



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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Lyndi Warner, Public Information Officer
pio@kalcounty.com
269-373-5271 or 269-373-5270

Kalamazoo County Government Celebrates National Public Health Week 2019

KALAMAZOO, MI— National Public Health Week kicks off April 1-7, 2019 and the Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department invites all residents to join in the observance of the week. The Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners signaled the important role public health plays in the lives of Kalamazoo County residents by approving a Proclamation at the March 19, 2019 meeting marking this week as “Public Health Week in Kalamazoo County.”

National Public Health Week unites public health work in Kalamazoo County to others throughout the State and across the nation who are all striving to create the healthiest nation by 2030. During the week, the [KCHCS Facebook page](#) will focus on daily topics that speak directly to the unique and pressing public health issues and social determinants facing Kalamazoo County and the nation.

Locally, Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department is working to ensure everyone has a chance to a long and healthy life. An important aspect of this is the Department’s commitment to tackling the underlying causes of poor health and disease risk; causes that are rooted in how and where individuals live, learn, work and play.

“Public health plays a role in every aspect of our lives,” says James Rutherford, Health Officer of Kalamazoo County. “Everyone deserves the opportunity to live a long, healthy life free from preventable diseases and injury. It starts with all of us making conscious decisions when it comes to prevention measures and advocacy for healthy and equitable policies and strategies in order to tackle public health issues.”

Public health workers from health departments across the country work every day to ensure their communities have access to the basic foundations necessary for good health – clean water, safe food, breathable air and access to life-saving vaccines.

“Our employees work tirelessly for this community and are dedicated to their role within public health. They build partnerships and collaborate with those in the public and private sector based on factual, data-driven information, like what is found on the Kalamazoo County Data Hub or within the 2019 County Health Rankings,” said Rutherford. “By letting the data drive our work, this ensures quality programs and services are

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

3299 Gull Road | Kalamazoo, MI 49048

Phone: 269.373.5200 | www.kalcounty.com/hcs

provided and meets the needs of our residents. I'm honored to work with a team who shows up every day to serve Kalamazoo County," said Rutherford.

The [Kalamazoo County Data Hub](#), an online resource with Kalamazoo County specific data and statistics, launched in October 2018. Residents can access this current information and explore data that reflects the health occurrences and outcomes in Kalamazoo County. Special reports, such as the recent 2019 Opioid Brief and Report, can also be accessed on the site.

The 2019 County Health Rankings were released on March 29, 2019, and show that for overall health, Kalamazoo County ranks 30 out of 83, compared with other counties in Michigan. The County Health Rankings rank nearly every county across the nation to show which factors are making residents healthy or unhealthy. This report aims to help communities build upon their successes and highlight where there are opportunities for improvement.

The rankings show that Kalamazoo County is achieving positive health outcomes with various indicators. One such indicator is adult smoking, with only 15% of the population over the age of 18 in Kalamazoo County reporting being a current smoker compared to 20% of the population over the age of 18 in the State of Michigan.

The rankings show that Kalamazoo County is at-risk for poor health when it comes to sexually transmitted infections. Kalamazoo County's Chlamydia rate is 1.7 times higher than the State of Michigan (800.0 cases per 100,000 population and 462.9 cases per 100,000 population, respectively). The Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department has recently implemented the Wear One Campaign to help address the high rates of sexually transmitted infections within the community. The Wear One Campaign is a condom distribution campaign that offers free condoms to the public and aims to remove barriers to condom usage, such as cost, availability, and embarrassment.

"Both the Data Hub and the County Health Rankings are tools that we have at our disposal to identify priority areas for Kalamazoo County and help guide new public health initiatives, like the Wear One Campaign," said Rutherford. "Ultimately, it is up to all of us to make public health a priority in our county. That is why I hope all Kalamazoo County residents join us in observance of National Public Health Week" said Rutherford.

More information about Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department, including how we celebrate public health every day, can be found at www.kalcounty.com/hcs. For details on National Public Health Week 2019 visit www.nphw.org. The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute collaboration, are available online at <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>.

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