



## WILLIAMSON COUNTY AND CITIES HEALTH DISTRICT

### NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Williamson County Ranks as Texas' Healthiest County**

Where we live, work and play matters to our health. In good news for Williamson County residents, the 2011 County Health Rankings, released today, rank Williamson first among Texas counties as a healthy place to live.

The Rankings—a set of reports to rank the overall health of every county in all 50 states—help counties see where they are doing well and where they are not so they can make changes to improve health. They illustrate how much health is linked to environment, behavior, social and economic conditions, and education. The Rankings are not a race to the top—but a tool for improvement.

Access to health care was a relatively small factor in determining the county health rankings—only 20% of the overall score. Health behaviors such as smoking, obesity, excessive drinking, and motor vehicle crash rates are considered, along with high school graduation rates, premature death, and the number of low birthweight babies. Other factors include the number of single parent households, the county's violent crime rate, air quality measures, and access to healthy foods and recreation facilities.

On many measures, Williamson County has reason to be proud. 85% of the county's residents completed high school, compared to 72% statewide. 71% attended college, compared to the state average of 55%.

Williamson County residents are more physically active than most. 81% of adults are physically active in their leisure time, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control. Only Travis County ranked higher among Texas counties.

County residents certainly have more access to medical care than in most of Texas, with six hospitals and a broad scope of medical services available. Lone Star Circle Care (LSCC), with 19 clinics in Williamson County, ensures broad provision of primary care services to residents. In 2010, the National Committee for Quality Assurance recognized LSCC as a top-quality health care provider on the leading edge of best practice models

for primary and preventive care, awarding the Physician Practice Connections™ Patient Centered Medical Home™ designation. Only 0.3% of primary care practices nationwide have received this recognition, and of those, only a fraction have won Level 3 recognition—the highest level awarded. LSCC is a primary provider of care for uninsured county residents, and those with Medicaid and Medicare.

Williamson County is doing well compared to the rest of Texas, but still well below national benchmarks on several measures. Excessive drinking—binge plus heavy drinking—was measured in Williamson County at 17%, well above the national benchmark of 8%, and above the state average of 16%.

What about the physical environment? The county ranked 163 statewide in that category, chiefly due to air quality measures. Access to healthy foods is another area for improvement. Only 67% of the population has ready access to healthy foods—compared to the national benchmark of 92%.

To develop strategies for improving the health of all county residents, the Williamson County Health Data Users Group was created in 2010 by the WCCHD Board of Health. This forum brings together local government agencies, community organizations, hospitals and school districts to coordinate how health data are collected and used, to advance health care efforts in this county.

Health does not happen by accident. Dr. Chip Riggins, Executive Director and Health Authority for Williamson County and Cities Health District (WCCHD) noted “It’s not how many resources you have, but how you use the resources that makes the difference. Williamson County has an ongoing community health improvement process.” Critical to this process are the health district’s many partners: physicians and other healthcare providers, community clinics, school health programs, Bluebonnet Trails Community Services, Lifesteps, the county’s Mobile Outreach Team and Crisis Response Team.

Upon learning about the 2011 Rankings, WCCHD Board Chair Kerry Russell commented: “WCCHD is pleased to have been a leader in the community effort that resulted in Williamson County once again being at the top of the statewide county health rankings. WCCHD’s Board appreciates the strong support it has received from the Williamson County Commissioners Court in directing various countywide health initiatives.”

The online Rankings, available at [www.countyhealthrankings.org/texas/williamson](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/texas/williamson) include snapshots of U.S. counties with a color-coded map that compares each county’s overall health with other counties in each of the 50 states.

For more information about Williamson County health statistics, the Williamson County Board of Health or WCCHD services, visit *your public health department* website at [www.wcchd.org](http://www.wcchd.org).