



The 2007 Colorado Health Report Card Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why does the Foundation issue The Colorado Health Report Card?

A. The Colorado Health Report Card is designed to provide a benchmark for measuring progress on the state's most pressing health issues. The Foundation's vision is that Colorado can become the healthiest state in the nation. In order to realize this vision, we need a tool to determine how healthy we are; how we compare to other states and what needs to be done to make us healthier.

Q. Who compiles the data for the report card and what are the sources used?

A. The data for the Colorado Health Report Card is compiled by The Colorado Health Institute, a nonprofit organization that is a comprehensive source of health information and analysis. The indicators selected for the 2007 Colorado Health Report Card come from nine different data sources. The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), the National Child Health Survey (NCHS) and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), as well as Vital Statistics and the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) are each maintained by state health departments, the Department of Public Health and Environment in Colorado, in cooperation with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Current Population Survey (CPS), National Immunization Survey (NIS) and Medicare Standard Analytical Files (MSA) are administered and maintained by other federal agencies.

Q. How were the indicators selected?

A. The 40 indicators used in the 2007 Report Card were selected based on a review of the indicators used in other national and state report card efforts, consultation with a Colorado Health Report Card Advisory Committee and input from technical experts at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

Q. What is *Healthy People 2010*?

A. *Healthy People 2010* is a set of disease prevention and health promotion objectives for the nation to achieve during the first decade of the 21st century. Created by the federal Department of Health and Human Services, it identifies a wide range of public health priorities and couples them with measurable objectives. *Healthy People 2010* includes 467 objectives designed to increase the quality and years of healthy life of all Americans by eliminating health disparities.

Q. Why are the grades given by life stage?

A. The Foundation believes everyone deserves a healthy start in life and the opportunity to maintain good health through all stages of life. To help show the biggest health threats for each age group, the indicators are organized by life stages. The 2007 Report Card grades each of these five life stages to show how Coloradans fare at every stage. The stages are: *Healthy Beginnings*, *Healthy Children*, *Healthy Adolescents*, *Healthy Adults* and *Healthy Aging*.

Q. How were the grades determined for each life stage?

A. A grade is assigned to each life cycle stage based on Colorado's average rank for all indicators included in the life stage. For example, the average rank for the seven *Healthy Children* indicators is 27.7. The letter grade of C- was assigned according to the rank/letter grade equivalency included in the Report Card.

Q. Why is there no overall grade this year?

A. In the 2006 Report Card, grades were given for each indicator and all 20 indicators were averaged to produce a state grade of C+. The 2007 Report Card includes 5 grades, one for each life stage, to present a more comprehensive picture of the health of Coloradans. Because of the differences in indicators selected and grading methods, it is not appropriate to compare the 2006 overall grade of C+ with an overall grade for the 2007 Report Card.

Q. Why is Colorado only average on this report card but on other rankings is the healthiest state?

A. Colorado and the Denver Metro area rank high on a narrow group of indicators that examine only obesity rates for adults and health risks associated with obesity such as diabetes, heart disease and cardiovascular disease. The fact is that Colorado ranks only average or below average on a number of critical health indicators used to measure overall health. These findings are consistent with recent national surveys including America's Health Rankings, issued by the United Health Foundation, and The Commonwealth Fund's report "Aiming Higher: Results from a State Scorecard on Health Systems Performance."

Q. Why is health insurance coverage included?

A. We have included these indicators for health coverage because along with healthy behaviors, access to health care is a critical determinant of an individual's overall health. Three of the life stages include an indicator showing the percent of Coloradans who do not have private or public health insurance. (*It is not included in *Healthy Beginnings* because infant coverage is determined by the mother's coverage, nor in *Healthy Aging* because adults over 65 are covered by Medicare.)

Q. Why does Colorado rank so poorly in the indicators related to health coverage?

A. Most non-elderly Americans obtain coverage either through employer-sponsored or publicly-funded health insurance. Colorado has a slightly larger proportion of employees

working in small firms which are less likely to offer health insurance. Also, Colorado's public programs, Medicaid and CHP+, have tighter eligibility requirements than many other states. Fewer low-income Coloradans participate in Medicaid than in most other states.

Q. What are the other states doing differently that rank better than Colorado?

A. With the recent exception of Massachusetts, states do not require employers to offer health insurance to their employees. However, states do regulate the "small group and individual market" and can create policies that make offering insurance more or less attractive to small employers and their employees. Also, many state Medicaid and S-CHIP programs have less stringent eligibility requirements than Colorado's.

Q. What does The Colorado Health Foundation plan to do with this information?

A. The Foundation will use the Report Card as a tool to educate, motivate and inspire health care and government leaders to take the next steps needed to improve our performance. We will also use the results to guide our grantmaking to achieve our goals of improving health coverage, health care and healthy living and ultimately our vision that Colorado becomes the nation's healthiest state.

Q. How can these grades be improved?

A. In "Understanding the Numbers: Indicator Details and Promising Initiatives," we have identified a number of initiatives and/or programs in Colorado and elsewhere that hold promise for improving health. In selecting these initiatives, we have highlighted those that offer innovative solutions. In some cases, change in local, state or federal health policies may be required to improve the grades.