



# Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

## Dickinson County

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Dickinson-Iron District Health Department Kicks-Off Public Health Week Building the Foundation for a Healthy America



Kingsford and Iron River, Michigan, March 24, 2009 - Despite our best efforts, Americans are not as healthy as they should be. Although we spend more on health care than any other country, the health system is failing and our nation is falling behind in many important measures of what it means to be healthy:

- U.S. life expectancy has reached a record high of 78.1 years but still ranks 46th — behind Japan and most of Europe, as well as countries such as South Korea and Jordan.
- A baby born in the United States is more likely to die before its first birthday than a child born in almost any other developed country. Among developed nations, only Latvia has a higher death rate for newborns than the United States.
- We're among the top 10 countries that have the most people with HIV/AIDS, and it is estimated that one in 20 residents in the nation's capital are HIV-positive.
- Disparities persist with ethnic minority populations having nearly eight times the death rate for key health conditions, such as diabetes, than that of non-minority populations.

And the list goes on. Despite the dramatic progress achieved through a century of public health advancements — the elimination of polio, fluoridation of drinking water and seatbelt laws, our nation's health falls far short of its potential. Our progress has stalled, and we have reached a point where we must examine our health system and the foundation upon which it stands.

We have the potential to greatly improve our population's health in the future. By recommitting ourselves to support our nation's public health system, we can build on the successes of the past and establish the solid foundation needed for a healthy nation. To this end, National Public Health Week (NPHW) 2009 will serve as the launch of the American Public Health Association's (APHA) new campaign — Building the Foundation for a Healthy America.

### Michigan Public Health Week is being celebrated April 20-26, 2009. Public Health at work in Michigan:

- Public Health is always working to protect families and communities: Michigan now has a booster seat law to reduce risk of injury in a crash for children up to 8 years old or 4'9”.
- Public Health is always working to promote healthy, safe lifestyles: Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan is focused on preventing childhood obesity.
- Public Health is always working for a healthier economy: Tobacco cessation efforts work to reduce annual health care cost of \$3.4 billion directly caused by smoking.
- Public Health is always working to eliminate health disparities; Michigan's Health Disparities Workgroup is developing a systematic, coordinated approach to reduce health disparities.
- Public Health is always working to guard and protect against threats: 8 regional bio-defense networks integrate health care into emergency preparedness and response.

-More-

**Things you can do to help:**

- Talk to elected officials about prioritizing public health as a part of health reform.
- Partner with media to show how Michigan health policies work in your community.
- Encourage young people to consider public health professions.
- Support efforts to make healthy behavior the expectation for Michigan citizens.
- Thank public health practitioners for their hard work and ask how you can help.
- Be prepared for public health emergencies that will impact your ability to work, provide for food, and care for yourself and family, e.g. a pandemic influenza.

The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department is committed to promoting wellness, preventing disease, providing health care, and protecting the environment. For additional information visit our website at [www.didhd.org](http://www.didhd.org).

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