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**2016**  
**State Of The County Health**  
**Report**  
**Graham County**

# Graham County

## State of The County Health Report

December 2016

The following State of the County's Health (SOTCH) Report was created and submitted March 6, 2017, in order to meet the requirements for the Graham County annual SOTCH Report.

The 2015 Community Health Assessment priority areas are:

- Health Priority 1 Access to Care
- Health Priority 2 Reduce the incidence of chronic disease (Diabetes, Heart Disease, COPD)
- Health Priority 3 Increase Physical Activity and Good Nutrition

The following resources were used/reviewed in order to complete the SOTCH:

- 2017 County Health Data Book Update
- The 2015 Community Health Assessment
- NC State Center for Health Statistics

### Introduction

The purpose of the SOTCH report is to provide the most current information on the health status of the county, as well as the progress made during the last year in regards to the priority health issues identified during the 2015 Community Health Assessment (CHA). Since the 2015 CHA, the Graham County Department of Public Health (GCDPH), along with other community partners, has worked diligently to address the priority health concerns. This report reviews local demographics, morbidity and mortality data, and priority issues affecting our community. All data included in this report, unless otherwise stated is taken from the *WNC Health Impact Data Workbook Update, Spring 2016*.

#### Local Demographics

<b>Demographics: Graham County, Western North Carolina, and the State of North Carolina</b>			
	Graham	Western NC	North Carolina
Population 2015*	8,616	781,026	10,042,802
% Male*	49.3	48.5	48.7
% Female*	50.7	51.5	51.3
Persons under 5 years	5.7%	5.4%	6.6%
Persons 5-19	18.2%	17.4%	20.2%
Persons 20-64	56.4%	n/a	60.2%
Persons 65 +	19.7%	19.0%	12.9%
White	90.3%	90.3%	90.3%
African-American	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
American Indian	6.4%	6.4%	6.4%
Asian	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Other	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Hispanic or Latino	2.2%	5.4%	8.4%
Median Household Income (2010-2014)	\$37,161	\$39,416	\$46,693
Population below poverty line (2010-2014)	21.4%	17.8%	17.6%
Unemployment (2015)	12.1%	6.3%	5.7%

\* NC State Center for Health Statistics

## **Priority 1 Access to Care**

Improvements have been made in this priority, however; Graham County still has inadequate access to care. The action plan strategy Heart 360 Check, Change, Control intervention has yet to start, it will begin in 2017 following an updated training. Another strategy outlined in the action plan is to increase the number of people who use the Quitline. Promotion of the Quitline has increased with more printed materials being displayed. We have a great success story regarding one of our residents who was able to quit smoking after more than 30 years. She credits the hotline's website as having been the most helpful support for her.

Though not in the action plans submitted, there has been a strong drive to get a dialysis center and an Urgent Care in the county. Through the efforts of many public meetings, letters of support from residents, and the hiring of a consulting firm, the State Health Coordinating Counsel (SHCC) approved a petition for a five bed facility. There still needs to be final approval by the governor, which is expected to happen.

## **Changes in Data**

At this time, there has been no changes or updated data concerning access to care since the 2015 CHA report.

## **Progress Towards The Goal**

The following progress was made in 2016 on access to care in Graham County.

- August 4, 2016 It was published in the paper that the county was in the process of applying for a certificate of need for a dialysis center and residents were asked to write a letter of support. This resulted in 1,255 letters being written.
- September 9, 2016 The SHCC announced it recommended approval of a five bed dialysis center.
- October 13, 2016 It was announced that in the prior week, the SHCC approved the petition and that a health care provider, DaVita, had expressed interest in operating the dialysis center.
- The one doctor's clinic in the county announced in September of 2016, that it had become a Federally Qualified Health Center, allowing the uninsured to have access to care.
- In December of 2016 the Hospice Foundation of Western NC began raising funds for a new Hospice House to be built in a neighboring county. Though it will not be in our county, it will be the nearest hospice residential facility and will serve residents of Graham.
- The Quitline is being promoted and a success story has been identified.

