



# State of the County Health Report

**Graham County**

December 2, 2013

# Review of Current Data

Key Mortality and Morbidity Data for Graham  
County

# Demographics

Demographics: Graham County, Western North Carolina, and the State of North Carolina			
	Graham County	Western North Carolina	North Carolina
Population (2010 )	8,861	759,727	9,535,483
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	50.7%	51.5%	51.3%
Male	49.3%	48.5%	48.7%
<b>Age</b>			
Persons under 5 years (2010)	5.7%	5.4%	6.6%
Persons 5-19 years (2010)	18.2%	17.4%	20.2%
Persons 65 years and older (2010)	19.7%	19.0%	12.9%
<b>Race</b>			
White	90.3%	89.3%	68.5%
African American	0.2%	4.2%	21.5%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	6.4%	1.5%	1.3%
Asian	0.3%	0.7%	2.2%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Other	1.0%	2.5%	4.3%
Two or More Races	1.7%	1.8%	2.2%
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Hispanic or Latino	2.2%	5.4%	8.4%
<b>Other Indicators</b>			
High School graduates, age 25+ (2006-2010)	34.6%	n/a	28.2%
Median Household Income (2006-2010)	\$28,447	\$37,815	\$45,570
Population below poverty line (2006-2010)	21.3%	14.9%	15.1%
Unemployment (2011)	17.0%	11.5%	10.5%

Source: Graham County CHA 2012

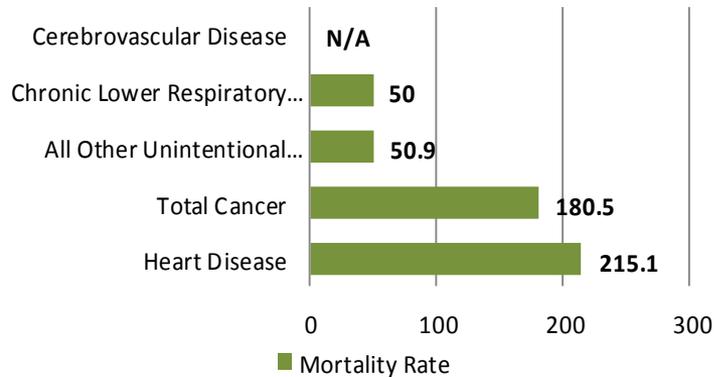
# Morbidity and Mortality Review

- The leading causes of death in Graham County from 2006-2010 were heart disease, cancer (all types), unintentional injuries, chronic lower respiratory disease, and cerebrovascular.
- Graham County has mortality rates for heart disease and all other unintentional injuries that exceed comparable rates for both Western North Carolina and North Carolina.
- The 2012 Graham County Health Assessment found that heart disease and cancer data from the past decade reveal striking gender disparities. Males had higher heart disease mortality rates and cancer mortality rates than those of females during the same time period.

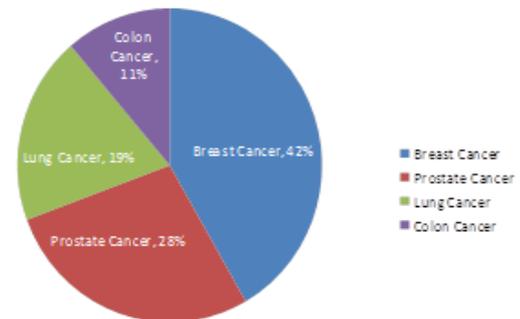
# Morbidity and Mortality Data

Leading Cause of Death (2006-2010)	Graham County		WNC		NC	
	Rank	Rate	Rank	Rate	Rank	Rate
Heart Disease	1	215.1	1	194.4	1	185.9
Total Cancer	2	180.5	2	180.3	2	183.1
All Other Unintentional Injuries	3	50.9	5	42.9	5	28.6
Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease	4	50	3	51.1	4	46.4
Cerebrovascular Disease	5	n/a	4	44	3	47.8

Leading Causes of Disease  
Graham County, (2006-2010)



Age-Adjusted Incidence Rates for Major Site-Specific Cancers  
Graham County, (2005-2009)



