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MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH REPORT CARD MAKES CASE FOR CHANGE
Detailed Goals Provide Roadmap for Community-Based Planning for Proposed Three Year Cycle

Miami, FL (June 22, 2007) – Under a grant from the Health Foundation of South Florida, the Health Council of South Florida released the inaugural Miami-Dade County Community Health Report Card today. The Card is the first of its kind, establishing a baseline for community needs assessment, providing measures for tracking progress, and benchmarking successes on improving community health.

Policymakers, researchers and grant making institutions will save money and time with the Community Health Report Card. Key decision makers in public health can now utilize the robust set of 93 indicators presented on health outcomes, quality, access and efficiency to assess the capacity of the County to improve health relative to achievable benchmarks. Conclusions were reached through a rigorous data mining process drawn from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey; the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System; the Florida Community Health Assessment Resource Tool Set; and National Vital Statistics Reports.

The results are alarming:

- 28.6% of Miami-Dade County residents have no health insurance and an even greater number have difficulty accessing health services or obtaining quality care as evidenced by the significantly higher rates of hypertension, low birth weight babies, diabetes, asthma, cervical cancer and low levels of access to oral health care and elders who have received influenza vaccination.
- Miami-Dade ranks first in the state of Florida and South Florida ranks third in the nation on the number of AIDS cases with 1,202 newly reported AIDS cases in Miami-Dade County in 2005.
- 63.2% of individuals in Miami-Dade County reporting depression did not seek professional help. Untreated mental illness is an enormous social and financial burden on the Miami-Dade community with consequences particularly effecting women, low-income individuals, Hispanics and Blacks.

According to *Pedro*, a Little Havana resident, "Since people cannot afford healthcare they wait until they are very sick before they go to the emergency [room] and once there the wait is very long and bills run very high if they end up being admitted."

One Model City citizen states, "Construction workers [are] working without health insurance" and "families cannot afford to cover the health needs of all of their dependents."

A Hialeah Gardens resident stated that "Medications are too expensive. Elders [in the community] really struggle with this and sometimes have to decide whether to pay rent or get their medications for the month."

Data in the Report Card confirm that these sentiments expressed during recent neighborhood meetings hosted by the Alliance for Human Services are being felt by individuals and families throughout Miami-Dade County. South Dade respondents to the 2006 Living Healthy, Living Longer Survey indicated a significant need for mental health services; affordable medical and dental care; access to primary care for preventive health measures; and assistance with barriers to medical care including health insurance, transportation issues and costs of prescriptions.

The Report Card does not measure the work of any specific government body or organization, but underscores the need for individuals, families, the health care industry, non-profit organizations, and state agencies to work together toward a healthier community because nowhere is it more challenging to create targets in order to measure health improvement than in Miami-Dade. Communities with comparable health indicators simply do not exist and the state of Florida cannot be employed as a benchmark given its standing as one of 10 states with the poorest indicators of health status in the nation.

"The quality of life issues identified in the Health Report Card are essential issues that everyone must work to improve. These issues affect the long-term viability of any business located here. Our community is inter-dependant and all of us must work to improve these key areas to ensure success in our schools, our neighborhoods, and our economy." --Adolfo Henriquez, President, Florida East Coast Railroad.

To select a benchmark and to assure a reasonable level of comparability, key demographic characteristics for Miami-Dade County were contrasted with each of the top ten states designated by the nationally recognized *Morgan Quitno Press* in their 2006 rankings. Massachusetts was identified as offering the highest level of comparability among the uppermost performers. The rankings take into account 21 factors to provide state rankings by testing available data on multiple health measures, including access to health care providers, affordability of health care and a generally healthy population, and assessing states based on how they compare to the national average. Through this data driven approach national benchmark data are applied to set goals that are within reach for Miami-Dade County.

Through benchmarking, the Report Card creates a unified approach for community leaders, government officials, service providers and community planners to make a change for the better. Communities across the nation have developed Community Health Report Cards as a user-friendly way of collecting, organizing and presenting data that can be utilized to assess needs, set priorities, measure progress over time, and compare local health status to national indicators reported in Healthy People 2010.

The Health Council of South Florida will work with community leaders and create future versions of the Miami-Dade County Community Health Report Card in order to track progress over time.

The Health Council of South Florida, Inc. (Council) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to engage in community based planning that improves health and promotes wellness in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. For over 39 years, the Council has served as an objective source of healthcare information, fostering community dialogue on contemporary health issues and developing strategies for emerging health needs. For more information about the Council, please call 305.592.1452 or visit the Web site, www.healthcouncil.org.

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