## **Priority 2 Reduce the Incidence of Chronic Disease (Diabetes, Heart Disease, COPD)**

The Health Department has worked diligently to assure that all residents have the opportunity to receive education and support in dealing with chronic disease. Health Department employees have attended trainings and conferences to insure that they are kept up-to-date with information and are knowledgeable about ways to implement programs.

The action plan strategies to expand the DPP classes to other locations and to begin a Faithful Families class will take place in 2017.

The Health Department began an employee wellness program, as described below, at the Health Department and has the intention of expanding it to other county government departments in 2017.

## **Changes in Data**

Graham County's total rate of cancer incidences, at 431.7 per 100,000 remains lower than the state (483.4) and the region(478.0). However, the rate of breast cancer incidents and of lung cancer mortalities has gone up. Breast cancer incidences in Graham County (163.6) are higher than the region (148.4) or the state (157.9). The rate of lung cancer mortality has increased from 35.5 to 43.6 per 100,000 population.

The number of adults with diabetes is showing a downward trend since the CHA report, from 812 adults in 2011 to 788 in 2012, the most recent data.

## **Progress Towards The Goal**

The following progress was made in 2016 to Reduce the Incidence of Chronic Disease (Diabetes, Heart Disease, COPD) in Graham County.

- In January, 2016, the Health Department began an employee wellness program, Working on Wellness (WOW). The program is an incentive program to encourage healthy lifestyle changes. The mission of WOW is to provide activities, programs, education, and services in areas of Disease Prevention, Chronic Disease Education/Awareness, and Health Promotion and Physical Activity. Our methods include a monthly newsletter and activity tracker calendar, weekly Healthy Recipe and Health Tip email, fitness challenges, group exercise times, and an awareness bulletin board.
- We completed two Diabetes Prevention Program classes in 2016, with a total of 13 participants starting and we had 5 graduates at the end of the year long programs. We scheduled for a new class to begin in January of 2017 and enrolled 8 members in that class. We also completed two DEEP (diabetes self-management) classes, graduating 5 participants.
- The Health Department formed an Asthma Coalition and was able to get an Air Quality Flag Program in every day care and school in the county.
- The Health Department conducted blood pressure checks at the distribution of food by the Manna Food Bank at First Baptist Church. Approximately 18 people participated and it was decided to make it a monthly event in 2017.
- The Health Department taught Healthy Lifestyle Choices classes to students in the after school programs at the elementary and middle schools, reaching approximately 40 students.

- Two Health Department employees attended the World Congress on Prevention of Diabetes and Its Complications in Atlanta and the five state Regional Diabetes Prevention Coalition Meeting in Gatlinburg.
- Some policy changes are slow to come in Graham County, but we are hopeful that our parks will be smoke free by our next CHA report.

### **Priority 3 Increase Physical Activity and Good Nutrition**

While Graham County is a beautiful place for outdoor recreation and activity, many of our residents are actually not very physically active. Recognizing the link between physical activity and chronic disease prevention, we realize that the Wellness program written of in Priority 2 is also a strategy for this priority.

### **Changes in Data**

The data on the rate of adults who are obese shows an increase from 29.8% in 2011 to 30.5% in 2012.

### **Progress Towards The Goal**

The following progress was made in 2016 on Priority 3, Increase Physical Activity and Good Nutrition in Graham County.

- As stated above, our employee wellness program at the Health Department encourages physical activity. Each month points are given for physical activity that is journaled. There are also set times of group exercise after work and at lunch, as well as employees are encouraged to take two 15 minute breaks during the day to exercise.
- We have three Health Department employees trained in the Matter Of Balance program and we have completed one program at the Senior Center where we had twelve participants. They requested the exercise portion of the program continue, so we will have exercise class with our seniors twice a week in 2017. Two additional facilities have asked for the program to be taught at their site in 2017.
- The county has an active Relay for Life each year where many residents participate in the walk to raise awareness for breast cancer. The Health Department sponsors a team for that event.
- The Health Department is working on a grant along with the GREAT organization to secure a grant for a community garden type of activity, it will provide residents with fresh, self-picked fruits and vegetables.
- Two Health Department employees received training in the Be Active Kids Guide to Early Childhood Physical Activity and the program was offered to all preschools and day cares in the county. One facility accepted and received training for their teachers.