Source: Graham County CHA 2012

# Spotlight on Success

- To help combat the leading causes of death, Hilltop Healthcare Free Clinic opened in February, 2011 to care for the low-income, uninsured residents of Graham County.
- The clinic operates 4 hours per week with a mid-level practitioner, a Registered Nurse, and volunteer clinical and clerical staff.
- Since opening in 2011, the clinic has provided care to 510 patients, averaging 15 visits per week, and seeing up to 21 patients per week.
- Patients at Hilltop Clinic are provided primary and urgent care services such as blood pressure management, cholesterol management, and sick visits.
- Patients are not charged any fees for the provider visit or lab work.
- Some medications are also provided at no charge to the patient, while others are provided through medication assistance programs with pharmaceutical companies. To date, 38 patients have participated in the medication assistance programs with pharmaceutical companies.

# Community Health Priorities & Improvement



## Our Health Priorities

Selected as a result of the most recent community health assessment

CHA – available [here](#)

CHIP – available [here](#)

- Obesity and Diabetes
- Access to Health Care
- Substance Abuse
- Tobacco Free Parks and Recreation

# Obesity and Diabetes

Graham County will be an *Active Living* community where healthy choices are easier to make. This will be accomplished by establishing policies, programs and built environments that support physical activity and healthy eating.

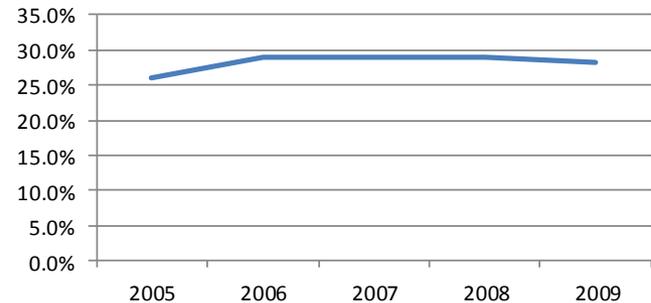
# Obesity and Diabetes

- Diabetes is a disease in which the body's blood glucose levels are too high due to problems with insulin production and/or utilization. Uncontrolled diabetes can damage the eyes, kidneys, and nerves as well as lead to heart disease, stroke and even limb amputation (US National Library of Medicine).
- Obesity and diabetes are known comorbidities (NC Medical Journal). Often programs that target one directly and indirectly affects the other.

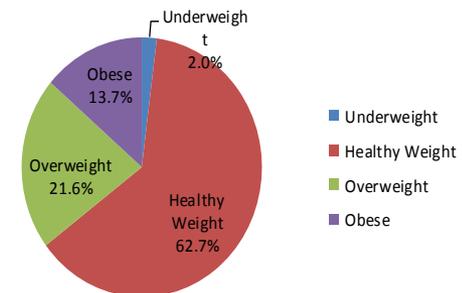
# Obesity and Diabetes Data Review

- The need to fight adult and childhood obesity poses a substantial public health challenge for Graham County. The estimated prevalence of obesity among adults in Graham County rose every year between 2005 and 2008, before declining in 2009. The percentage increase from 2005 to 2008 was 12.0%; the decrease between 2008 and 2009 was 2.8%.
- In 2010, the prevalence of overweight children ages 2-4 in Graham County was 22.8% and prevalence of obesity, 15.2%. Similar numbers were seen for children aged 5-11, 21.6% and 13.7% respectively.

**Estimated Prevalence of Obese Adults  
Graham County, 2005-2009**

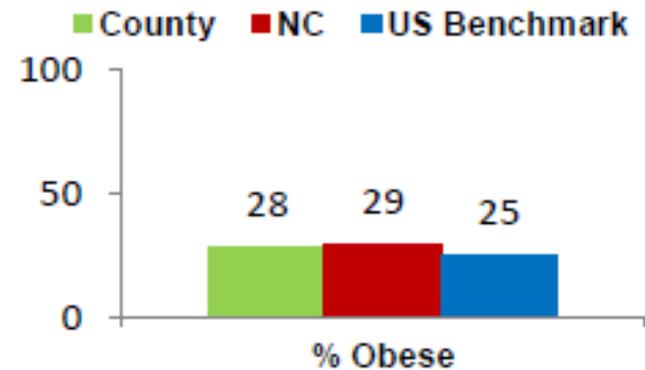


**Prevalence of Obesity, Overweight,  
Healthy Weight, and Underweight  
Children Age 5-11 (2010)**



## Obesity and Diabetes Data Review

- In Graham County, 28% of adults are obese, compared to the US Benchmark of 25%.



