

## Most local counties making progress toward 2010 health goals

By DAN SCHNEIDER, DMG Writer

HOUGHTON — Among the four counties in the Copper Country, Houghton is the closest to meeting national child health goals for 2010 in several categories for which local data is available.

The Michigan League for Human Services released its Kids Count in the Michigan 2007 data book Tuesday, which compiles child health statistics from several state agencies including the Department of Community Health and Department of Human Services.

This year, in addition to reporting state and local statistics such as rates of low birthweights and teen pregnancy, the league measures progress on a set of national health objectives called Healthy People 2010. These are national health improvement targets established by agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institute for Health, and the Surgeon General's office.

"These Healthy People 2010 goals or targets were developed by experts at the federal level and they seemed reasonable," Kids Count in Michigan Project Coordinator Jane Zehnder-Merrell said.

One Healthy People 2010 goal is for 90 percent of pregnant women to receive prenatal medical care in the first trimester.

At 85.7 percent in 2005, Houghton County fell short of the 2010 prenatal care goal despite exceeding the state average. It should be noted that 2005 figures are actually the average of numbers from 2003, 2004 and 2005.

But Houghton County did meet the 2010 goals in four of the eight categories for which local data was reported. Houghton County's percentage of babies with low birthweights, at 3.9 percent, was better than the national goal of 5 percent. At 11.8 pregnancies per 1,000 females ages 15-17, Houghton County met by a wide margin the 2010 goal of 43 per 1,000. Houghton County also met the goals for lowering the number of preterm births and reducing confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect.

"Overall, you look at Houghton and we've done really well," Copper Country Human Services Coordinating Body Director Dave Mayo-Kiely said. "I think we've done better than the state with some of the Healthy People 2010 rates."

The state met 2010 goals for teen pregnancy rates, percentage of fully immunized toddlers and rates of physical fights among adolescents. Local data were not available for the latter two categories.

Houghton fell short of the 2010 goals for reducing infant mortality, incidences of lead poisoning and number of teen deaths.

Despite having one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in Michigan, Baraga County reached the 2010 target in that category.

The county remained short of the goals for the other categories for which local data were available: increasing first trimester prenatal care, reducing instances of low birthweight, reducing preterm births, eliminating incidences of lead poisoning for ages 1 to 6, and reducing confirmed victims of abuse and neglect.

Ontonagon County reached the 2010 goal for reducing preterm births and eliminating incidences of lead poisoning but remained short of the mark for rate of prenatal care, reducing instances of low birthweight, and reducing confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect.

Keweenaw County data was available in only three categories. "One of the bad things up here is we have so few people up here, we don't have real data," Mayo-Kiely said.

The three categories are lead poisoning, for which the county met the 2010 goal; increasing the rate of prenatal care in the first trimester, in which the county remained short of the mark; and reducing confirmed victims of child abuse/neglect, in which the county remained under the mark.

On a statewide level, Zehnder-Merrell said the single statement she would make about its progress on the 2010 goals is "when you look at those 18 areas, we've made improvement on 14 of them but for most of them the improvement has been minimal," she said. "We have fairly substantial improvement to make in order to achieve the healthy people 2010 goal."

She said children's health is important for their education which has implications for the future of the state.

"Clearly, if kids are not healthy, if they're missing school because of asthma or they're not getting adequate care, if they're not feeling well, if they have dental decay on a regular basis, they are not going to be able to be successful students," Zehnder-Merrell said. "The state as a whole is going into a transition into a new economy where we'll be looking more at an economy that is knowledge-based, high technology and we will need a highly-educated workforce. Education is grounded in health."

More information about the Kids Count in Michigan report is available at [www.milhs.org](http://www.milhs.org).

Dan Schneider can be reached at [dschneider@mininggazette.com](mailto:dschneider@mininggazette.com)