- The Health Department acquired 5 bikes and helmets, and are going to begin a bike share program for the employees and the community..

## Morbidity and Mortality Change

Leading Causes of death, Single 5-Year Aggregate, 2010-2014

Rank	Cause of Death	Graham	
		# Deaths	Death Rate
1	Diseases of Heart	129	196.1
2	Cancer	106	164.2
3	Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases	43	66.9
4	All Other Unintentional Injuries	35	76.0
5	Cerebrovascular Disease	26	39.9
6	Alzheimer's disease	15	22.9
7	Pneumonia and Influenza	13	19.6
8	Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and Nephrosis	13	18.7
9	Diabetes Mellitus	12	19.5
10	Suicide	12	26.6

The top five causes of death have had very little change since the CHA (The bottom chart). Chronic Lower Respiratory has moved up to third as unintentional injuries went down to fourth. Diabetes has moved down from 7 to 9, giving hope that we may have it out of the top ten by the next CHA.

### Chart from the 2015 CHA

Leading Causes of Death, 5-Year Aggregate, 2009-2013

Rank	Cause of Death	Graham	
		# Deaths	Death Rate
1	Diseases of Heart	130	199.6
2	Cancer	100	157.8
3	All Other Unintentional Injuries	31	69.8
4	Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases	40	61.4
5	Cerebrovascular Disease	24	35.7
6	Alzheimer's disease	15	<b>23.3</b>
7	Diabetes Mellitus	13	<b>20.5</b>
8	Pneumonia and Influenza	13	<b>19.7</b>
9	Suicide	9	<b>18.2</b>
10	Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and Nephrosis	10	<b>15.3</b>

## Monitoring New and Emerging Issues

These are the new or emerging issues in our community that were not identified as priorities in our 2015 CHA.

- Opioid and other drug misuse
- Smoking during pregnancy
- Occurrence of Hepatitis C

## New Initiatives & Community Changes

The following are new initiatives or changes in our community in 2016.

- Graham County has had some changes in leadership in 2016. Our county manager resigned and we have had one new county commissioner elected.
- The county has created plans to relocate the Health Department and the DSS offices and put them together in the same building.
- The one doctor's clinic in the county announced in September of 2016, that it had become a Federally Qualified Health Center, allowing the uninsured to have access to care.
- In December of 2016 the Hospice Foundation of Western NC began raising funds for a new Hospice House to be built in a neighboring county. Though it will not be in our county, it will be the nearest hospice residential facility and will serve residents of Graham.
- The Health Department acquired bikes and is making plans to begin a bike share program in 2017.
- The county has only one more step to complete to bring Dialysis to the county.
- The Health Department has plans to begin the Check, Change, Control program to help combat heart disease.
- The Health Department began teaching *A Matter of Balance* fall prevention classes to seniors and had 13 participants in the first class and two additional facilities request to host the program.
- The Health Department hosted a Community Health and Wellness Fair which was attended by approximately 170 people.
- The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians is building a Tribal Recovery Center (20 bed long-term residential treatment center) in Graham County. The Center is scheduled to open late winter/early spring 2018.
- The Tallulah Health Clinic began a walk in clinic serving urgent needs and sports physical Monday-Friday from 12 to 4.

Graham County has dealt with many issues in 2016 that were unexpected, beginning in the summer and going through to the end of the year, Graham County has experienced draught, a fuel spill which leaked into one of our rivers that provided our public water supply, and a wildfire. Graham County is an economically distressed county. It is a place where people who have very little pull together and manage to do big things.

