

PRIORITY 3: Physical Activity & Nutrition

The Henderson County Committee for Activity and Nutrition (CAN) continued to support efforts to increase options for physical activity and food access in light of the pandemic.

TRACK Trails, a program to draw youth and families outdoors, was expanded to The Park at Flat Rock, making it the fourth of its kind in Henderson County. NC Innovative Approaches partnered with TRACK Trails as it planned for installation to ensure the trail is accessible and engaging for children and youth with special healthcare needs.

Go NAPSACC continued to support healthy environments within early childhood education centers. Efforts were put towards improving outdoor environments and providing additional portable play equipment to reduce sharing and thus decrease the risk of virus transmission amongst students and staff. Food and nutrition education continued in public schools and community sites on behalf of the Henderson County Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program Assistant.

In 2020, options for local food access were expanded with the addition of the Hendersonville Farmers Market and Bearwallow Valley Farms (BVF) food hub. Both sites accepted SNAP/EBT purchases and offered the incentive of “Double Bucks”, giving participants twice the amount of produce per dollar spent. BVF also offered a food box delivery option in response to COVID19.

Through CARES Act funding, the Council on Aging and Interfaith Assistance Ministry, both representatives within CAN, ensured vulnerable and at-risk populations in Henderson County had access to food and other necessities. Together, they developed a COVID19 food delivery program to reach isolated community members. Actions of both groups are continuing through the new year.

PRIORITY 4: Safe & Affordable Housing

Progress towards safe and affordable housing in Henderson County was led by the efforts of THRIVE, Housing Assistance, United Way and the City of Hendersonville. The need for safe and affordable housing was highlighted by the effects of the pandemic. Home repairs, the construction of single- and multi-unit housing, housing counseling and education, and awards for community revitalization improved housing options in 2020. There continues to be a great need to address homelessness in Henderson County, in conjunction with substance misuse and mental health programs.

New Initiatives

Several partnerships were initiated and strengthened to support our community in response to the pandemic, including but not limited to the establishment of a COVID19 Emergency Shelter, collaborative testing and vaccination sites, expanded food distribution programs, free community resource drives, community health workers, and increased options for tele-health/tele-medicine.

Emerging Issues

COVID19 has drawn attention to the need to consider pandemic mitigation and re-enforce disease prevention in community health efforts. The events of 2020 also exposed a continued need for crisis assistance related to housing and utility assistance, food access and mental and behavioral health support. Underlying these issues, addressing racial equity remains a public health priority.

Get Involved

Each of the health priorities identified in this report are addressed by various committees and coalitions within Henderson County.

Efforts have been made to summarize the major activities related to each priority area, but some programs may not be represented in this report. Please contact Camden Stewart, Community Health Improvement Specialist, at cspace@hendersoncountync.gov to ensure information regarding your program, as it relates to one of the outlined health priorities, is included in future reports.

If you would like to serve on an Action Team, please contact the Henderson County Department of Public Health at (828) 694-6065.



State of the County Health Report

Henderson County, North Carolina

March 2021

Henderson County Department of Public Health

1200 Spartanburg Hwy; Suite 100

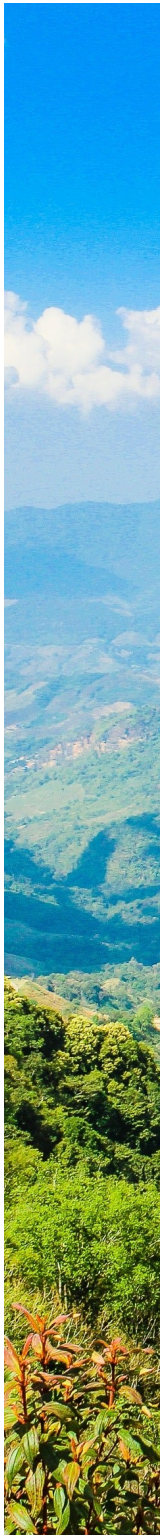
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Introduction

The state of North Carolina requires local health departments to conduct a Community Health Assessment (CHA) at least every four years. In the years between assessments, health departments submit an abbreviated State of the County Health (SOTCH) report.

The most recent Henderson County CHA, which identified Mental Health, Substance Misuse, Physical Activity & Nutrition, and Safe & Affordable Housing as health priorities, was published in 2018. The assessment can be viewed online at: www.hendersoncountync.gov/health/page/community-data.

This report provides a brief overview of changes in trends related to the health priorities in 2020, updates on community initiatives, and details emerging issues that may impact the health of Henderson County.

Snapshot of Henderson County

Henderson County is home to nearly 119,000 residents. Of this, close to 27% of the population is 65 years of age and older. About 90% of the county's population is White, with 3.3% Black/African American, and 5.9% some other race. Just over 10% of Henderson County's population identifies as Hispanic or Latino (of any race).

