



State of the County Health Report

Harnett County Health Department

Our mission is to prevent illness, diseases, and injuries, promote healthy lifestyles, and keep the environment clean, healthy and safe.

The **2020 State of the County's Health (SOTCH) Report** is compiled and released to provide updates on health indicators related to our community and the work surrounding our health priorities. The report highlights some of the work that has been completed to advance the CHA health priorities.

The **Harnett County Health Department (HCHD)** works with other crucial partners and stakeholders in comprehensively reviewing the health status of the community as well as collecting information about perceptions of health and quality of life in the county.

Throughout this report, programs and initiatives will highlight progress in addressing the top three health issues as identified by Harnett County residents.

North Carolina has its first reported case of COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus in March 2020.

COVID-19 Morbidity and Mortality: The first COVID-19 case was reported in Harnett County on March 13, 2020.

Since that time, and throughout 2020, the Health Department employees worked in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to protect the health and safety of residents and working steadily to curb the spread. Outcome data from 2020 COVID-19 cases in Harnett County reported 5,861 cases and 95 deaths related to COVID-19 in 2020.

- Confirmed cases by Age- Approximately 39% of the cases were in the age group 25-49.
- Positive Cases by Race/ Ethnicity 3143 White, 1387 Black, 1143 Hispanic, and 188 Other

Health Priorities:

- Diabetes/ Nutrition
- Heart Disease
- Cancer

Community members have rated these concerns as significant with regard to the urgency, severity, and feasibility of improvement efforts. *Source: 2019-CHA.*



COVID-19 Morbidity and Mortality – (May 2021)

- Confirmed cases 11,380
- Deaths reported 170
- Age range 1 week-101 years
- Average Age 40
- Positive Cases by Race/ Ethnicity, 6450 White, 2671 Black, and 1775 Hispanic 484 Other
- Gender 53% female and 47% male

Morbidity and Mortality COVID-19: Older adults are more likely to get severely ill from COVID-19. Risks for severe illness with COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest risk. In Harnett County, for 2020 approximately 74% of COVID-19 deaths occurred in people over age 65.

- COVID-19 Confirmed case by Gender: 53% females and 47% males
- COVID-19 deaths by Gender 58% of the deaths were in males and 42% females.

Progress on **Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIPs)**. A community health improvement plan is a long-term, systematic effort to address public health problems in a community. It is based on the results of community health assessment activities, and is one-step in a process to improve community health.

Priority: Diabetes/Nutrition

- **Faithful Families Thriving Communities (Faithful Families)** offers faith communities simple solutions to help them eat smart, move more, and prevent chronic diseases. The program provides individuals, families, and communities with the skills to be able to eat more meals at home, move more in their everyday routine, and help their communities lead healthier lives. This program meets once a week for nine weeks. **Outcome:** Area churches were restricted with gatherings and many did not have in person meetings with the congregations due to pandemic; no Faithful Families sessions were held in 2020.
- **Living Healthy Chronic Disease Self-Management:** The Health Department offers the Living Healthy Chronic Disease Self-Management Program and Living Healthy Diabetes Self-Management program at area senior centers. Risk for severe illness with COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest risk. **Outcome:** Due to the pandemic and older adults being high risk for COVID-19 complications, Harnett County senior centers closed in March 2020 and remain closed no Living Healthy programs were offered.

The HCHD provides the National Diabetes Prevention Program, which can help you make lifestyle changes to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes and other serious health problems.

- **Prevent Type 2 Diabetes (T2)** is a yearlong lifestyle change program. It is a proven program to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. Prevent T2 was conducted at the Health Department from November 2019-November 2020, in collaboration with First Health of the Carolinians. **Outcome:** Nine people participated in the program. Class combined weight loss was 118 pounds. Nine of the nine participants increased physical activity.

Priority: Heart Disease: Heart Disease ranks as the leading causes of death in the Harnett County, our peer counties, and North Carolina. People with chronic diseases such as heart disease are at increased risk of getting severely ill from COVID-19.

