

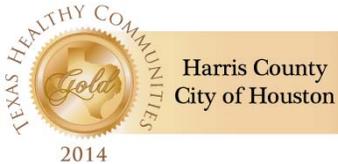
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Contact: Sandy Kachur, HCPHES  
713.439.6292

Porfirio Villarreal, HDHHS  
832.393.5041

## **Harris County & City of Houston Win the Gold for Texas Healthy Communities Program**



**Houston, Texas (March 19, 2015)** – Harris County and the City of Houston have earned the state’s top honors for making local changes to prevent and control heart disease, stroke and other chronic diseases.

Houston and Harris County are the only two areas of the state to win the Texas Healthy Communities Program’s gold award. The program helps agencies assess their existing environments, implement changes in local environmental and policy infrastructure, and adopt priority public health practices to reduce risk factors for chronic diseases.

The local health departments are facilitating the area workgroups conducting the assessments and identifying improvement opportunities.

“We are honored to be recognized by the state of Texas. With the addition of our new Nutrition & Chronic Disease Prevention (NCDP) Division, we continue our commitment to improve the health and well-being of Harris County residents and the communities in which they live,” said Dr. Umair A. Shah, Executive Director of Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services (HCPHES).

“Houston is making numerous efforts to become a healthier city,” said Stephen Williams, director of Houston Department of Health and Human Services. “The City of Houston will continue to collaborate with a wide range of partners to ensure healthy places for Houstonians to live, work, play and thrive.”

Communities are assessed on eight indicators to determine recognition as a Texas Healthy Community. Environmental indicators include offering physical activity areas, healthy eating options, mother-friendly worksites and an evidence-based health curriculum in schools.

Policy indicators include a 100 percent smoke free city ordinance; an EMS system which maintains a rapid response time for cardiac events and treatment of stroke as an emergency in the community, with appropriate acute stroke treatment protocols in place.

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