



State of the County Health Report

Harnett County Health Department

Our mission is to prevent illness, diseases, and injuries, promote healthy lifestyles, and keep the environment clean, healthy and safe.

The North Carolina Division of Public Health (DPH) and the North Carolina Local Health Department Accreditation Board (NC LHDAB) require local health departments to submit a **State of the County Health Report (SOTCH)** in each interim year following the comprehensive community health assessment.

The Harnett County Health Department's **2021 State of the County's Health Report (SOTCH)** is compiled to provide updates related to the 2019 Community Health Assessment (CHA) and the work surrounding our health priorities. The Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) are derived from the priorities identified in the CHA.

Throughout this report, we will highlight progress in addressing the top three health priorities from the 2019 CHA as identified by county residents. Community members have rated these concerns as significant with regard to the urgency, severity, and feasibility of improvement efforts.

The SOTCH report demonstrates that the HCHD is tracking priority issues identified in the community health assessment, identifying emerging issues, and shall identify any new initiatives.

In 2021, COVID-19 greatly affected many local health departments including the HCHD to temporarily suspend work on identified priorities and refocus on COVID-19 education, outreach, testing, prevention, and vaccination.

Priority issues:

1. Diabetes/ Nutrition
2. Heart Disease
3. Cancer

Source: 2019-CHA.



Priority: Diabetes/Nutrition the HCHD provides Prevent Type 2(T2) Diabetes, which is part of the CDC National Diabetes Prevention Program which is a research-based program that focuses on healthy eating and physical activity. It is proven to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes.

Prevent Type 2 Diabetes is a yearlong lifestyle change program. Prevent T2 was conducted at the Health Department from January 2021- January 2022, in collaboration with First Health of the Carolinians. Outcome: Due to COVID-19, the 2021 class size for the program was reduced. Five people participated in the program of those 100% of participants lost weight and increased their physical activity by the conclusion on the program.

Priority: Heart Disease: Heart Disease ranks as the leading cause of death in Harnett County, our peer counties, and North Carolina. The leading causes of death in Harnett County match with the leading causes of death in the state. (Source 2019 CHA).

“Go Red Sunday” is designed to raise awareness that heart disease is the leading cause of death for women. Churches and other faith-based organizations are encouraged to select one Sunday in February as "Go Red Sunday." The HCHD provides participating churches with heart health information packets to distribute to the women in their churches. Outcome: Due to COVID-19, we saw a reduction in the number of churches that participate in this initiative. Many churches were not having in person services and did not participate in the program. An average of 10 churches participate each year, however five churches participated in 2021.

Tobacco Prevention: The HCHD implemented media messaging campaigns with a goal to prevent the use of all tobacco products by young people and adults, including cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco and hookah to help tobacco users quit. The media campaign included newspaper and social media. Outcome: Media messages included 94 Social Media Posts and 3 newspaper public service announcements. Messages aimed to increase awareness of the health effects of tobacco use and promote smoking cessation.

Priority: Cancer ranks as the second leading causes of death in the county, peer counties, and North Carolina. The HCHD mobile mammography program continues to work through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide access to mammography screenings, in partnership with Rex Mobile Mammography. The mortality rate for breast cancer in Harnett County has decrease in recent years due to increased access to screening mammograms and increased awareness of early detection (2019-CHA).

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In 2021, the HCHD provided access to 14 mobile mammography screenings with the capacity to screen 252 women. Outcome: Approximately, 215 women were scheduled and 179 were screened. Overall, approximately 83% of the women kept their screening appointment. The disparity for mammography screenings between ethnic and racial minorities persists. Women from racial and ethnic minority groups and women who are uninsured are screened at a disproportionately low rate.

Outcome: Approximately 64% of the women screened were ethnic and racial minorities in 2021. The percent of women screened by race/ethnicity includes 34% White, 33% African American, 26% Hispanic, and 7% other. Uninsured: Approximately 45% of the women screened were uninsured. This was a 2% increase in the number of uninsured women screened in comparison to 2020. Funding assistance is provided for women who meet program criteria through Rex Mammography Assistance program.

- **COVID-19 Vaccination Impact:** Many vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccine, can cause lymph nodes to temporarily increase in size. Enlarged lymph nodes can cause a false-positive mammogram result. Our staff continuously worked scheduling and rescheduling women following guidelines for waiting approximately four to six weeks after they receive a COVID-19 vaccine or booster to have a mammogram.

“Pink Sunday” initiative is launched to provide breast health educational materials to faith-based communities. The HCHD partner with places of worship, providing resources to educate the members of their congregations on breast health and breast cancer. Many churches throughout 2021 continued to meet and gather using online/virtual media. Outcome: The HCHD collaborated with 17 churches, predominately African American churches reaching approximately 540 women. Social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter, were also used to share information.