- **“Go Red” Lunch and Learn:** Each February, American Heart Month, Health Department in collaboration with Harnett Health offers the annual “Go Red” Lunch and Learn. This program includes a presentation, by a cardiologist, on heart disease and the latest heart health information. Previously each year approximately 100-community members attend this program. **Outcome:** The program was scheduled for February 2020; however, adverse weather caused it to be postponed. It was rescheduled for March 2020, but was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **“Go Red Sunday”** is designed to raise awareness that heart disease is the leading cause of death for women. Churches and other faith-based organizations are encouraged to select one Sunday in February as "Go Red Sunday." On this Sunday, churches conduct heart health awareness related activities. The Health Department provides participating churches with heart health packets, which include health information-brochures to distribute to the women in their churches. **Outcome:** In February 2020, Health Department collaborated with 15 local churches for “Go Red Sunday” and 495 heart health packets were distributed.
- **Tobacco Prevention:** The HCHD implemented media messaging campaigns with a goal to prevent the use of all tobacco products by young people and adults, including cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco and hookah to help tobacco users quit. The media campaign will included newspaper, social media, and radio. **Outcome:** Media messages included 150 radio ads, 25 Facebook Posts, and 2 newspaper public service announcements. Messages aimed to increase awareness of the health effects of tobacco use.

Priority: Cancer

Cancer ranks as the second leading causes of death in the county, peer counties, and North Carolina. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted breast cancer screening. Many women postponed getting a mammogram due to concerns of exposure to COVID-19.

- **Mobile Mammography:** The partnership between the HCHD and Rex Mobile Mammography provides access to screening mammograms. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the mobile mammography program, cancelled two screening in 2020. The number of screening dates was reduced from 14 to 12. Due to the reduction in screening dates, the number of mammography appointments available decreased from 322 to 216. Outcome: In 2020, the HCHD provided access to 12 mobile mammography-screening dates. Approximately 166 women were screened, 43 percent were identified as uninsured, which is one of the priority population for this program.
- **“Pink Sunday”** is a breast health education event held during the month of October. The HCHD partner with places of worship, providing resources to educate the members of their congregations on breast health and breast cancer. All congregations are encouraged to participate in sharing the life-saving message of early detection. As part of Pink Sunday, the HCHD provided breast health information materials and promotional items to each participating religious organization. Each church coordinates the event at their site. Outcome: Many churches canceled worship services due to COVID-19. The HCHD collaborated with approximately eight churches and implemented the “Pink Sunday” program, reaching approximately 355 women in the community.

COVID-19 Community Outreach-2020

- **Farmworker:** HCHD collaborated with the NC Farmworkers Project and provided over 100 packets with COVID-19 information, for Migratory and seasonal agricultural workers (MSAWs).
- **Harnett County Schools:** HCHD in partnership with Harnett County Schools provided families utilizing the “Grab & Go” lunch program 1,067 bags, which contained educational brochures on COVID-19 testing, and information on community resources.
- **Public Housing:** HCHD staff in partnership with Dunn Housing Authority and Westminster Company Property Management implemented a “door to door” campaign; the purpose of this outreach was to distribute educational materials about COVID-19, along with resources to four public housing communities. Outcome: This initiative reached approximately 183 households located within four public housing communities.

Churches and Faith communities have a very large role to play in informing and influencing communities on matters of health. Below is information regarding two of the many churches the HCHD collaborated with during 2020-COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Coats Church of God of Prophecy:** The Health Department collaborated with Coats Church of God of Prophecy located in Coats to provide access to free rapid antigen testing for COVID-19 on December 9, 2020. Outcome: This drive thru testing event was held at the church, and a large crowd was on site with approximately 150 residents were tested for COVID-19.
- **Piney Grove Chapel Baptist Church:** Public Health Officials with the HCHD were on site at Piney Grove Chapel Baptist Church located in Angier, to provide access to free rapid antigen testing for COVID-19 on December 16, 2020. Outcome: This drive thru testing event was held at the church with over 100 persons being tested for COVID-19.

