



Twitter: @AHR_Rankings
 Facebook: www.facebook.com/AmericasHealthRankings
 Website: www.americashealthrankings.org/senior

Media Contacts:

Lauren Mihajlov
 (952) 936-3068
lauren_mihajlov@uhg.com

Jane Pennington
 (952) 945-7508
jane.m.pennington@uhg.com

NEW REPORT: MINNESOTA HEALTHIEST STATE FOR SENIORS

- *United Health Foundation issues first America's Health Rankings® Senior Report*
- *Minnesota followed by Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Iowa*
- *Even among healthy seniors, one-third report being physically inactive*

MINNETONKA, Minn. (May 29, 2013) – Seniors who live in Minnesota are the nation's healthiest, reflecting both individual health and access to key health and community resources, according to the inaugural edition of United Health Foundation's America's Health Rankings® Senior Report: A Call to Action for Individuals and Their Communities.

United Health Foundation commissioned the America's Health Rankings Senior Report to examine the health of today's seniors and to encourage the nation, local communities and families to take action to improve senior health. This is an especially timely issue given the fact that Americans are living longer but sicker lives and that America's senior population is expected to grow more than 50 percent between 2015 and 2030. The America's Health Rankings Senior Report is the most comprehensive rankings to date of senior health at both national and state levels.

This report builds on the annual America's Health Rankings report which, for 23 years, has presented the definitive analysis of national health on a state-by-state basis by evaluating a historical and comprehensive set of health, environmental and socioeconomic data to determine national health benchmarks and state rankings.

"The America's Health Rankings Senior Report is a comprehensive portrait of senior health designed to inspire new, effective solutions that meet the health care needs of this rapidly expanding demographic," said Reed Tuckson, M.D., senior advisor to United Health Foundation. "We are measuring senior health in order to help improve it.

"States with healthy seniors have a combination of positive personal behaviors and community support, which demonstrate that improving senior health will only come about by acting on individual, family, community and state levels," said Dr. Tuckson.

The America's Health Rankings Senior Report assesses state-level performance on 34 different elements, including both health determinants and health outcomes.

State rankings

Minnesota, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Iowa are the top five states for seniors' health. Mississippi ranks 50th, preceded by Oklahoma, Louisiana, West Virginia, and Arkansas.

Minnesota's strengths include high rates of annual dental visits and creditable drug coverage¹, relatively high availability of home health care workers, and a low rate of seniors at risk of hunger. Minnesota's ranking also reflects a low rate of hospitalization for hip fractures, more able-bodied seniors, and a large number of seniors who report being in very good or excellent health. Challenges for Minnesota include a low percentage of senior residents with a personal doctor or health care provider. Minnesota's senior population is expected to grow nearly 55 percent between 2015 and 2030.

Mississippi's challenges include a high percentage of seniors who live in poverty and are at risk of hunger, a high rate of premature death, as well as a low percentage of seniors who report very good or excellent health and a low rate of annual dental visits. Mississippi scored well for a low prevalence of chronic drinking and a high rate of flu vaccination. Mississippi's senior population is expected to grow more than 45 percent between 2015 and 2030.

Preventable chronic illness at troubling levels among seniors

Older Americans are experiencing troubling rates of chronic illness. Nationwide, about 80 percent of seniors are living with at least one chronic condition, while 50 percent of seniors have two or more chronic conditions, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The report notes that states with the lowest percentage of seniors with multiple chronic conditions are Alaska (20.9 percent), Wyoming (21.5 percent) and Montana (23.1 percent), while states with the highest percentages are Florida (43.5 percent) and New Jersey (43.2 percent).

"Chronic illness is unnecessarily high among seniors," said Rhonda Randall, D.O., senior advisor to United Health Foundation and chief medical officer, UnitedHealthcare Medicare & Retirement. "The coordination of care for seniors, particularly the 50 percent of the population with multiple chronic illnesses, is complex and increases pressure on our country's caregivers and our health care system."

Senior population health challenges such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer and Alzheimer's disease will lead to diminished quality of life and severe economic consequences if left unaddressed. Medicare beneficiaries with chronic illness account for a majority of Medicare spending. With a rapidly growing and sicker Medicare population, annual spending on Medicare is expected to increase by 90 percent in the next decade, from \$557 billion in 2013 to more than \$1 trillion in 2023, according to May 2013 estimates from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

Report examines key individual, community-level health measures

Key measures from America's Health Rankings Senior Report provide a comprehensive picture of senior health that reflects each state's unique challenges.

