

## **PRIORITY 4: Interpersonal Violence and Abuse**

This Action Team is co-chaired by Safelight and Pisgah Legal Services. They meet quarterly to align, share, and update on resources; and understand gaps in serving survivors of interpersonal violence and abuse. Collaboration in 2023 included the sharing of information related to Lethality Assessment Program (LAP); Domestic Violence Intervention Program; expansion of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE); and the Phoenix Project -- a partnership between The Free Clinics and Safelight to support vulnerable community members.

Three strategies were identified to focus on for 2024—2025: Increase the number of SANE providers; LAP training and support with local law enforcement officers; and prevention trainings for school aged children and/or caregivers.

## **PRIORITY 5: Safe & Affordable Housing**

Henderson County and the Partnership for Health recognizes access to safe, affordable, and adequate housing is still a priority for our community. Local organizations both individually and collectively support homeownership and home repair programs, providing housing case management, counseling, education and financial assistance with rent, utility payments, heating fuel and other necessities. There is not an active Action Team addressing Safe & Affordable Housing.

## **New & Emerging**

In 2023, Henderson County joined the #ViewFromHereWNC social media campaign locally sourced by the WNC Health Communicators Collaborative. The ongoing campaign addresses Henderson County's priorities of mental health, substance misuse, and physical activity/nutrition. Initial online survey results showed 62% of respondents found the ads helpful while 72% sought more health information.

The Poplar Drive Wildfire burned approximately 494 acres in Henderson County, while several other wildfires in our area, including the Collett Ridge Fire (5,505 acres) and the Black Bear Fire (2,008 acres) impact our community and environmental health. Air quality is affected, which can trigger asthma attacks, heart attacks, strokes, and increase respiratory issues and distress.

Youth mental, emotional, and behavioral health continues to be a leading emerging issue. Henderson County had three completed youth suicides in 2023. There were 177 emergency department visits from youth ages 11—17 years old for behavioral health, 110 of whom listed suicidal ideation.

## **Get Involved**

Each of the health priorities identified in this report are addressed by various committees and supported by the Henderson County Partnership for Health. Learn more about the Partnership for Health at [www.pfhhendersoncounty.com](http://www.pfhhendersoncounty.com).

If you would like to serve on a committee or action team, contact Juliana Whitaker, Community Health Improvement Specialist, [julianawhitaker@hendersoncountync.gov](mailto:julianawhitaker@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.*



# 2023 State of the County Health Report

**PUBLISHED MARCH 2024**

## **Henderson County, North Carolina**

---

**Henderson County Department of Public Health  
1200 Spartanburg Hwy, Suite 100  
Hendersonville, NC 28792  
(828) 692-4223**

[www.hendersoncountync.gov/health](http://www.hendersoncountync.gov/health)



# OVERVIEW

## Introduction

North Carolina requires local health departments to conduct a Community Health Assessment (CHA). Henderson County conducts one every three years. Based on the CHA results, community stakeholders decide on local health priorities and develop 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.

A State of the County Health (SOTCH) report is submitted annually between CHAs. The SOTCH report provides a snapshot overview update for the selected health priorities, and progress on the CHIP for the previous year.

The most recent Henderson County CHA was published in 2021. Henderson County stakeholders identified Mental Health, Substance Misuse, Physical Activity & Nutrition, Interpersonal Violence, and Safe & Affordable Housing as health priorities.

More information can be found at <https://embed.clearimpact.com/Container/Embed?id=9995559>

## PRIORITY 1: Mental Health

Hope Coalition continued youth mental health education and support with the Hope Rising program, added Architects of Hope and expanded Handle with Care. Handle with Care is a trauma-sensitive curricula to support students exposed to a traumatic event, if needed. This response allows for immediate mental health care for the student. A training video and reminder stickers were created to raise awareness and use of Handle with Care.

Henderson County Public Schools offered several Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) trainings with 174 participants. YMHFA teaches how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among children and adolescents ages 12-18.

Crossnore Communities for Children continues the WNC Trauma Resilient Communities Project. Local agencies participate to enhance their resilience efforts through training, capacity building, coaching and implementation support. In 2023 a total of 14 agencies participated, 8 new and 6 continuing. The HEART (Henderson ACE's, Resilience, and Trauma) Collaborative held the second screening of the film "Resilience," with 75 individuals in attendance.

This Action Team, along with other community partners, offered several new initiatives throughout 2023 with a focus on mental health:

- ***Mental Health Awareness Signage Campaign*** - Children & Family Resource Center (CFRC) teamed up with the Partnership For Health to develop 240 colorful roadside signs with positive messages like "You are seen and loved" and "You are worth so much."
- ***Sesame Street in Communities Emotional, Eating Well, and Resilience Toolkits*** - Smart Start Partnership for Children Henderson County and Henderson County Department of Public Health distributed 75 English and 55 Spanish toolkits.
- ***Zen Dens*** - Innovative Approaches created a safe space to provide respite for children and youth with special health care needs during events.



# & PROGRESS

## PRIORITY 2: Substance Misuse

This action team focused on developing a strategic plan for Henderson County's portion of the Opioid Litigation Settlement Fund. Henderson County created the Department of Strategic Behavioral Health to oversee this plan. The plan outlines four strategies for 2024: Recovery Support Services; Evidence-based Addiction Treatment; Early Intervention Programs; and Criminal Justice Diversion.

Henderson County had 120 drug overdose ED visits; 200 emergency department visits for an overdose with dependency potential; 39 drug overdoses; 79.5% of drug overdose deaths involved illicit opioids. Henderson County EMS reported 532 overdose response calls in 2023.

The Action Team and community partners continued substance misuse education, prevention and recovery through naloxone distribution, support groups, and Hope Coalition's Recovery Community Center.

## PRIORITY 3: Physical Activity & Nutrition

The Committee for Activity and Nutrition (CAN) and other community partners continue working to increase for physical activity and access to healthy foods in the community. Mills River and Hendersonville Farmer's Markets had a total of \$14,213 for the Double SNAP program for 2023. This program allows SNAP participants to receive twice the amount of fresh local fruits and vegetables.

Two additional Farmer's Market initiatives started in 2023. The Senior Farm Market at Mills River had 7 farmers participating and they hope to continue the program in 2024. Partnership with the Henderson County Cooperative Extension added in Farmer Market Passport. Farmer Market goers who returned the passport to the Extension office received a seed starter kit and/or a recipe cookbook.

Henderson County NC Cooperative Extension Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) hosted a variety of free nutrition and cooking education classes, engaging 894 children and 22 adults. Youth were engaged through Henderson County Public Schools and EFNEP Summer Camps. The program was extended in 2023 to include two HeadStart facilities and several Henderson County Library locations. EFNEP and the library offered a Seed Library in 2023 where 977 seed packets were given out.

Healthy Food Boxes and Produce Prescriptions were filled and offered by various organizations through the Healthy Opportunities Pilot (HOP), which began in 2022 and continued through 2023. Caja Solidaria fulfilled 558 Produce Prescriptions. Mills River Farmer Market also participated and gave out \$1,616.00 in fresh fruits and vegetables.

Several other new and continuing initiatives that focus on physical activity and nutrition in 2023 include: the completion of Jackson Park; Ecusta Trail phase 1 completion; GLO Mobile; IAM Mobile Pantry; community dinners; and Sesame Street in Communities - Eating Well Toolkit.