Surge COVID-19 testing: Harnett County was one of several counties selected to participate in the NC Department of Health and Human Services' surge COVID-19 testing initiative. HCHD coordinated community-testing sites from November 2 until December 4, 2020, the drive through testing sites were located across the county at several Harnett County Schools parking lots. **Mass COVID-19 testing:** HCHD provided access to free rapid antigen testing at the Governmental Complex in the Commons Area. Outcome: Approximately 66,737 tests were performed and processed by the HCHD in 2020.

Women, Infants & Children (WIC) COVID-19 Emergency Response: WIC is the special supplemental nutrition program that provides healthy food and health care support. The Health Department's WIC program remained open to serve eligible family members. There were modifications in how services were provided in response to COVID-19. Everyone whom is an active participant of WIC could receive their benefits thru automatic transfer because of COVID-19. Waivers allow nutritionally at-risk mothers, babies and children to use their benefits in a safe manner and enables the WIC program to operate based on local conditions throughout the pandemic. For more information, please call the WIC office at 910-893-7570 or www.harnett.org/health.

Emerging Issues

Health disparities & COVID-19

Obesity & COVID-19

Virtual health education programs

Cigarette Sales up during the pandemic

Media/Communications: The Health Education Division of the HCHD worked to provide consistent updates about reported cases of COVID-19 to help our community better understand how this pandemic is developing in the county. Information is provided in accessible and culturally appropriate ways. The HCHD produced a series of newspaper and social media posts on COVID-19. Outcome: In 2020 approximately, 57 articles were featured in the Dunn Daily Record related to COVID-19. The HCHD posted 179 COVID related Facebook posts reaching 100,885 people. The HCHD staff responded to numerous requests for information from media sources.

Health disparities in the COVID-19: When policies, programs, and systems that support health are equitable, poor health outcomes can be reduced and health disparities can be prevented. The pandemic has highlighted that health equity is still not a reality as COVID-19 has unequally affected many racial and ethnic minority groups, putting them more at risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19. There is a need for increased coordination of efforts with community leaders to provide short-term and long-term solutions to improve health equity and decrease health disparities.

Obesity & COVID-19: Adults with excess weight are at even greater risk during the COVID-19 pandemic. Having obesity puts people at risk for many other serious chronic diseases and increases the risk of severe illness from COVID-19. During our community health survey (30.5%) of respondents reported doing no physical activity or exercise at all in a typical week. Across all subgroups, respondents to the survey indicated that "Eating Well/Nutrition" was a one of the top two health behaviors about which the community needs more information.

Virtual health education programs: COVID-19 allowed for the exploration of alternative methods to provide health education programming for the community.

Through platforms such as Zoom and Facebook, programs were conducted related to healthy eating, physical activity, and various other health topics. Virtual programs are convenient and allow participants to learn and participate from their home.

Quitline calls down, Cigarette Sales up during the pandemic: The number of people seeking help to quit smoking decreased in 2020. The decrease mirrored the timeline of the pandemic, showing a 6% decrease in the first quarter of 2020, followed by decreases of 39%, 30%, and 21% in quarters two, three and four respectively, compared to 2019. This data indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a large and negative impact on smoking cessation in 2020. Changes in smoking cessation and cigarette sales during the pandemic have implications for smokers, public health and the health care system. Being a cigarette smoker can make you more likely to get severely ill from COVID-19. It is more important than ever to make smokers aware of their increased risk for severe illness with COVID-19 and the availability of tobacco cessation programs that can help them quit.

The State of the County Health Report-2020 will be disseminated to key stakeholders and community partners including the Board of Health, Healthy Harnett Partnership and others. Copies of the report will be available at the HCHD for the public. For more information about this report, contact the Health Department at 910-893-7550. Copies of this report will be available on the Health Department's website www.harnett.org/health.