A GUIDE TO THE COUNTY (PARISH) HEALTH RANKINGS WEBSITE
# Table of Contents

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE ABOUT THIS WEBSITE? ................................................................. 2  
HOW TO USE THE COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS DATA .................................................. 3  
THE ACTION CENTER: PUTTING DATA INTO ACTION ......................................................... 6  
WHAT WORKS: IDENTIFYING EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS ............................... 7  
THE PARTNER CENTER: FINDING PEOPLE TO WORK WITH .......................................... 8  
CONCLUSIONS .................................................................................................................. 9
Why Should You Care About This Website?

Health is complex and influenced by a variety of factors. Although we typically think of health as most impacted by health-related behaviors, health outcomes are also influenced by social determinants of health, including factors like education, employment, housing, and access to health services. Inequalities in these social determinants of health can act as the root causes that lead to and perpetuate health disparities in communities.

The County Health Rankings Model, as shown in the graphic below, takes a broader community health approach that considers both health behaviors and social determinants of health as factors that influence health outcomes. According to this model, by creating policies and programs that aim to improve or reduce disparities in specific health factors, we can in turn improve health outcomes in communities.

The County Health Rankings website has data and resources that can be used to guide the development and implementation of evidence-based community projects that target the health factors described in the model. Even if health is not your primary field of interest, this website will likely be useful for your workgroup because of the inclusion of resources related to various social determinants of health. The following document will provide basic instructions on how to access and use these resources.
How to Use the County Health Rankings Data

The County Health Rankings Data is a great tool to identify which health factors may represent an important target for intervention in your community of interest. In order to use this data, navigate to the homepage of the County Health Rankings website. On this page, there is a map that prompts you to select a state or search for your county or ZIP code. For the purposes of this demonstration, we will be looking at Louisiana as an example.

Upon navigating to the state of interest, you will see the following screen that provides a map of the counties in the state ranked by both health outcomes and health factors. Health outcomes is measured by length of life and quality of life, while health factors consists of the health behaviors and social determinants of health detailed in the model.
In order to explore the county-level data in greater detail, click on the county of interest on either map. This will bring you to the county screenshot (see example below), which provides a breakdown of the county’s data for each of the health outcomes and health factors measures. This page also includes the following tools that are helpful for interpreting the data.

**Measure Descriptions**
In order to better understand what each measure is assessing, click on the name of the measure. This will bring you to the page for that measure, which provides a specific description of the measure and the source of the data. Alternatively, hover your cursor over the name of the measure for a brief description of the measure.

**Trend Column**
For certain measures, the trend column will describe how the county is doing over time on that measure depending on the color of the icon. A green line indicates that the county is getting better on that measure. A yellow line indicates that the county is staying the same on that measure. A red line indicates that the county is getting worse on that measure.
Areas of Strength and Weakness
The strengths and weaknesses of a county can be further explored by clicking the “show areas to explore” and “show areas of strength” checkboxes at the top of the county screenshot. This will highlight the measures on which a county is performing well or performing poorly. Areas to explore will be highlighted in brown (see adult smoking on example above) and represent potential targets for intervention. Areas of strength will be highlighted in purple (see food environment index on example above) and represent community assets that can promote resilience.

Disaggregating the Data
Only measures for which the reported data value is blue and underlined can be disaggregated by race and ethnicity. In the example county above, the data for premature death can be disaggregated. In order to disaggregate the data, simply click on the blue underlined data value. This may be helpful in identifying disparities in health factors between racial or ethnic groups.

Available Downloads
Each state has additional downloadable resources that can provide further guidance under “Downloads and Data Resources.” To find this section, navigate to the County Health Rankings page for the state of interest and scroll to below the state maps. This section will have four downloadable items, including a state-specific summary report of the rankings data, maps for the health factors and health outcomes in the state, and the County Health Rankings dataset.
The Action Center: Putting Data Into Action

Once you have decided on an area that you want to work on within your community of interest, the Action Center tool on the County Health Rankings website can help you figure out how to move towards taking action. To find this tool, navigate to the “Take Action to Improve Health” tab of the website and then click on the Action Center button. On this page, there is a list of five steps and two overarching goals that provide guidance on how to move forward with community action.

