brackets. Of those seniors making $10,000 or less, 43.6 percent report poor health. Furthermore, 29.2 percent of adults living at the lowest-income levels are obese, seven percent above the state average.

In order to improve our grades, Colorado can take steps to address the significant health disparities that exist in our state and to develop policies and systems that provide Coloradans the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of healthy decisions whether they are 85 years old, 8.5 years old or not old enough to make a decision on their own.

To read the Colorado Health Report Card and to find out more about what the data means for Colorado, please visit www.ColoradoHealth.org/ReportCard. Join the conversation on Twitter by using the hashtag #COHRC.

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