

# PORTAGE COUNTY COMBINED GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT

705 Oakwood Street  
Suite 208  
Ravenna, Ohio 44266

Phone: 330-296-9919  
Fax: 330-297-3597  
E-mail: [pchd@portageco.com](mailto:pchd@portageco.com)



**DuWayne O. Porter, M.P.H., R.S.**  
**Health Commissioner**

Web: [www.co.portage.oh.us/dept/healthdepartment](http://www.co.portage.oh.us/dept/healthdepartment)

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Media Contact  
Becky Lehman

## **Community health assessments benefit Portage County residents**

Surveys completed by Portage County adults, children, and adolescents this spring will help local public health partners and community service providers to identify and address the health issues facing community residents.

As part of an ongoing community health assessment (CHA) and community health improvement process (CHIP), Portage County Health Department (PCHD), Kent City Health Department (KCHD) and The Center for Health Affairs are partnering with Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio to administer surveys to residents. Results will be used to guide a multi-agency collaboration to develop and expand programs and services impacting community health.

Over forty area organizations have participated in the CHA process in recent years. Survey questions were carefully selected with contributions from workgroup participants, including Mental Health & Recovery Board of Portage County, Portage County WIC, Kent State University Health Center, Portage County Job & Family Services, Ravenna City Board of Health, Robinson Memorial Hospital, University Hospitals, Cleveland Clinic, United Way of Portage County, Coleman Pregnancy Center, Townhall II, Summit County Public Health, as well as PCHD, KCHD, and The Center for Health Affairs.

Surveying residents can be a valuable tool to understand the health experiences and behaviors of community members. Participants are randomly selected to complete the anonymous and voluntary survey.

Adult surveys will be sent to 1,200 households and child surveys will be sent to 2,400 households via postal mail in March 2015 throughout Portage County. Advanced notice letters have been mailed to adults and parents of children ages 0-11 years.

In 2014, Kent State University Center for Public Policy and Health facilitated a major collaborative effort under the leadership of the three local health departments to create the comprehensive Portage County Community Health Needs Assessment, which was released in January 2015. The effort brought together many community stakeholders to analyze the quality of existing public health data and capture issues facing Portage County residents, as identified by service providers and experts from local agencies. The need to conduct primary data collection, of which surveys are an example, was identified in the report.

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