



2022 State of the County Health Report

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Henderson County, North Carolina

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OVERVIEW

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 version of the CHA titled the State of the County Health (SOTCH) report.

The SOTCH report provides an overview of progress and changes related to the selected health priorities over the past year, 2022, as well as updates on new initiatives and emerging issues that may impact health in Henderson County.

The most recent Henderson County CHA, which identified Mental Health, Substance Misuse, Physical Activity & Nutrition, Interpersonal Violence, and Safe & Affordable Housing as community health priorities, was published in 2021. The assessment can be viewed online at:

www.hendersoncountync.gov/health/page/community-data.

Snapshot of Henderson County

Henderson County is home to nearly 117,000 residents. Of this, close to 27% of the population is 65 years of age and older. Just over 92% of the county's population is White, with 3.4% Black/African American, and 4.3% some other race. Close to 11% of Henderson County's population is Hispanic or Latino (of any race).

According to the Robert Wood Johnson County Health Rankings last released in early 2022, Henderson County ranked 12th in the state (out of 100 counties) in health outcomes, which measure length of life and quality of life. The county ranked 11th in the state in health factors, including health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment. The nation-wide collection of 50 reports, one per state, helps community leaders understand that where individuals live, learn, work, worship and play influences the health of a community.

In the 2021 CHA, several special populations were identified including under-served (individuals or households experiencing poverty, persons who are uninsured or under-insured, persons who are non-English speaking, persons who identify as LGBTQIA+), at-risk (pregnant women who smoke, persons with multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences, persons experiencing homelessness), and vulnerable groups (older adults, children under 5, teens, persons of color, persons with physical and/or mental health care challenges, incarcerated persons). The well-being of these populations is prioritized in each health initiative.

Progress on Health Priorities

Based on the results of the 2021 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, and building on efforts from past years, the following was accomplished in 2022:

PRIORITY 1: Mental Health

In 2022, members of the Behavioral Health Summit collaborated to address mental health in the community. The impacts of the pandemic led to a heightened interest in trauma and resilience. In response, the Henderson ACE's, Resilience, and Trauma Collaborative was formed, as a subcommittee, to infiltrate resilience in all areas of the community, from non-profits to healthcare to the business sector. As an extension of this work, Crossnore launched the WNC Trauma Resilient Communities Project, recruiting



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select agencies in Henderson County to enhance their resilience efforts through training, capacity building, coaching and implementation support. This collaboration and learning will continue over the next year.

Additionally, the Health Department and Vaya Health, partnered to re-engage the Crisis Response Collaborative (CRC) with the intent to improve communications between stakeholders, and to assess the availability and quality of crisis and early prevention services in Henderson County. The CRC has been successful in understanding gaps and addressing staffing needs across agencies.

During the school year, Hope Coalition partnered with law enforcement and Henderson County Public Schools to implement Handle with Care, a trauma-sensitive curricula to support students who have been exposed to a traumatic event. If needed, this response allows for immediate mental health care for the student.

The year was also spent planning to re-launch Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA), a day of training and conversation to support students confronting the challenges of mental health and substance misuse. YMHFA will kick-off in 2023.

PRIORITY 2: Substance Misuse

The Substance Use Action Team, led by Hope Coalition through most of 2022, serves as the shared space for addressing substance misuse in Henderson County.

Hope Coalition's Recovery Community Center (RCC) opened its doors in August 2022 as a peer living room dedicated to adults in recovery. The Center is a safe space for individuals recovering from substance misuse and other traumas to find support. The RCC has had a significant impact already, connecting clients with housing, transportation, and job placement. The Action Team continued substance use education, prevention and recovery through drug take-back events, naloxone distribution, support groups.

Moving forward, a top concern for the Action Team is informing how Henderson County's portion of the Opioid Litigation Settlement funds will be spent. Over the past year, stakeholders identified four priority areas for spending from the list of allowable activities. Through action planning in early 2023, led by the REAL Academy, specific initiatives within each of these priority areas will be selected and funded.

PRIORITY 3: Physical Activity & Nutrition

The Committee for Activity and Nutrition (CAN) exists to increase options for physical activity and access to healthy food in the community. CAN identified community dinners as a top strategy to address social isolation, engage individuals with lived experience, and offer guidance for healthy eating and active living. The dinners began in late 2022 and have been successful in promoting community and health so far.

Through participation in the Healthy Opportunities Pilot (HOP), Caja Solidaria launched a unique initiative for HOP participants to receive and use vouchers for fresh produce at two local farmers markets. Outside of the market season, participants can continue to use their vouchers at Caja Solidaria's mobile market, "Vege-Guagua".

CAN's additional activities include free cooking and nutrition education classes through Henderson County Cooperative Extension, advocacy and expansion of double SNAP at farmers markets, promotion of mobile food pantries (IAM, Hola Carolina), supporting greenway development and implementing bike/helmet initiatives.

PRIORITY 4: Interpersonal Violence

Interpersonal Violence (IPV) was selected as a new priority in the 2021 CHA. The IPV Action Team, co-chaired by leadership from Safelight and Pisgah Legal, met quarterly through 2022 to establish membership, align resources, and understand gaps in serving survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse.

Collaboration in 2022 included the Lethality Assessment Program, Domestic Violence Intervention Program, expansion of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, and the Phoenix Project, a partnership between The Free Clinics and Safelight to support vulnerable community members. The Action Team will undergo further planning in Spring 2023.

PRIORITY 5: Safe & Affordable Housing

Due to turnover in staffing and leadership, there is not currently an active Action Team addressing Safe & Affordable Housing. Although, local organizations both individually and collectively are supporting homeownership and home repair programs, providing housing case management, counseling and education, and financial assistance with rent, utility payments, heating fuel and other necessities. There also continues to be a great need to address homelessness in Henderson County, in conjunction with substance misuse and mental health programs.

New Initiatives

Many new initiatives have been detailed in this report including Trauma Resilient Communities, HART Collaborative, Recovery Community Center, community dinners, mobile food markets, and prescription food boxes. Other new initiatives in the community in 2022 include dental education and screening, planning for an inclusive playground at Jackson Park, and the Children and Family Resource Center GLO Mobile.

Emerging Issues

Following the onset of the pandemic, Early Childhood Education emerged as a leading issue in the community. Access to and affordability of childcare has impacts on employment, economic development, and the well-being of children ages 0-5. The Early Childhood Education Taskforce was launched in late 2022 to begin investing in and transforming Henderson County's child care landscape.

As Henderson County's population grows, with an increasing portion of the population ages 65+, supporting older adults is becoming a heightened priority. Led by the Council on Aging, the Aging Coalition was established in 2022 and is collaboratively planning ways to support aging in place in Henderson County.

Reflected nationally, the mental and emotional health of youth in the community has been negatively impacted over the past few years. There is a growing need to invest in the health and development of youth, and to expand programming to children under 18.

Get Involved

Each of the health priorities identified in this report are addressed by various committees, all supported by the Henderson County Partnership for Health. Learn more about the Partnership for Health at pfhhendersoncounty.com. If you would like to serve on a committee or action team, please contact Camden Stewart, Community Health Improvement Specialist, at cstewart@hendersoncountync.gov, (828) 694-6065.

Efforts have been made to summarize the major activities related to each priority area, but some programs may not be embodied in this report. If information regarding your program, as it relates to one of the health priorities, is not represented appropriately, please reach out ensure it is included in future reports.

Data sources used to complete this report include: NC State Center for Health Statistics, 2021 Henderson County CHA, 2022 WNC Healthy Impact Data Workbook, RWJ County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, US Census Bureau, and NC DHHS County Health Data Book.