



Buncombe County Health and Human Services

Aging and Veteran's Services ~ Social Work Services
Public Assistance & Work Support Strategies ~ Public Health
Amanda Stone, MSW
Health and Human Services Director

March 28, 2016

HHS Media Coordinator

HHSPIO@buncombecounty.org or 828.775.1321

For Immediate Release

Community Health Assessment Identifies 'Priority' Health Issues and Strategies for Improvement

Buncombe County, N.C. –Buncombe County got a health 'check-up' in 2015. Buncombe County Health and Human Services is releasing the **2015 Community Health Assessment Report** (CHA Report), which highlights our community's priority health issues and ways that we can improve when our community works together.

BCHHS partners with Mission Hospitals and MAHEC to complete the community health assessment and improvement process. An Advisory Team of over 30 community leaders and data experts reviewed health data and listened to opinions from our community about what they believe are the most important health issues.

'Top Priority' Health Issues and Strategic Partnerships for Impact:

Infant Deaths: There has been an increase in the number of infants who die during their first year of life and the death rate continues to be unequal for African American babies compared to White babies.

- Because preconception health is so important to infant health, CHIP will continue to look towards initiatives that improve preconception health through evidence based programs like *Making Proud Choices*, facilitated by Mt. Zion Community Development.
- At risk infants and mothers are currently being served by evidence based programs such as *Nurse Family Partnership*, which provides first time mothers with parenting help and home visits from a registered nurse. The YWCA's *Mother Love* program and Project NAF are also examples of community-based programs that provide peer support, education, and resources for young mothers that qualify.
- The Community Child Protection Team (CCPT) is using data to understand the causes infant death locally and looking for ways to impact infant mortality. CCPT has set "safe sleep" as their outreach priority this year and will educate influencers about safe sleep.

Obesity and Causes of Obesity: 50% of adults and 33% of children are either overweight or obese. Almost 30% of families say it's difficult to access healthy foods at affordable

buncombecounty.org

HHS Administration p. 828.250.5700 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7408 Asheville, NC 28802	Aging & Veteran's Services p. 828.250.5726 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7408 Asheville, NC 28802	Social Work Services p. 828.250.5500 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7408 Asheville, NC 28802	Public Assistance p. 828.250.5500 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7408 Asheville, NC 28802	Public Health p. 828.250.5000 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7407 Asheville, NC 28802
--	--	--	--	--

prices. Deaths from diabetes has worsened for the past 8 years along with a very significant difference in the rate of whites who die of diabetes compared to the higher rate of minorities who die of diabetes. Focusing on access to healthy foods, and safe, accessible opportunities for recreation and transportation can help our community adopt healthy behaviors that prevent obesity and close the gap in this health disparity.

- Efforts to reduce the disparity and improve overall healthy behaviors can be seen in initiatives like the *Fresh Food Pop Ups*, a partnership between BCHHS, MANNA Food Bank and several other community agencies. The *Pop Ups* bring healthy food and produce into neighborhoods throughout Buncombe County along with preventative health screenings and education. There are also more organized efforts to support and track community gardens and urban agriculture that give back to our community.
- To improve access to safe active transportation, the *Healthy Living Opportunities Map*, was created by the CHIP team to highlight opportunities for active transportation in Buncombe County. The *Safe Routes to School* movement used a grant from the NCDOT to install a cross walk and pedestrian signage at Hominy Valley Elementary that allows families and children to safely walk and bike to school.
- MAHEC and their health improvement specialist have strengthened efforts to connect the clinical setting to the community through increased provider education about community based programs like those offered through ABIPA, to promote preventative health interventions and education to at risk populations. Further, MAHEC's school nurses continue to educate children and parents about self-care, prevention of diabetes, and help to manage chronic health conditions of children in school.

Intimate Partner Violence: 5 of 8 domestic violence homicides in 2013 were the result of intimate partner violence and with awareness raised by HHS and community partners Buncombe County is seeing an increase in awareness of this important issue and it is resulting in a significant increase in the number of calls reporting domestic violence.

- To stop the cycle of violence, the Family Justice Center (FJC), an evidence based comprehensive response to domestic violence, is scheduled to open in August 2016. The FJC is a coordinated effort by community partners dedicated to helping victims heal, find justice, and support their ability to be self-sufficient. Communities around the nation have seen improved safety as a result of establishing a FJC.
- MAHEC continues to bring DV screening tools and information to medical providers to connect the clinical setting to issues that affect the health of patients.
- The eNOugh campaign continues to drive awareness throughout our community that domestic and sexual violence will not be tolerated.

Substance Abuse: Hospitals continue to see spikes in heroin-related visits and overdoses, and neonatal abstinence syndrome (babies born addicted to opiates or other addicting

buncombecounty.org

HHS Administration p. 828.250.5700 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7408 Asheville, NC 28802	Aging & Veteran's Services p. 828.250.5726 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7408 Asheville, NC 28802	Social Work Services p. 828.250.5500 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7408 Asheville, NC 28802	Public Assistance p. 828.250.5500 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7408 Asheville, NC 28802	Public Health p. 828.250.5000 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7407 Asheville, NC 28802
--	--	--	--	--

drugs) continues to grow. Also over half of those experiencing homelessness have a substance use disorder or mental health illness.

- Projects like C3@356, a partnership between Mission, Buncombe County, and Smoky Mountain Center, offer a variety of behavioral health services including a crisis stabilization unit to serve those with immediate and critical mental health needs. This integrated care model will provide case management for those with substance abuse issues and mental health issues with wrap around supports.

Currently, community health improvement specialists are working with community partners to measure these ‘priority health’ issues and strategies for improvement. “The CHA provides clarity about the issues our community is facing and the CHIP gives us a framework for improvement,” explains Nelle Gregory, Population Health Coordinator. Underscoring the importance of collective impact, she says, “Issues such as intimate partner violence, substance abuse, and poverty are complex and cannot be solved by any one member organization.”

Community partners will focus on the common thread that connects these ‘priority’ health issues. “We know that all of these ‘priority’ health issues are connected to trauma, either as a cause or effect of that traumatic experience and those experiences add up. Through opportunities like the MARC grant, we are able to come together to find practical, innovative solutions to solve seemingly intractable problems. By aligning resources and efforts we are able to take measurable steps towards a violence-free, healthy, and safe community.”

For more information go to www.buncombecounty.org/chip or contact Nelle Gregory, Population Health Coordinator at nelle.gregory@buncombecounty.org.

###

buncombecounty.org

HHS Administration p. 828.250.5700 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7408 Asheville, NC 28802	Aging & Veteran's Services p. 828.250.5726 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7408 Asheville, NC 28802	Social Work Services p. 828.250.5500 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7408 Asheville, NC 28802	Public Assistance p. 828.250.5500 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7408 Asheville, NC 28802	Public Health p. 828.250.5000 f. 828.250.6235 PO Box 7407 Asheville, NC 28802
--	--	--	--	--