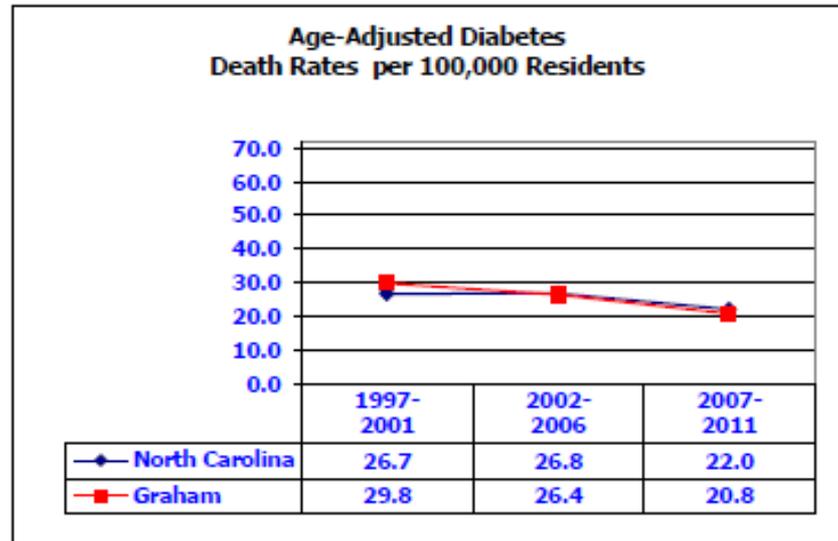
## Obesity and Diabetes Data Review

- Prevalence of diagnosed diabetes among adults in Graham County rose from 8.8% in 2005 to 10.1% in 2009, an increase of 14.8%. Between 2006 and 2010, diabetes was the sixth leading cause of death in Graham County (Graham County CHA 2012).

Geography	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Graham County	639	8.8	637	9.0	637	9.1	631	9.1	759	10.1
Regional Total	49,896	-	52,045	-	55,160	-	55,442	-	58,378	-
Regional Arithmetic Mean	3,119	8.5	3,253	8.7	3,448	8.9	3,465	8.8	3,649	9.0

## Obesity and Diabetes Data Review

- Diabetes death rates in Graham County overall have declined in the since 1997, trending towards being less prevalent in Graham County than in the state.



## Obesity and Diabetes Successes

- *Pedestrian Connectivity.* The GREAT Revitalization Committee worked in collaboration with the GREAT Health and Social Committee and the town of Robbinsville to install pedestrian crosswalks, pedestrian islands, and walking signals to increase physical activity by making it easier for pedestrians to walk around the town.
- *Joint-Use of Recreational Facilities.* A formalized joint use agreement between the Graham County Government and Graham County Schools was reached to allow the use of recreational facilities such as playgrounds and fitness trails for the public, thereby providing more option for physical activity.

## Obesity and Diabetes Successes (continued)

- *Permanent Location for Farmers' Market.* The parking lot of the health department was secured as the permanent location for the local farmers' market. This allows for the continuity and availability of fresh produce that can be used for a healthy diet.
- *Message Boards.* Message boards were installed in high volume public areas such as the public playground and fitness trails. These boards hold health promotion information such as group fitness and activities schedules.



