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CONTACT: Brian Schleter
PHONE: 443-984-2623
mediahealth@baltimorecity.gov

Baltimore City Health Department Releases Results of First Community Health Survey

BALTIMORE, MD – (March 26, 2010) – The Baltimore City Health Department is releasing the results of a telephone survey of more than 1,100 City residents – unprecedented in its size and scope – conducted during the spring of 2009. The 2009 Community Health Survey provides a vivid snapshot of the health of Baltimore City residents.

Data gleaned from the study will help public health officials better understand issues such as diabetes and hypertension prevalence, mental health needs, and perceptions of neighborhood safety. Analysis of the data reveals stark differences between respondents of different socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, gender and age groups. The survey results also demonstrate residents' education level and income profoundly affect their health.

“It is well recognized that social determinants like access to educational and economic opportunities, healthy food and healthy housing, and safe neighborhoods are mostly responsible for the health inequities we see in Baltimore City,” said Interim Commissioner Olivia D. Farrow. “With this report we can develop new programs and policies for eliminating health disparities in Baltimore.”

“This is a customized and targeted assessment of health topics most relevant to Baltimore City residents,” said Alisa Ames, acting chief epidemiologist for the Health Department. “For the first time, we are able to gauge residents' access to health promoting resources, such as safe places to exercise, healthy food options and food security, health insurance, and healthy housing.”

The survey was conducted by ICF International and included both cellular and landline telephone numbers. Randomly generated numbers were meant to produce a representative sample of the entire city population. The survey probed the backgrounds and behaviors of respondents. They were asked questions about whether they look at food nutrition labels, whether they feel lonely, have been incarcerated or attended graduate school, and where and how often they exercise.

Future Health Department releases will provide more detailed information on topics highlighted in this report. The Health Department will conduct the Community Health Survey every two years in order to monitor trends in these important health indicators.

A copy of the report, as well as a list of key findings, can be downloaded from the Health Department's Website, <http://www.baltimorehealth.org>.