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Today, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute released the County Health Rankings for New York State.

The purpose of these rankings is to report how the overall health of each county compares to the health of other counties in the state.

The rankings compare multiple factors that influence health so that people can see where their county is doing well and where they need to improve.

Putnam County was ranked number one in New York State for having the best overall health outcome rating. The composite score was based on many health-related factors. For example, Putnam is third lowest in premature deaths and sixth lowest in poor health-related quality of life factors and rate of low birth weight.

“Although ranking systems are only blunt measures of health, this study confirms that Putnam is a healthy place to live and most of our people enjoy better health, overall, than some other parts of New York,” said Sherlita Amler, MD, Commissioner of Health. But like every other community, there is always room for improvement,” she said.

The data for the rankings come from public data sources, not from the New York State Department of Health. These include: vital statistics, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance system data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Medicare claims data calculated by the Dartmouth Atlas of Healthcare, Census 2000, and the American Community Survey 2005-2007.

Besides statistics on death and illness, the study also looked at health-related behaviors, such as tobacco and alcohol use, obesity, motor vehicle deaths, and rates of teen births and sexually-transmitted diseases. Also important were access to quality health care and hospice care, and levels of education, employment, household income, social support, public safety, and environmental quality.

Despite the high ranking in health outcomes, the report indicates that Putnam is less highly ranked in access to quality health care and in environmental quality (according to factors preselected by the investigators).

“Putnam keeps working to improve quality of life, with bike trails, beautiful parks and lakes, and outdoor exercise facilities. And when illness happens, we have an excellent hospital, great doctors, and a growing community effort to ensure care for those without adequate insurance,” Commissioner Amler said.

For more information about specific measures and Putnam County rankings visit <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/new-york/putnam>.