# Obesity and Diabetes Successes (continued)

- *New Fitness Room.* A new fitness room was furnished at the Robbinsville Elementary School that allows teachers a safe exercise area. This room is open the public as long as a school employee is present and achieves greater reach.
- *Incorporation of Active Living Components.* The Town of Robbinsville's Revitalization Plan now includes active living components such as bike racks, crossing signals, and way-finding signage to encourage more physical activity in a safe environment



# Access to Health Care

Residents of Graham County will have access to health care services, especially a primary care medical home where they have a relationship with their primary care provider, do not have to wait long periods of time for an appointment, and receive quality, affordable care.

## Access to Health Care Data Review

- Access to health care means the timely use of personal health services to achieve the best health outcomes.
- Access to health care was chosen as a top health concern as a result of the 2012 Graham County CHA reporting 11.7% of survey respondents were unable to reach medical care for some reason in the past 12 months.
- The three most frequently given reasons were Cost/No Insurance, Long Wait for Appointment, and General Inaccessibility.

## Access to Health Care Data Review

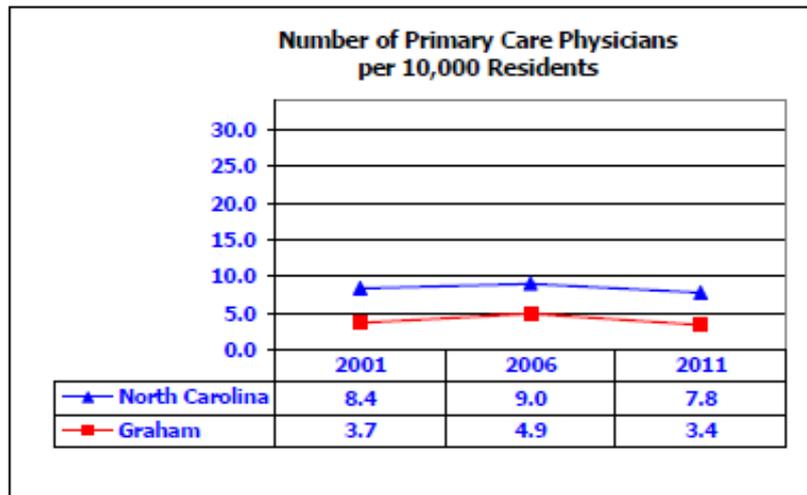
Furthermore, 51.8% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “Considering cost, quality, number of options, and availability, there is good health care in my county.” This dissatisfaction and sentiment of inability to access care is compounded by Graham County being designated a Provider Shortage Area by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

## Access to Health Care Data Review

In 2010, the ratios for several medical professions in Graham County (physicians, primary care physicians and pharmacists) were 40% or less of the comparable regional or state averages. The ratio of physicians to population was 1:2941, 941 individuals more than can be adequately served, according to the DHHS.

## Access to Health Care Data Review

Graham County consistently ranks below the state in the number of primary care physicians per 10,000 residents.



## Access to Health Care Successes

- *Free Clinic.* The Graham County Health Department is proud to announce the continued funding of the Hill Top Clinic. A free clinic that is open on Wednesdays from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm that has seen 202 clients for 1052 number of visits this calendar year.
- The clinic has applied for funding to expand medication assistance services and hours of operation.

## Access to Health Care Successes

- *Urgent Care/Family Medicine.* Smoky Mountain Urgent Care and Family Medicine has established a 3-day per week clinic in Graham County.
- *Specialty Care.* Smoky Mountain OB/GYN is providing services in Graham County 2 days per month.
- The Department of Veteran's Affairs is providing monthly intake clinics in Graham County.



