

Morbidity and Mortality Health Data

2011 Ten Leading Causes of Death for Wilkes County and North Carolina (all ages) (Source: NC Vital Statistics Vol: 2 Leading Causes of Death, 1/13)

Wilkes County Rank	Cause of Death	North Carolina Rank
1	Cancer	1
2	Diseases of the Heart	2
3	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	3
4	Cerebrovascular Disease	4
5	Pneumonia and Influenza	9
6	Other unintentional	5
7	Diabetes Mellitus	7
8	Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and nephrosis	8
9	Alzheimer's Disease	6
10 (tie)	Septicemia	10
10	Motor Injury	-

2012 Ten Leading Causes of Hospitalization for Wilkes County and NC (Source: NC SCHS, 2014 County Health Data Book)

Wilkes County Rank	Cause of Morbidity	North Carolina Rank
1	Cardiovascular & Circulatory Disease	1
2	Respiratory Disease	4
3	-- Heart Disease	3
4	Digestive System Disease	5
5	Infectious & Parasitic Diseases	9
6	Pregnancy & Childbirth	2
7	Injuries & Poisoning	7
8	-- Septicemia	13
9	Other Diagnoses (incl. mental disorders)	6
10	Symptoms, Signs & Ill-Defined Conditions	12
11	Musculoskeletal System Diseases	8
12	Genitourinary Diseases	10

Resources in Wilkes (Health Promoting Policies, Walking Trails, and Built Environment in Regards to Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Tobacco Free Environments)

Wilkes County Schools and Wilkes Community College are both 100% Tobacco Free. Wilkes County Government buildings, cars, etc. are Smoke Free. Wilkes Regional Medical Center is a Tobacco Free Campus. The Yadkin River Greenway, the Park at River's Edge, and Wilkesboro City Parks are Tobacco Free. The Yadkin River Greenway, the Park at River's Edge, Cub Creek Park, Wilkes Community College, W. Kerr Scott Trails, Stone Mountain Trails, and the Wilkes YMCA provide facilities which can be used by community members to engage in physical activity, most are available free of charge. Joint Use Agreement with Wilkes County Schools allows community access to school facilities outside of school hours at all 13 Elementary Schools. The Wilkes County Health Department's ADA certified Diabetes Self Management Education program, and Medical Nutrition Therapy program provide assistance managing Diabetes and other chronic diseases including weight management. Wilkes County Schools started to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), a part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, during the 2014-15 school year. CEP allows all schools in qualifying districts to serve all students one free breakfast and one free lunch each day the student is in attendance.

Needed Resources:

Additional Tobacco Free public places, a Wilkes County Schools District Wide Healthy Foods Policy (to address foods served outside of the cafeteria), completion of the proposed additions to Yadkin River Greenway which would connect the currently finished sections, creation of built environment or the integration of health promoting policies and environments in all aspects of community planning, broader community focus on prevention and early intervention. Increased access to local healthy foods and increased breast feeding friendly facilities.

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2014 Wilkes County State of the County's Health Report

December 8, 2014

In May 2013, following the 2013 Community Health Needs Assessment data collection period, the Wilkes County Health Department, Wilkes Regional Medical Center, and The Health Foundation called a special meeting- a Health Summit, to review the findings. Based on primary and secondary data collection and the opinion of community members and stakeholders, the following six priority areas were selected to be addressed in the following three action plans during the 2013-2016 time period:

- **Access to Health Care:** Objective: Increase the number of people receiving primary care by 15 percent. To serve on this task force or for more information contact Armando Limon at 651-7386 or alimon@wilkescounty.net.
- **Chronic Disease (Fitness and Nutrition for Disease Prevention):** Objective: By 2016 there will be no increase in the percentage of Wilkes County adults who are classified as overweight or obese. To serve on this task force or for more information contact Jared Belk at 651-7478 or jbelk@wilkescounty.net.
- **Mental Health (Access to Services):** Objective: By March 2016, reduce the number of mental-health related emergency department visits by 5 percent. To serve on this task force or for more information contact Ann Absher at 651-7450 or aabsher@wilkescounty.net.

This report details progress made to date on each of the above listed priorities as well as outlines emerging issues, morbidity and mortality data, new initiatives, and resources within Wilkes County.

Priority One: Access to Care

Progress Made: The Task Force Chair continues to work with private physicians, Wilkes Regional Medical Center, community centers, Wilkes County Health Department, and Care Connection Pharmacy to ensure proper availability of primary care for the uninsured. Through this collaboration, uninsured Wilkes County residents can continue to have proper ways to seek primary care, specialty care, outpatient services, and prescriptions drugs. A new initiative was implemented in 2011, for the purpose of providing free dental care through dental clinics. The Wilkes Public Health Dental Clinic and the Health Foundation have been instrumental in this initiative since the beginning. The School of Dentistry at UNC-Chapel Hill has joined as a new partner. A patient navigation program was develop to assist patients in managing and improving health care outcomes through partnerships between the faith community and the health care system.



