



## Buncombe County Department of Health

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### **Community Leaders Identify Health Priorities for Buncombe County** *Community Health Assessment for 2010-2014 Released*

Buncombe County Department of Health publishes the county's 4<sup>th</sup> Community Health Assessment Report on Tuesday, Dec 8, 2010. Over 700 Buncombe County residents were involved in developing the report and setting priorities for improving health in Buncombe County, said Health Director Gibbie Harris. "This is by far the most community engagement we have ever had," Harris says.

"The point of conducting a community health assessment," says Harris, "is to engage community members in figuring out to how to make our lives better. This is not a challenge the Department of Health can or should try to do alone."

A Community Health Assessment Report is required of health departments every four years. This is the fourth such report completed in Buncombe County since the state requirement began.

Included in the report are six health priorities that a team of community leaders identified. Some issues such as mental health and medical care remain on the list from past reports, but new issues have emerged as well.

Helping residents be active and eat well is a key element identified in improving health. Improving women's and children's health are other key issues that have risen to the top.

Various teams of community leaders and volunteers have participated in the 18 month assessment process. And hundreds more were interviewed or shared their opinions about health concerns through in-person

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interviews and on-line surveys.

Nearly 70 diverse leaders joined the Department of Health and Health Partners, a Healthy Carolinians coalition, to participate at every stage of the health planning process. Community members helped decide what types of data were gathered, some even helped do household healthy surveys. Many were involved in reviewing data and defining what improvements in health we want to see in Buncombe County.

The top health priorities selected for Buncombe County for 2010-2014 are:

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 and succeed in school
5. Access to and continuity of a mental health home
6. Access to and continuity of a primary care home

Gibbie Harris, Health Director states, “At a time when funding and resources are tight, the priorities help our community focus resources and connect in new ways that create improvements in health, as well as improvements in the way we work together.”

The Community Health Assessment Report is located online at [buncombecounty.org](http://buncombecounty.org).

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