More than 30 percent of seniors in fair or better health report that they are not physically active, which increases their risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, obesity and premature death. Physical inactivity among healthy seniors ranges from a high of 41.3 percent in Tennessee and 41.2 percent in West Virginia and to a low of 21.3 percent in California and 20.5 percent in Colorado.

Obesity affects more than 25 percent of adults ages 65 and older. The prevalence of obesity among seniors varies from a low of about 16.9 percent in Hawaii and 18.1 percent in Nevada to a high of nearly 30 percent in Michigan and Alaska. Obesity rates among individuals ages 50 to 64 increased more than 7 percent from 1995 to 2010, indicating that the next generation of seniors will experience higher rates of obesity compared with current seniors. The economic impact of obesity is staggering: a 2008 *Health Affairs* study estimated that the United States spends \$147 billion on obesity or obesity-related health issues annually.

Poverty prevents many seniors from meeting their health needs. Nearly 10 percent of U.S. adults ages 65 and older live at or below the federal poverty line. The percentage by state of seniors living at or below the poverty line ranges from a low of about 5 percent in Alaska and just over 6 percent in Utah, New Hampshire and Wyoming to a high of more than 12 percent in Louisiana and New Mexico and more than 13 percent in Mississippi.

“Looking across the 34 measures in America’s Health Rankings Senior Report, we see how important it is for people to explore the data and investigate where states are excelling and where they are falling behind,” said Dr. Tuckson. “All states have their share of strengths and challenges, and we must make a concerted effort to learn from one another and replicate what works.”

United Health Foundation offers resources for stakeholders to improve senior health

To empower more people to become public health advocates and support meaningful improvements in senior health, United Health Foundation has updated the America’s Health Rankings website and added www.americashealthrankings.org/seniors which offers online tools and resources related the report, including:

- a resource library with websites and articles that offer information on actions people can take to address different health issues;
- a discussion page where visitors can share proven health programs that have made a difference;
- social sharing buttons to enable people to post stories via Facebook and Twitter;
- e-books and interactive maps that enable people to explore and share data.

About America’s Health Rankings Senior Report

America’s Health Rankings Senior Report: A Call to Action for Individuals and Their Communities offers a comprehensive analysis of senior population health on a national and state-by-state basis across 34 measures of senior health. In commissioning the report, United Health Foundation seeks to promote discussion around the health of Americans 65 years and older while driving communities, governments, stakeholders and individuals to take action to improve senior health.

Researchers draw data from more than 12 government agencies and leading research organizations to create a focused, uniquely rich dataset for measuring senior health at the state level, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Labor, The Dartmouth Atlas Project, the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger and the Commonwealth Fund.

In addition to producing the America’s Health Rankings Senior Report, United Health Foundation also produces the annual America’s Health Rankings report. For 23 years, America’s Health Rankings has provided an analysis of national health on a state-by-state basis by evaluating a historical and comprehensive set of health, environmental and socioeconomic data to determine national health benchmarks and state rankings. The Rankings

employs a unique methodology, developed and annually reviewed by a Scientific Advisory Committee of leading public health scholars.

For more information on both reports, visit www.americashealthrankings.org.

About United Health Foundation

Guided by a passion to help people live healthier lives, United Health Foundation provides helpful information to support decisions that lead to better health outcomes and healthier communities. The Foundation also supports activities that expand access to quality health care services for those in challenging circumstances and partners with others to improve the well-being of communities. After its establishment by UnitedHealth Group [NYSE: UNH] in 1999 as a not-for-profit, private foundation, the Foundation has committed more than \$210 million to improve health and health care. For additional information, please visit www.unitedhealthfoundation.org.

¹ Creditable Drug Coverage-Seniors is the percentage of adults aged 65 and older who have a creditable prescription drug plan. A creditable plan must provide coverage for brand name and generic prescriptions, provide reasonable access to retail providers, pay on average at least 60 percent of participants' prescription drug expenses and must satisfy one of several other conditions established by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The senior ranks, based on 2010 data obtained from the Kaiser Family Foundations State Health Facts, are at www.americashealthrankings.org/all/creditable_drug_coverage_sr.

###