# Substance Abuse

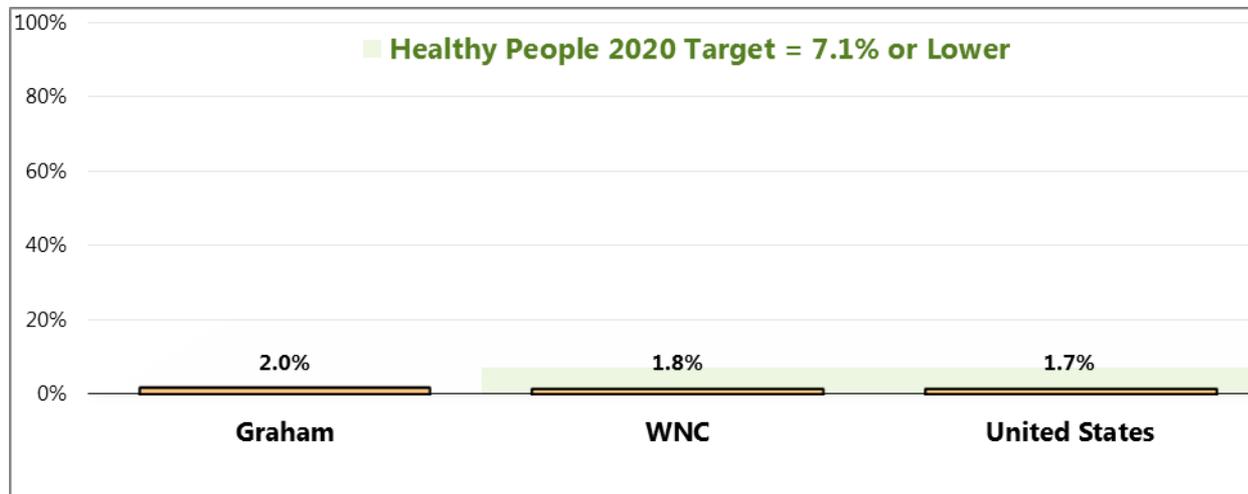
Reduce substance abuse in order to improve the health and safety of our youth and families by providing education, raising awareness, encouraging positive choices, and building cooperative links within our community.

# Substance Abuse

- Substance abuse refers to a set of related conditions associated with the consumption of mind and behavior-altering substances that have negative behavioral and health outcomes

# Substance Abuse Data

Illicit Drug Use in the Past Month (WNC Healthy Impact Survey)



Source: WNC Healthy Impact, 2012

# Substance Abuse Data

- 45% of adults surveyed reported knowing someone who abuses prescription drugs (Parent Link Phone Survey, 2013) and from 2008 to 2011, drug-related emergency room visits increased by 51% (NCDETECT).
- The root causes of prescription drug abuse in Graham County are easy access and low perception of harm (Pride Survey, 2013). Prescription drugs are being kept beyond the time period that they are medically needed, unsecured in homes, shared between family and friends, and illegally trafficked. In 2012,
  - 20 of 63 drug violation sin Graham County involved illegal possession of prescription pills (Graham County Sheriff's Department),
  - 43,196 doses of medication were collected form a total of 20 residents during Operation Medicine Drop,
  - 80% of high school students surveyed reported prescription medications are not locked up in their homes (Coalition Survey) a
  - 34% of adults surveyed reported they do not lock up prescription medications in their homes (Parent Link Phone Survey).

# Substance Abuse Successes

- *Formation of Drug Coalition.* The Coalition for a safe and drug-free Graham County was formed to focus on prescription drug abuse. Action plans have been established for the upcoming year to broaden the use of lockboxes for prescription drug control.

