WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Counties (NACo) today announced three counties selected to participate in its first-ever County Health Learning Challenge. Cabarrus County, N.C., Knox County, Tenn. and Salt Lake County, Utah will participate in the new initiative designed to catalyze innovative health improvement efforts.

Supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI), NACo’s County Health Learning Challenge is a year-long program intended to help counties strengthen cross-sector partnerships, identify potential action and implement data-driven strategies to build healthier communities.

“We are pleased to announce the first counties selected to participate in the County Health Learning Challenge,” said Matthew Chase, NACo’s executive director. “This effort will leverage county leadership and partnerships to improve residents’ health and well-being. Investing nearly $70 billion in community health and hospitals annually, health is a top priority for counties across the country.”

Teams composed of elected officials, agency leadership, non-profit partners, local businesses, community advocacy groups and other stakeholders in each county will embark on a collaborative, public-private partnership to address unique health needs.

The three counties will focus on the following areas:

- **Cabarrus County, N.C.**, located northwest of Charlotte, will focus on housing and employment. Healthy Cabarrus, a long-running community partnership, will develop a work plan and begin implementation of goals addressing these two priority health needs. Through this project, the county plans to have a broad impact on the quality of life in their community.

- **Knox County, Tenn.**, located in eastern Tennessee, will focus on creating a shared understanding among key stakeholders of the impact of land development guidelines and policies on the built environment. Through this project, the county aims to align land development guidelines and policies with physical environment goals that promote active lifestyles.

- **Salt Lake County, Utah**, will focus on teen pregnancy prevention in its Latino community. The teen pregnancy rate in the Latino community, the fastest-growing population in the county, is double the county rate. Through these efforts, the county seeks to impact high school graduation and poverty rates.
The goals for each team build on the *County Health Rankings and Roadmaps*, a collaboration between RWJF and UWPHI that measures the health of nearly every county in the nation on more than 30 factors that influence health.

The Challenge begins at the 2015 NACo Annual Conference and Exposition in Mecklenburg County, N.C. in July. Over the course of a year, each team will attend a NACo “Learning Lab,” an intensive two-day experience to strengthen skills and strategies necessary for making community health improvements. At the conclusion of the Challenge, each county’s progress will be featured at the 2016 NACo Annual Conference and Exposition in Los Angeles County, Calif.

For more information about the NACo County Health Learning Challenge, visit [www.naco.org/countyhealthlearningchallenge](http://www.naco.org/countyhealthlearningchallenge).

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The *National Association of Counties* (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo assists America’s 3,069 counties in pursuing excellence in public service to produce healthy, vibrant, safe and resilient counties. NACo promotes sound public policies, fosters county solutions and innovation, promotes intergovernmental and public-private collaboration and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. More information at: [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org).