



## **Draft News Release**

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### **Reports Examine Health in Utah's Local Health Districts**

**(Salt Lake City, UT)** – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) has released two reports that provide insight into the health of Utahns within the state's 12 local health districts and examine progress in meeting national 2010 health objectives. The Utah Local Health District report contains information obtained by UDOH's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (ULHD/BRFSS) Report for the years 1999-2001. Another report called the 2001 Utah Health Status Survey Local Health District Overview Report (UHSS) reports provides additional health indicator information.

The ULHD/BRFSS looks at smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, poor nutrition, overweight, physical inactivity, and under-use of health screening services, such as mammography, colonoscopy and serum cholesterol. All these behaviors are known to contribute to a substantial portion of illness and premature death from a variety of chronic diseases and unintentional injury.

The UHSS was designed to collect information on a variety of health topics, including health insurance coverage, access to health care, health screening, limitations of activities, general health status, and demographics.

The reports are intended specifically for use by local health districts. "They should be used along with other health information to provide a picture of health status and health-related behaviors in these areas, says Lois Haggard, Ph.D., Director, Office of Public Health Assessment, UDOH. "Looking at the data within these smaller regions is one way to help state and local health officials to implement public health programs where they are most needed."

The BRFSS telephone survey is a primary way states track their progress in meeting national Healthy People 2010 (HP2010) objectives. For example:

- One HP2010 objective aims to reduce to less than 20 percent the proportion of adults who do not get any physical activity during their leisure time. Physical activity is important throughout life for maintaining health. BRFSS data show that the state as a whole has already met this objective with only 17 percent of adults not getting any leisure time physical activity. However, Tooele County and TriCounty Health Districts reported slightly higher proportions of 21 percent and 24 percent respectively.
- A similar objective is to increase to 30 percent the proportion of adults who get at least 30 minutes of regular, preferably daily, moderate physical activity. Utah falls short with only 26 percent of adults engaging in regular physical activity. Only Summit County health district met this objective where 41 percent of adults reporting regular physical activity. Many diseases are associated with overweight and obesity. The percentage of overweight and obese adults has increased dramatically in Utah and the U.S. in recent years. The HP2010 objective is to increase the proportion of adults with healthy weights to 60 percent. Unfortunately, statewide only 46 percent of adults have healthy weights and none of the health districts have met the objective.
- Preventive health screening is important to detect diseases in the earliest stages when they are most treatable. Cervical cancer is one of the most curable cancers if detected early through routine screening. A HP2010 objective is to increase the proportion of women ages 18 years and over who received a Pap test within the preceding three year to 90 percent. Overall, 81 percent of Utah women had been screened in the last year, and Summit County Health District was the only district to meet the objective with a proportion of 90 percent.
- It is a well-known fact that tobacco is addictive and that cigarette smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. The HP2010 objective is to reduce adult cigarette smoking to 12 percent. Utah's adult smoking rate was estimated to be 13 percent, which is the lowest of all the states and close to the objective. There were four health districts that met the objective. In Bear River

and Summit County Health Districts, 8 percent of adults reported current cigarette smoking. The proportion was 10 percent in Wasatch County Health District. Utah County Health District had the lowest adult smoking rate of only 6 percent.

The UHSS reports findings of a telephone survey conducted with 7,520 households, randomly selected within Utah local health districts. The survey was designed to collect information on a variety of health topics, for example finds from this report show:

- The percentage of children (age 17 and under) who had been exposed to cigarette smoke inside the home. The rate for the entire state of Utah was 6.0 percent. However, rates for Southeastern and TriCounty health districts were 17 percent.
- Health insurance coverage was another measure included in the HSS report. The report measured the percentage of persons with no health insurance coverage. The overall state rate was 8.2%, ranging from 4% in Davis County to 14% in Tri-County and Southeastern Health Districts.
- Another insurance-related focus of the UHSS report was access to care, which measured the percentage of insured persons who were unable to get needed medical, dental, or mental health care in the previous 12 months. The percentage for the state was 12.2%, with a range of 10% in Davis County to 19% in Southeastern Health District.

For complete reports, go to [www.health.utah.gov](http://www.health.utah.gov) or call the Office of Public Health Assessment at 801-538-6108.

*All the data reported here for both the BRFSS and the HSS were age standardized to the U.S. 2000 population to control for differences in the age distributions of Utah's health districts. As with any data derived from a sample of the entire population, these estimates have a margin of error. Error also results when people who are selected for the survey refuse to participate or don't answer specific questions and because people sometimes have trouble remembering the answers to some questions.*

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