Change in Data: In 2009 4,800 of 12,000 (40%) uninsured patients were being served through Access to Care/Care Connection services. To date, an additional 1,800 clients are receiving services, for a total of 6,600 of 12,000 (55%). Several free dental clinics have been offered and over \$36,000 in free dental care has been donated.

Priority Two: Chronic Disease (Fitness and Nutrition for Disease Prevention):

Progress Made: Wilkes County Schools has successfully implemented FitnessGram. Grades K-8 will continue to collect BMI data and test physical fitness using the FitnessGram model. The schools will continue to assess the data and send the information home to parents.

Wilkes County Schools with the assistance from the Wilkes County Health Department updated the tobacco free policy to include electronic cigarettes. In the policy an electronic cigarette is defined as a cigarette-shaped device containing a nicotine-based liquid that is vaporized and inhaled, used to simulate the experience of smoking tobacco.

The community parks or upgrades to facilities located at all 13 elementary schools has been completed. The project was made possible with a grant from Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust for \$151,000. The community parks allowed “Joint Use-Community Use of School Grounds” that may be used by the students during the school day and the community after school hours.

The Task Force successfully wrote a grant to the Health Foundation for farmers’ market vouchers to be distributed to students at North Wilkesboro Elementary School participating in the Samaritan’s Purse Backpack Program as of spring 2014. With a partnership with the Wilkes County Farmers’ Market and the Wilkesboro Open Air Market students could use the vouchers to purchase fresh fruits and produce. Currently the taskforce is looking to expand the voucher program to other elementary schools.

The Wilkes County Health Department and Cooperative Extension successfully implemented cooking demonstrations at the Wilkesboro Open Air Market with support from the CTG Project, Wilkes Community College Culinary Arts Department, and Greene Valley Farms. The Cooking demonstrations were held on the 3rd Friday Markets this season and showcased preparation of local fresh produce for the market attendees.

This year three Eat Smart Move More Weigh Less Classes were conducted in partnership with the Cooperative Extension and the Express YMCA. In total, participants enrolled 85, with approximately 30 completing more than 75% of the 15 classes and 8 completing 100%.

The Wilkes County Health Department received a \$13,500 grant from National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) to implement Chronic Disease Self-Management Program workshops, an evidence based program from Stanford University. Three workshops have been completed in the community with 33 community members being reached. Three “Healthy Living” peer leaders have been trained to facilitate workshops in Wilkes County.

Change in Data: At the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year children grades K-8 in Wilkes County School were assessed using FitnessGram. Results were boys K-8, 56% had healthy BMI and girls K-8, 57% had healthy BMI. This shows an improvement as compared to fall of 2011 where children grades 6-8 were assessed and of those reported, 44.6% were at a healthy weight.

Priority Three: Mental Health (Access to Services):

Progress Made: The Mental Health Services Task Force has been meeting since early 2010. The task force is focused on prevention and access to services. Goals include: 1) Community Education – The Task Force continues to hold its speakers bureau for provider awareness of mental health services in the area. 2) Integration of Physical and Mental Health for Proper Diagnosis – The Crisis Intervention Team, coordinated by Daymark Recovery Services, has been providing mobile crisis mental health evaluations to emergency department patients at Wilkes Regional Medical Center. After 12/31/14, Medicaid reimbursement for these mobile crisis services will end. Statewide advocacy to reverse this decision has thus far been unsuccessful. 3) Training in preventive mental health interventions to support individuals – Members of the Task Force determined their staff would be trained in the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP), Mental Health First Aid (MFHA) and Youth-MFHA. In 2014, three school nurses from Wilkes County Schools, and one nurse and one provider from the Health Department’s Mobile Expanded School Health unit were trained in Y-MHFA. The school district is hoping to train an additional 60 staff in this intervention during 2015. The Task Force also supported continued use of multi-systemic therapy by groups such as the Juvenile Justice Treatment Continuum program. 4) Access to Care – Expand access to health care to increase coverage of mental health needs. The Health Department hired certified application counselors to assist residents with enrollment on the federal insurance marketplace for the 2014 and 2015 open enrollment periods. A Care Net Grant from the Health Foundation will offer Mental Health First Aide to professionals and to the public. 5) Drug Overdose Prevention – Increase the number of local agencies who are dispensing Naloxone or Naloxone nasal converter kits. In 2014, the NC Department of Health and Human Services authorized standing orders to allow public health nurses to dispense Naloxone. All public health nurses at the Health Department have completed this training, and by 2015 will begin to patients and or significant other being treated with controlled substances or who are deemed to be at increased risk of opiate overdose.