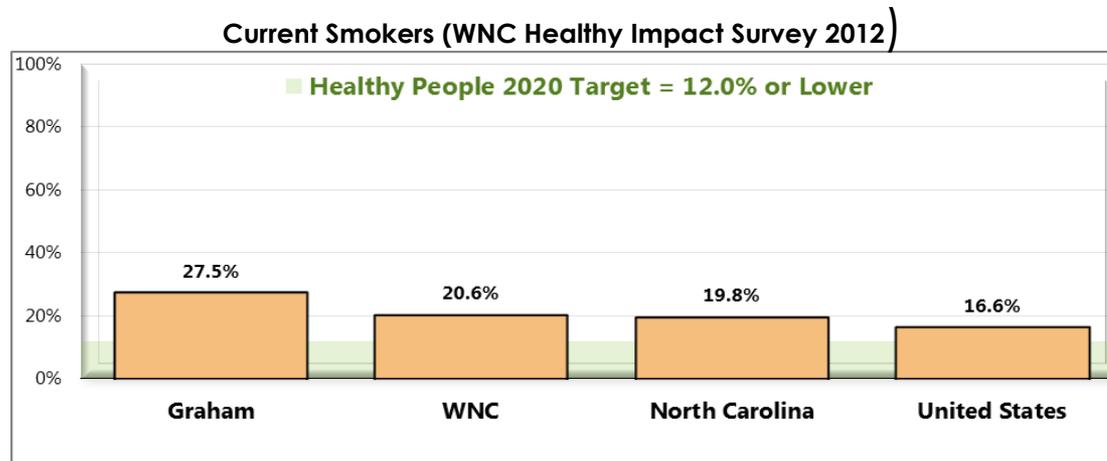


# Tobacco Free Parks and Recreation

Reduce substance abuse in order to improve the health and safety of our youth and families by providing education, raising awareness, encouraging positive choices, and building cooperative links within our community.

## Tobacco Free Parks and Recreation

- Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in the United States. Each year, approximately 443,000 Americans die from tobacco-related illnesses (DHHS, 2010).



# Tobacco Free Parks and Recreation Data Review

- In the 2012 Graham County CHA, 27.5% of survey respondents were current smokers and 8.2% currently used smokeless tobacco products. Therefore, tobacco-free parks were made a priority for 2013.
- In the 2012 Graham County CHA, 63.3% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the statement, “I believe it is important for parks and public walking/biking trails to be 100% tobacco-free.”



This ad was developed as part of the Minnesota Partnership for Action Against Tobacco's secondhand smoke campaign

# Tobacco Free Parks and Recreation Successes

- *Advocacy for Policy Change.* The Board of Commissioners requested information on tobacco free parks to be presented during their work session in April of 2013. After listening to the information provided by MountainWise and the Graham County Health Department, they decided not to vote on the ordinance and instead requested even more data to be provided.
- In May of 2013, MountainWise worked with Robbinsville High School HOSA students to gather thoughts on tobacco free parks through surveys. Information was compiled and shared with the Board of Commissioners.

# Emerging Issues & Local Changes

# New & Emerging Issues

## **Aging Population**

- In Graham County 19.7% of the population is age 65-and-older, compared to 12.9% statewide. The median age in Graham County is 44.3, while the state median age is 37.4 years. As the 65-and-older population of Graham County increases, there are concerns that poor access to primary care physicians and other health care providers could result in poorer health outcomes.

# New & Emerging Issues

## **Growing Hispanic Population**

- The percentage of Hispanics in Graham County increased from 0.6% in 2008 to 2.2% in 2012. As this population increases, so does the need for translation services, which are often not available, the percentage of people living in poverty, and the percentage of children and adults without insurance.

# New & Emerging Issues

## **Unemployment**

- Although unemployment rates in the nation and the state continue to decline, Graham County continues to suffer greatly from unemployment.
- The NC unemployment rate was 8.0% as of October, 2013. Graham County has an unemployment rate of 12.3% as of August, 2013, ranking 98<sup>th</sup> out of 100 counties.

# New Initiatives

- Healthy Cornerstores: The Healthy Corner Store Initiative, called MountainMarkets, is a collaborative partnership between MountainWise, local farmers & growers, local health departments, and interested corner stores to increase access to healthy, affordable foods.
- Tobacco Free Multi-Unit Housing: In efforts to reduce maintenance and turnover costs while protecting the health of residents, MountainWise, HiTop ASSIST, and local health departments are working to take multi-unit housing properties smoke-free.



## What Next?

- We will continue to work with a wide range of community partners to address the health issues facing Graham County.. This SOTCH will be used by partner organizations to complete agency specific reporting of roles and responsibilities (e.g., our health department and local hospitals), as well as informing agency strategic plans across the county where appropriate.
- Dissemination of this SOTCH will include partner organizations as well as making it publicly available on the [Graham County Department of Public Health](#) website, the [WNC Healthy Impact](#) website and local libraries.
- Moving forward, the SOTCH report will be updated to provide the framework for the next annual State of the County's Health Report, which will be submitted and made publicly available in December 2014.