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## Online profile of area's health released

**Data compiled by regional hospitals track threats, trends in communities for viewing by public.**

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Public health workers and community groups have a new tool for extracting critical information about area communities: An online health mapping program launched today that pinpoints, by ZIP code, hospitals and clinics and tracks rates of health threats such as asthma or childhood obesity.

The goal is a reliable, detailed profile of public health, down to the local level.

The initiative's Web site – [www.healthylivingmap.com](http://www.healthylivingmap.com) – features interactive maps and searchable databases. Data can be compared by county or ZIP code, and overlay maps offer a snapshot of a neighborhood's health.

Data come from a comprehensive community-needs assessment carried out by the four major health systems in the Sacramento region: Catholic Healthcare West, Sutter Health, Kaiser Permanente and UC Davis Health System. The hospitals tracked demographic data, rates of youth obesity, death, hospitalization and ER visits by disease, and health insurance status for El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento and Yolo counties.

The hospitals worked with community groups and funded the Web site.

"It's more accessible and user-driven rather than paper-driven," said Bill Mueller, managing partner at Valley Vision, a community partner in the project.

The free online tool pulls together data from interviews with key community leaders and state and federal databases.

For example, in looking at youth obesity in the region, the study found rates in Sacramento and Yolo counties on par with the state average, while rates in Placer and El Dorado counties were lower. But, a further breakdown by ZIP code revealed obesity rates much higher than the state average in Isleton, Alta, Knights Landing, Elverta and Rio Linda.

The profile does not offer reasons for the differences, nor does it draw conclusions.

"That's the next step ... the data is supposed to trigger more research," said Anthony Smith, senior administrative analyst with UC Davis Medical Center.

The Web site is primarily intended as a planning tool for hospitals but is also a resource for public health workers and community groups.

"The immediate utility is that hospitals will use it, but how it will be used by community members has yet to be seen," said Mueller.

Katie Villegas, executive director of Yolo County Children's Alliance, said the online tool will provide valuable data that can go into grant proposals and community presentations.

"Just being able to tell the level of poverty helps us paint the picture (of) what's accessible in an area," she said.

Villegas provided an example:

"In West Sacramento or Capay Valley ... it's difficult to get to a hospital. Which transportation routes are out there, and what's available to get children to doctor or hospital?"

The Web site isn't static, said Mueller, who explained that he'd like to see others add to the information that's currently there.

Villegas already has some ideas about how to use the online tool. In combating childhood obesity, she said, it would be useful to map the healthy food choices as well as fast-food restaurants in a neighborhood.

"Uploading information as it becomes available would be great," said Villegas. "A lot of the stuff is so subtle. You may not notice how many fast food or convenience stores there are in the area."

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