
Press Release

NEWS

Burlington County
Board of Chosen Freeholders
Mount Holly, NJ 08060
Office of Public Information
Phone 609-265-5028/Fax 609-265-5151
www.co.burlington.nj.us



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Ralph Shrom

Thursday, March 31, 2011

(609) 265-5028

BURLINGTON COUNTY OFFICIALS REACT TO STATEWIDE HEALTH RANKINGS

County Is Seeking \$250,000 Grant To Update Community Assessment Data

Good – but could be better

That was the reaction of Burlington County officials today to news that a statewide study had ranked the County as the 8th healthiest among the State's 21 counties.

The study, undertaken by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, comes as freeholders, through the Health Department, are preparing to seek a \$250,000 grant to update the County's own four-year-old community health assessment data.

"Or to put it another way, we're on the case," said Freeholder Mary Ann O'Brien. "Freeholders will engage several community partners to assess everything from the physical health of our residents to our overall environmental health.

"Once collected, that data will tell us where we stand, healthwise, compared to 2007, when the last assessment was undertaken," O'Brien added. "And, hopefully, it will lead us to some new strategies for prevention of disease, maintaining wellness and promoting healthy lifestyles of our residents while preserving tax dollars .

As fate would have it, the County will be seeking the competitive grant from the same Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that funded the statewide study.

-more-

PRESS RELEASE: Health Rankings – 3/31/11 – Add One

Results of the 2007 community-driven Health Assessment resulted in a comprehensive Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) which can be viewed on the County's website (www.co.burlington.nj.us).

Some of the strategies included better promotion of available medical services and routine screenings, increase testing and educational awareness for HIV/AIDS, promotion of nutrition and fitness programs in the schools, and encourage residents to take advantage of programs to quit smoking.

"At a time when so much debate focuses on health benefits costs, we need to focus more on preventative health care, and healthier personal habits," said Robert Gogats, County Health Coordinator. "Families and individuals can really take charge of their own health."

Programs that address such things as exercise, nutrition, alcohol use, and smoking are part of the equation. But residents also need to be encouraged to make appropriate health screenings part of their "routine," not to mention free services when they are offered.

"For example, the Health Department spent the better part of four months encouraging, really in some cases begging, individuals to get flu shots – in many cases, free flu shots," said Gogats. "These are simple things that can go along way to safeguarding one's health, as well as that of the family."

The County is hoping to undertake its new community assessment study in September of 2011, and complete it by August of 2013.

Participating community partners include Lourdes Health System, Virtual Health Systems, Bayada Nurses, Burlington County Department of Corrections, Burlington County College, CONTACT of Burlington County, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Servicios Latinos de Burlington County, Spanish American Social Cultural Center – Hispanic Social Service Center.

###