Cancer remains the leading cause of death in the county. Other leading causes include diseases of the heart, unintentional injury, and cerebrovascular disease.

Adolescent pregnancy rates continue to decline and now stand at 23.2 per 1,000 women ages 15-19. Infant mortality rates have been stable over the past ten years, now at 5.4 per 1,000 live births.

According to the *County Health Rankings* released in early 2020, Henderson County ranked 8th in the state (out of 100) in health outcomes, which measure length of life and quality of life. The county ranked 3rd in the state in health factors, including health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment. This nation-wide collection of 50 reports - one per state- helps community leaders understand that where individuals live, learn, work and play influences the health of a community.

Through the 2018 CHA, several special populations were identified including under-served (persons with limited English proficiency, the uninsured or under-insured), at-risk (pregnant women who smoke, persons with multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences, persons who use intravenous drugs), and vulnerable groups (seniors, children under 5, teens, persons living in poverty, persons of color, persons with physical and/or mental health care challenges). The well-being of these populations was prioritized in community health interventions.

COVID19

The coronavirus pandemic significantly impacted the well-being of our community. It shifted the way our county addressed the 2018 CHA priorities. Some programs expanded, others paused, and new initiatives were established in response to the virus. The effects of the pandemic on our community will last indefinitely.

Data sources used to complete this SOTCH include: NC State Center for Health Statistics, 2018 Henderson County CHA, 2018 WNC Healthy Impact Data Workbook, RWJ County Rankings & Roadmaps, US Census Bureau, NC DHHS County Health Data Book, 2017 Youth Behavior Risk Survey.

Progress on Health Priorities

Based on the results of the 2018 Community Health Assessment, stakeholders in Henderson County created a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP is an action-oriented, strategic plan intended to engage partners, leverage resources and to ultimately improve the health of the community. Using the CHIP as a guide, building on efforts from 2019, and adjusting in the pandemic environment, the following was accomplished in 2020:

PRIORITY 1: Mental Health

In 2020, members of the Behavioral Health Summit worked together to mitigate the impact of COVID19 on mental health in our community. The Summit supported Henderson County by expanding access to mental health care in community health clinics, Henderson County Public Schools (HCPS), and the Henderson County Detention Center. In tandem, Summit members created a "Directory of Behavioral Health Resources" to support the community in seeking assistance. The directory is posted on the Health Department's website (with resources available in Spanish), and a version was distributed through HCPS.

The school system was stretched to address intense mental health needs in 2020 in response to the virus. Eleven school-based social workers and 33 school counselors supported students through at-home and in-person learning. HCPS obtained grant funding for collaborative trainings to support youth Mental Health in Henderson County. Nearly 200 community members participated in Youth Mental Health First Aid and Trauma Sensitive School trainings before the COVID19 interruption. The group is preparing to continue trainings virtually in the future.

Community members made progress towards The Hendersonville Connection Center (THCC), a centralized location for people who have unmet needs to learn about and connect with programs and services. THCC will also offer support to people with mental health and substance use issues through peer support, harm reduction, and addressing social determinants of health. The facility will be on the campus of Grace Blue Ridge and is planning to open in 2021.

PRIORITY 2: Substance Misuse

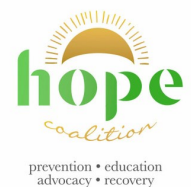
Hope Coalition (formally HopeRx), is the action team responsible for addressing substance misuse in Henderson County. Like mental health, the necessity for substance misuse services was heightened by the pandemic. In 2020, Hope Coalition supported Henderson County through diversion control, impacting youth attitudes, and increasing community collaboration.

Although restricted by COVID19, a total of 1,086 net pounds of medications were collected in Henderson County in the last year. This total reflects the amounts collected from county drop boxes, as well as the amounts taken from 4 drug take-back events.

The Henderson County Post-Overdose Response Team was launched in 2020, consisting of two Peer Support Specialists. The Specialists' role is to reach out to people who have recently overdosed and who are at risk of overdosing to offer intervention and recovery support.

In May of 2020, colleagues from Hope Coalition, The Free Clinics and the Health Department were awarded a grant for a Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Site-based Program (COSSAP). The grant was awarded in the amount of \$900,000 over three years. Efforts will go towards increasing substance use disorder treatment and recovery, as well as training for law enforcement, DSS, public health, hospitals, and social service & community partners in substance use disorder, behavioral health, trauma informed care, and peer support.

Evidence-based, substance abuse prevention programs were suspended in HCPS in early 2020 due to COVID19 and required remote learning. Events for "We Are Hope" did not occur in the Spring, but plans are in progress to resume virtually during the 2020-2021 school year.



To learn more, visit: elementsofhope.org