How Does Your State Score?

With states facing ever greater pressure to restrain costs and improve access to health care, policymakers have a new resource to gauge how their state compares over time and with others. In its May 2018 “Scorecard on State Health System Performance,” the Commonwealth Fund uses recently available federal data (generally from 2015 or 2016) to assess states on 43 performance indicators grouped in five areas: access and affordability, prevention and treatment, avoidable hospital use and cost, healthy lives, and disparities.

Overall, the scorecard found that most state health systems improved between 2013 and 2016, with Arkansas, Louisiana, New York, Oklahoma and West Virginia showing gains in the greatest number of indicators. For example, 23 states reported fewer hospital readmissions of older adults within 30 days of their discharge; 28 states showed improvement in the number of adults with mental illness who received treatment; and 32 states reduced the rate of adults who smoke. Still, premature deaths are on the rise, with deaths from suicide, alcohol, opioids and other drugs at an all-time high. The combined death rate from suicide and substance abuse increased by 50 percent.

Four major trends emerged in the 2018 scorecard:

- Rising death rates, high levels of obesity and gaps in care are pressing challenges for states.
- Regional differences in performance persist, as do within-state disparities.
- Many states are not getting good value for their health care dollars.
- States made progress in areas where they targeted their efforts.

—Colleen Becker

State Health System Performance Varies Within Region

Top 5 Most Improved

#1 New York
#2 Arkansas
#3 Louisiana
#4 Oklahoma
#5 West Virginia

More Improvement Than Decline

State Health System Performance

NORTHEAST

TOP THREE IN EACH REGION
ABOVE AVERAGE IN EACH REGION
BELOW AVERAGE IN EACH REGION

WEST

SOUTH

MIDWEST

NORTHWEST

STATESTATS

Source: “Scorecard on State Health System Performance,” The Commonwealth Fund, May 2018