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Public Health
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For Immediate Release:

Sauk County Shows Slight Improvement in County Health Rankings

Sauk County ranked 36 out of 72 counties for health outcomes and 32 for health factors, according to the seventh annual *County Health Rankings*, released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI). The *Rankings* are available at www.countyhealthrankings.org

An easy-to-use snapshot that compares counties within states, the *Rankings* show that where you live influences how well and how long you live. The local level data makes it clear that good health is influenced by many factors beyond medical care including housing, education, jobs, access to healthy foods, and more.

“The County Health Rankings are one tool the health department to uses in analyzing the health of Sauk County. Yearly trends are provided that allows us to assess improvements or declines in certain areas over a period of time. The 2015 Sauk County Health Needs assessment identified drug and alcohol use along with mental health as top Health Priorities” noted Cynthia Bodendein, Sauk County Health Officer.

The health rankings this past year took a closer look at premature deaths-or deaths that occur among people under the age of 75. The *Rankings* Key Findings Report reveals that drug overdose deaths are fueling a dramatic increase in premature deaths nationally as well as locally. Drug deaths are also accelerating among 25-44 year olds. However in the 15-24 year old age group, nearly three times as many people die by homicide, suicide, or in motor vehicle crashes.

The *Rankings* have become an important tool for communities that want to improve health for all. The Sauk County Health and Wellness Coalition and community partners has a number of initiatives underway to expand health opportunities and prevent premature deaths for residents in Sauk County including : the Sauk County Preventing Drug/Opioid Overdose Death grant initiative; the Tri-County Medication Treatment Recovery & Support grant (Tri-County MATRS); the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council’s work including Treatment Court; HOPE Sauk Prairie Suicide Prevention; a Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) suicide prevention trainings; Mental Health First Aid trainings; Sauk County Mental Health Task force; and Building a Better U Teen Summit. Please see the Sauk County Health Department Web page @www.co.sauk.wi.us, for more information and initiatives.