

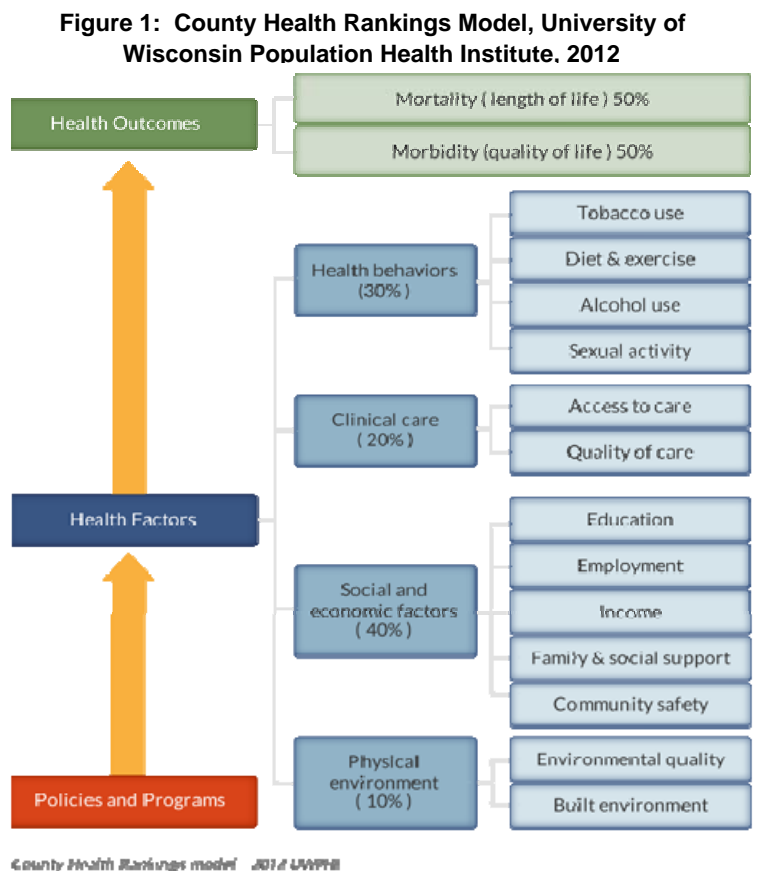
# INTRODUCTION

In working towards Public Health Essential Service #1: "To monitor the health of the community," the Public Health Department of the Health Services Agency examines health-related data and publishes their collective findings biennially. The data and analyses are intended to portray and inform residents, providers, and policymakers about the health of Santa Cruz County residents.

Similar to previous editions, this report continues to draw from the national *County Health Rankings and Roadmaps* annual report which is based on a population health model that emphasizes the many factors that, if improved, can help make communities healthier places to live, learn, work and play (see Figure 1 for model). The *Rankings* report is a key component of the Mobilizing Action Toward Community Health (MATCH) Project, a collaboration effort between the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, with the goal that the information will be used to create and implement evidence-based programs and policies that will improve communities' health.

The Health Outcomes section measures how healthy a county is, based on: Mortality (how long people live) and Morbidity (how healthy they are while alive). While the Health Factors section evaluates the factors that can influence the health of a population: Health Behaviors, Clinical Care, Social and Economic Factors and Physical Environment. Of note, a fifth group of Health Factors that influences health, Genetics and Biology, is not addressed in this report.

In addition, *Rankings* compares the nation's 3,016 counties on a state-by-state basis, which allow us to compare ourselves with other counties in California using a standardized, weighted methodology showing that where we live, learn, work, and play influences how healthy we are and how long we will live. The Report Card in this report states where Santa Cruz County ranked in the state for each measure *Rankings* assesses.



In 2012, Santa Cruz County ranked 10<sup>th</sup> healthiest for both Health Outcomes and Health Factors, out of 56 California counties (two counties are not ranked due to small population size). This report, although structured similarly to *Rankings*, is a far richer document locally, delving deeper into the same factors and outcomes, while adding important categories like chronic diseases. When data is available, further analysis by race/ethnicity, gender, age, or sub-county geographies are also addressed.

The data presented is annotated and referenced and can be used to study critical issues and trends, and can uncover hopeful avenues for prevention and population health improvement. Good data is fundamental to good governance, not only because it informs decision-making and thoughtful use of scarce resources, but also because it helps people understand their own conditions and the contributions they can make towards improving their health and the health of the community.