Steps to Move Your Community Forward

The steps below provide a path to help your community move with data to action. In each you will find key activities and suggested tools to guide your progress. Keep in mind: action isn’t always linear. Revisit these steps to find the right resources when you need them.

1. Assess Needs & Resources
2. Focus on What's Important
3. Choose Effective Policies & Programs
4. Act on What's Important
5. Evaluate Actions

In order to learn more about any of these steps, simply click on the step of interest. This will bring you to a page that a more in-depth description of that step, including the purpose, key activities that should be completed, and tools that may be helpful in completing each key activity. If you ever feel unsure about what you need to do next to create community change, the Action Center will have a resource for you.

The Action Center also has Action Learning Guides that are helpful if you want to learn more about topics such as understanding and using data, promoting health and equity, and getting started on policy change. These modules may be particularly useful in tandem with the above Action Center tool if you have a specific knowledge gap that you wish to fill.
### What Works: Identifying Evidence-Based Interventions

After deciding to take action to improve your community, the What Works for Health tool on the County Health Rankings website will help you identify a policy or program that can be implemented to achieve your desired outcome. To find this tool, navigate to the “Take Action to Improve Health” tab of the website and then click on the What Works for Health button. This page will allow you to find different strategies by topic or to search all strategies by keyword.

Once you have searched for strategies by topic or by keyword, you will see a list of relevant policies and programs. We will be using strategies that target employment for this example. Each of the relevant strategies will include a brief description, information about the level of empirical support, and the specific health factor areas that are being targeted by the intervention. On the left-hand side, there are also several filter options, including the approaches used, the decision-making entity, and the scientific evidence rating. These filters will allow you to narrow down the strategies to the ones that are most relevant to your community. If you find an intervention strategy that seems particularly appealing, you can click the star next to the strategy name in order to save it for later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>18 Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment</strong> (18)</td>
<td>□ Adult vocational training Support acquisition of job-specific skills through education, certification programs, or on-the-job training, often with personal development resources and other supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Ban the Box</td>
<td>Prohibit criminal history questions on job applications and postpone background checks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Bridge programs for hard-to-employ adults</td>
<td>Provide basic skills (e.g., reading, math, writing, English language, or soft skills) and industry-specific training with other supports; also called occupationally contextualized basic education programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Career pathways programs</td>
<td>Provide occupation-specific training for low-skilled individuals in high-growth industries, with education and supports, usually with stackable credentials and work experience opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After identifying a strategy that is appealing to you, click on the name for more detailed information about the intervention. This page will provide you with information about expected beneficial outcomes, evidence of effectiveness, likely impact on disparities, and implementation examples and resources. These resources may be particularly helpful when you are deciding what strategy to implement or actually implementing the strategy within your community.
Finding partners to work with can be difficult to do, but is often essential to creating lasting change within communities. If you are looking to find an organization to partner with, check out the Partner Center on the County Health Rankings website. To find this tool, navigate to the “Take Action for Health” tab on the website and then click on the Partner Center button. On this page, there are nine different categories of organization or interest groups that are frequently partnered with for community action. Below these categories, there is also a list of 5 tips for reaching out to new partners.

To explore any of these categories further, simply click on the organization or interest group. This will bring you to a page that will provide further information about why that particular group can be helpful to partner with and how you can connect with that group to collaborate on community interventions. This resource is useful for both community members and larger organizations to find others to work with and create lasting change.
Conclusions

The County Health Rankings website is an invaluable resource that can help you to move from data to action and implement programs and policies that improve community health outcomes. We hope that this guide is helpful in orienting you to some of the specific tools that this website has to offer.

If you are looking for additional support in your journey to creating change, the County Health Rankings website has a team based at the University of Wisconsin that is available to answer your questions through the Contact Us page. In addition to answering questions about the County Health Rankings website, there are also community coaches that can provide more in-depth guidance for your community’s needs. Regardless of who you are or what change you want to make within your community, the County Health Rankings website will have a resource for you.