



## Buncombe County Health and Human Services

Public Health ~ Adult & Children's Protective Services ~ Economic Services & Work Strategies  
Parks, Greenways & Recreation ~ Human Resources, Services Support & Finance

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### NEWS RELEASE

#### Buncombe Ranks in Top 20 Healthiest NC counties

Buncombe County ranks #18 in the state when it comes to overall health, according to the Annual County Health Rankings Report released today. This report offers a way for us to take a look at how healthy we are today and how healthy we may be in the future compared to other counties in NC.

A snapshot of Buncombe's current overall health rankings have stayed in the top 20 for the last four years and this year also ranks in the top 20 in five of the six major categories: Length of Life, Quality of Life, Health Behaviors, Clinical Care and Social & Economic Factors. We ranked #47 for Physical Environment.

In addition, these rankings give an indicator of how healthy we will be in the future and on this ranking Buncombe ranks #7 out of 100 NC Counties for overall Health Factors. Health factors include health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic, and physical environment factors. Buncombe ranked #18 for Health Outcomes, which includes length of life and quality of life.

In interpreting these numbers, it is important to realize that on another recognized scale with similar indicators, American Health Rankings 2013, North Carolina ranked 35<sup>th</sup> in the nation for overall health, only better than 15 other states. This leaves room for a lot of improvement, even if we were to rank #1 in our state.

The County Health Rankings help us understand that our health is affected by income, education, where we live and our access to healthy foods and recreation, as well as the health behaviors we adopt. Two of

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the lower ranking health indicators in Buncombe County are physical environment and children in poverty.

- The ranking for physical environment factors continues to be lower (47<sup>th</sup>) than other health factors, due primarily to the air quality indicator. All of the worst NC counties for air quality appear in WNC due to the quality of air from other parts of the US which move into our region. Air quality across NC improves as we move to the northeastern counties.
- Children in poverty is another area of needed improvement. The top performing counties nationally have a child poverty rate closer to 13%, while Buncombe has 2 times more children living in poverty (26%). This is roughly 1 in every 4 children in our community, and according to the County Health Rankings data, is trending worse over time despite a small improvement in this past year’s data.

Changes in our county’s health rankings from one year to the next are usually small. But the rankings serve to motivate and remind leaders from every sector – health providers, schools, businesses, worksites and community organizations – about what it will take to create the health improvements we want to see in our community. The integration of Buncombe County Health and Human Services allows for a more integrated and seamless approach to issues of health, well-being and self-sufficiency. Health and Human Services and the Public Health Advisory Council have initiated a Community Health Improvement Process, where over 70 local organizations have committed to work on specific strategies that magnify improvements in the following five health priorities that our community identified:

- Healthy Living
- Preconception Health
- Early Childhood Development
- Tobacco Cessation and Prevention
- Clinical-Community Connections

Our rankings will also improve as we work towards achieving the goals set out in the Buncombe County Sustainability Plan, which align with the Public Health Advisory Councils health priorities.

To learn more about the Community Health Improvement Process and see how organizations across our community are working together on strategies that will improve our Rankings, visit

[www.BuncombeCounty.org/CHIP](http://www.BuncombeCounty.org/CHIP)

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