



# Buncombe County 2010 Community Health Assessment



**2010 Community Health Assessment Report**  
Presented by  
**Community Health Assessment Steering Committee  
and Volunteer Teams**  
Under the joint leadership of  
**Buncombe County Department of Health and Health Partners, a Healthy Carolinians Coalition**  
December 2010



# Executive Summary

How do we prevent disease, save lives, and save dollars? How do we make serious changes in our community so that all residents have the opportunity to make healthy choices? What will it mean to create a bold health vision that community partners can work towards instead of simply listing the problems we want to get rid of? The Buncombe County Community Health Assessment process of 2009-2010 has focused on answering these questions.

In the challenging times in which we find ourselves at the end of 2010, one stark fact about community health is clear: the health sector will simply not be able to accomplish overarching health improvement on its own. Now more than ever, public health and health care providers must develop innovative partnerships to achieve success. High school graduation, urban planning and design, and air and water quality likely have as much or greater impact on health than seeing a doctor when you are sick.

A diverse team of community leaders has worked together to chart a course for Buncombe’s healthier future. The priorities outlined in this report focus on helping all of our people stay healthy. Gathering a wealth of information, reviewing data, and setting priorities are only the first steps. Now we begin the search for strategies that can push our community forward and reduce death and disease. Our health and well-being depend on it.

America leads the world in medical research and medical care, and for all we spend on health care, we should be the healthiest people on Earth. Yet on some of the most important indicators, like how long we live, we’re not even in the top 25, behind countries like Bosnia and Jordan. It’s time for America to lead again on health, and that means taking three steps.

**The first** is to ensure that everyone can afford to see a doctor when they’re sick.

**The second** is to build preventive care, like screening for cancer and heart disease, into every health care plan and make it available to people who otherwise won’t or can’t go in for it. (Example: have available in malls and other public places, where it’s easy to stop for a test.)

**The third** is to stop thinking of health as something we get at the doctor’s office but instead as something that starts in our families, in our schools and workplaces, in our playgrounds and parks, and in the air we breathe and the water we drink.

The more you see the problem of health this way, the more opportunities you have to improve it. Scientists have found that the conditions in which we live and work have an enormous impact on our health, long before we ever see a doctor.

***It’s time we expand the way we think about health to include how to keep it, not just how to get it back.***

Excerpt from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:  
A New Way to Talk about the Social Determinants of Health, 2010



# Buncombe County's 2011-2014 Health Priorities

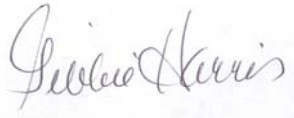
After examining the data that was generated during the Community Health Assessment (CHA) process and listening to input from community members, six priority areas have been chosen by community leaders. By focusing on these six areas during 2011-2015, Buncombe County residents and organizations will move forward toward our long-term goal of improving health.

- 1 **Promote Healthy Weights Through Healthy Living**
  - 2 **Improve Women's Health During Childbearing Years**
  - 3 **Improve Children's Health Outcomes through a focus on Family Support and Education**
  - 4 **Increase Readiness of All Students to Learn & Succeed in School**
  - 5 **Access to and Continuity of a Mental Health Home**
  - 6 **Access to and Continuity of a Primary Care Home**
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Each of these health priorities is also complemented by five guiding principles or “overarching themes” that will shape the development of specific strategies to address each of the priorities.

- **Equity / parity:** Focus on addressing racial, ethnic, income, and other disparities.
- **Access to resources:** Focus on strategies that enable access to various kinds of resources.
- **Prevention:** Focus on creating opportunities to help people stay well.
- **Assets-based approaches:** Build on existing strengths and assets.
- **Results, impact, and outcomes:** Seek to be strategic about which interventions or combination of interventions are more likely to achieve the most impact and create positive health outcomes.

In the remainder of this report, you will find detailed data and analysis, input from community members and much more. The priorities for the next four years have been identified. Now the strategic work begins. Your ideas, energy, and creativity are welcome.



Buncombe County Health Director  
2010 Chair, Health Partners



Dr. Richard Oliver, DMV  
Chair, Buncombe County Board of Health



# Acknowledgements

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The Department of Health and Health Partners wish to thank all of the people and organizations that have made the 2010 Community Health Assessment report and process possible. Over 700 community residents and representatives from local organizations participated in the health assessment process in 2009-2010. Without them, the assessment would not be as meaningful.

We also wish to thank the Community Benefits Program of Mission Hospital and the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina for their support of the Community Health Assessment process.

## In Our Dreams

In our dreams

We can imagine the world we want to live in

We can imagine an imperfect place

With perfect sunny days filled with joy and laughter

Of rainy days by the fire with hot chocolate and a good book

Of celebrations with friends and families that allow us to feel truly loved

For this world to exist

We must be healthy

We must have access to education

We must make a livable wage where our basic needs are met

We must be connected to our communities like in days of old

Where neighbors knew their neighbors

And the services we needed were local

So that we knew the farmer, the grocer, and the delivery people

For this world to exist

We must see our work as one of relationships

Relationships with people, resources, and networks

Relationships between our work and the land

Relationships where we honor this planet and honor ourselves

By living with discipline, compassion, and humility

In this dream

We are loved because we are loving

We are respected because we have come to respect ourselves as well as others

We are joyful because we seek joy, not immediate gratification, every day

In our dreams

We can imagine the world we want to live in

We can imagine an imperfect place

With perfect sunny days filled with joy and laughter

Of rainy days by the fire with hot chocolate and a good book

Of celebrations with friends and families that allow us to feel truly loved

Kevin "Doc" Klein