

News

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Health Department releases 2009 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. – As Congress debates healthcare reform aimed at giving more people access to insurance coverage, the percentage of Macomb County adults with no health coverage is more than twice as high as it was a decade ago, a new study shows.

Almost 13 percent of adults in Macomb County have no healthcare coverage, according to the latest Behavioral Risk Factor Survey by the Macomb County Health Department and Southeastern Michigan Health Association. That compares with 5.8 percent of adults in 1999 and 11.2 percent in 2002.

“As more and more people lose their jobs in this rough economy, we are seeing a rise of people without health care coverage and the impact it is having on their lives,” said Dr. Kevin Lokar, medical director of the Macomb County Health Department.

Nationally, about 71 percent of Americans working in private industry had access to employer-sponsored health insurance, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, but just a quarter of the lowest-wage earners had such access.

The lack of insurance or the cost of healthcare was a big factor in whether people sought medical help, according to the Macomb County survey. About 7.4 percent of survey respondents said they did not see a doctor when they needed to during the past year because it was too expensive or they had no health insurance.

Although the number of adults without health insurance has spiked, the rate of children with healthcare coverage remains high in Macomb County. About 97 percent of children under age 20 living at home had some healthcare coverage.

The risk factors survey also showed that Macomb County residents were engaged in more prevention and detection behaviors such as getting frequent mammograms, clinical breast exams and influenza vaccinations, compared with the state average.

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Macomb County residents also had lower incidences of diabetes and asthma than the 2008 state averages. But county residents continue to have high, sustained rates of smoking, high blood pressure, and high blood cholesterol levels, compared with the 2005 Behavioral Risk Factors Survey.

"These important risk factors increase the occurrence of major causes of death in Macomb County, such as heart disease, stroke, and some forms of cancer," Lokar said. "Smoking, in particular, is still high in this county."

As part of the Health Department's community health assessment responsibilities, the 2009 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey provides timely, accurate and scientifically valid information for individuals and organizations that make critical decisions in Macomb County.

The survey was designed with support and input from the Macomb County Board of Commissioners, the Southeastern Michigan Health Association, the Macomb Health Plan and the Macomb County Office of Emergency Management.

"We assess some community health factors like infant mortality and communicable disease on an ongoing basis," said Thomas Kalkofen, director of the Health Department. "Other factors, like risk behaviors, are best reviewed using periodic surveys. Among the things we look at are health status, access to health care, prevention and detection behaviors, health risk behaviors, and disaster preparedness."

The complete BRFS is available at www.macombcountymi.gov/publichealth. Click on the 2009 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey link under "What's New." The 1999, 2002 and 2005 Macomb County studies are located in the "Data & Statistics" section of the Web site.

Questions or comments about the 2009 Macomb County Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, or past surveys, can be directed to Steven Kuntz, manager of planning & quality assurance, at 586-469-5699 or Steve.Kuntz@macombcountymi.gov.

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