The Involuntary Commitment (IVC) subcommittee continues to meet monthly to work on solutions to issues surrounding the long hospital emergency room visits, diverting unnecessary IVCs, and collaborating to best meet consumers’ needs. IVC data is provided by WRMC as the number of patients waiting in the emergency department for involuntary commitment to a mental health facility.

Change in Data: WRMC reported 173 IVC patients in 2010 and 158 IVC patients in 2013. The goal of the taskforce is to reduce the number of patients by an additional 5% by 2016.

Emerging Issues

- The unemployment rate in Wilkes County has continued to remain significantly higher than the state rate for the past several years. Statewide, there has been reduction in funding for public health and other human services agencies, decreasing assistance for persons in need. Given that low socioeconomic status is directly related to poorer health outcomes, unemployment and poverty are now critically recognized emerging issues of concern to the public health community in Wilkes County.
- Medicaid reform in North Carolina has the potential to negatively impact the poor, especially women, children, and the elderly.
- Decreasing public health funding in the midst of global outbreaks like Ebola, strains our shrinking public health infrastructure.
- Community partners, emergency department, and Project Lazarus statistics are indicating an increase in heroin use as opposed to prescription medication abuse.

New Initiatives/Changes in the County

- ACA Exchange/Navigators- Certified application counselors who can help people determine whether they qualify for free or reduced cost health insurance through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) are now available in Wilkes County. The navigators have been trained and certified to guide community members through the process of applying for insurance through the market place.
- Bright Ideas Grant– Emergency Preparedness Kits will be created for 88 senior households with one or more residents who are identified as being at risk in the event of an emergency by April 2015.
- Wilkes County Health Department in collaboration with Wilkes Regional Medical Center was awarded a bridge grant through the Duke Endowment to assist with continuation of the Health Care Connection Program. The funds provided through this grant will assist uninsured adults in Wilkes County to access health care through the establishment of a medical home and access to medications through Care Connection Pharmacy. This will promote better health outcomes for chronically ill patients with multiple health problems and will decrease the costs to the hospital by inappropriate access of Emergency Department services and inappropriate admissions to the hospital for control of chronic disease.
- During the past 3 years Wilkes County worked with interested local Farmer’s Markets and produce vendors to assist with set up for accepting EBT/SNAP at these locations. The process to establish EBT/SNAP at these locations is still ongoing.
- The state of NC received a Community Transformation Grant from the CDC for \$7.4 million, reoccurring for 5 years, with \$400,000/year for five years to come to our Public Health Incubator region to create policies to impact healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco free living, and chronic disease management. The Community Transformation Grant funding ended in 2013, two years short.
- Approximate investments made in Wilkes County through the CTG Project totaled over \$40, 000: Social Marketing paid for healthy eating and smoke-free multiunit housing; supported local farmers markets by providing resources to the Wilkes County Farmer’s Market at Smoot Park and the Wilkesboro Open Air Market; provided resources to a corner store, Porter’s, in Roaring River, to provide local fresh produce to customers, and assessed over 100 small corner/retail stores in Wilkes; engaged property managers from multiunit housing facilities in two different smoke-free multiunit housing educational sessions on smoke-free policies; conducted tenant surveys regarding smoke-free policies; three Northwestern Regional Housing Authority properties implemented smoke-free policies.
- Golden LEAF Foundation Grant: The Dental Clinic received \$305,255 for the purchase of a new mobile unit, with updated technology and equipment. Wilkes ADAP received \$50,000 for new vans to transport their clients to job sites. Wilkes Community College received \$1.25 million for a new health sciences building, and the town of North Wilkesboro received \$1.38 million for a sewer line extension. Two new requests for funds were submitted in October 2014. Wilkes County Schools applied for \$1.5 million for building facilities at three high schools to increase enrollment in career and technical education courses, including in the Career and College Promise (CCP) program. The initiative is called Project ADMIT, which stands for Advancing Development in Manufacturing and Integrated Technology. Wilkes Regional Medical Center applied for \$500,000 for construction, renovations and equipment to add five dialysis stations at the hospital’s Don Jarvis Dialysis Center at West Park, North Wilkesboro.
- Expansion of Food Rules in Schools– New USDA food rules took effect July 1, 2014 which set nutrition standards for all food sold in schools outside of federal school lunch and breakfast programs, including “a la carte” items, vending machine food, and other snacks and beverages. These standards included capping calories at 200 and sodium at 230 milligrams per serving. Required no more than 35% of calories come from fat or sugar and no more than 10% of calories come from saturated fat. The new rules also mandated that grain items include 50% or more whole grains by weight, or have whole grains as the first ingredient.
- The Health Foundation is funding a Program Director to oversee the Wilkes Community Health Action Team that will coordinate the task forces around our priority areas.