Emerging Issues:

Vaccine Hesitancy

Social Isolation

Communicable Disease

Vaccine Hesitancy: Many factors influence vaccine decision-making, including cultural, social, and political factors, individual and group factors, and vaccine-specific factors. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to increasing vaccine confidence, as reasons for hesitancy depend on an individual's personal experiences. Developing messaging strategies that reach people where they are is also important, especially in rural areas.

The HCHD staff has worked to provide consistent information to the public. Staff have conducted outreach involving several modes of communication such as Facebook, radio (FM and AM), and digital ads. Strong confidence in COVID-19 vaccines within communities leads to more adults, adolescents, and children being vaccinated — which leads to fewer COVID-19 illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths.

Social Isolation: Practicing social distancing is an effective means of curtailing the COVID-19 pandemic, as it has the potential to increase loneliness and social isolation, especially for those older adults who may already have risk factors for COVID-19, namely underlying chronic disease conditions. This practice is likely to amplify the social isolation that certain at-risk individuals might already be experiencing. This includes the elderly, the handicapped, and others. This emphasizes the importance of embracing virtual check-ins, telemedicine, and tele therapy—any measure that we can use to build and maintain connections.

Communicable Disease: NC and Harnett County are experiencing an increase in syphilis cases.

- Harnett County: In 2021, there were 13 early syphilis cases diagnosed (January 1–September 30, 2021). In comparison with 2020 data, of seven (7) early syphilis cases diagnosed for 2020. There was an 85.7% percent increase in cases from 2020 to 2021.
- North Carolina: The number of early syphilis cases diagnosed for 2021 (January 1–September 30, 2021) was 2,129. The number of early syphilis (primary, secondary, and early non-primary non-secondary) cases diagnosed in NC for 2020 was 2,342, a rate of 22.1 per 100,000 population.

COVID-19 Metrics: The first COVID-19 case was reported in Harnett County on March 13, 2020. The HCHD began administering vaccine December 11, 2020.

2021 Morbidity:

COVID-19 cases reported 20,878

Race/Ethnicity: 12,160-White, 4,938 Black, 2,882

Hispanic, 898 Other

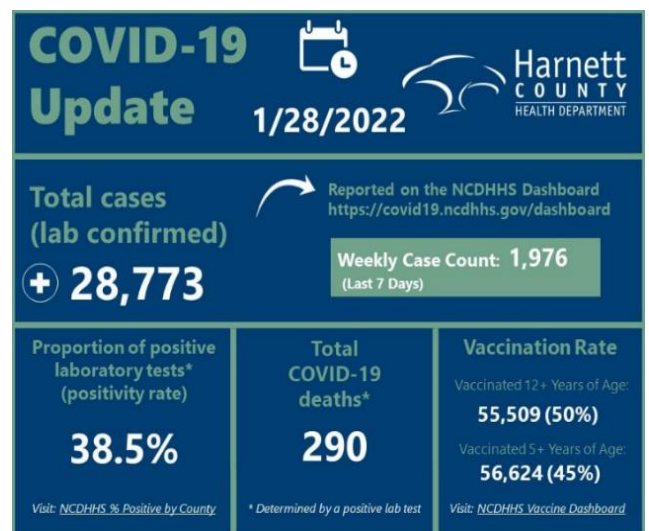
Gender: 53% Female and 47% Male of confirmed cases.

Average age: 36

Mortality:

283 deaths related to COVID-19

72% deaths age 65+



New Initiative: The “Pink Ribbon Parade” in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month and to raise awareness about early detection of breast cancer and the importance of mammography. On Saturday, October 23, 2021 at the HCHD, the Pink Ribbon Parade, was held a drive thru and pick up event consisted of exhibits and resources on breast health information, COVID-19 information, incentives and breakfast. The event was in partnership with the HCHD, Breast Cancer Support Group of Harnett County and Mary Kay Cosmetics.

Elderly Nutrition Program 2021: Social isolation has long been recognized as a factor leading to higher risks for health problems in seniors. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased that isolation among older adults who often live alone, lose mobility, lack transportation options, live away from their families, and now, additionally, are concerned about the risk of contracting the virus. The goal of the Harnett County Elderly Nutrition Program a division of the HCHD, is to reduce hunger and social isolation among our elderly population and to maintain and improve the health of homebound seniors by serving them nutritionally balanced meals. Our program supplies a nutritious meal five days per week as well as social interaction with the volunteers who deliver meals, which helps seniors feel more connected. During 2021, approximately 14,268 congregate meals were served to 96 seniors at six sites throughout the county. Also, 56,423 home-delivered meals were served to 216 seniors from nine nutrition sites.

COVID-19 Vaccinations: COVID-19 is widespread in Harnett County and our state. COVID-19 vaccination is a safe proven tool to provide individuals immunity against this virus. In 2021, Harnett County Health Department administered 28,466 COVID-19 Vaccinations. HCHD held 107 mass vaccination clinics at the Governmental Complex-Commons site located in Lillington. **Community Vaccination sites:** HCHD staff were diligent in their efforts of working with communities to provide vaccine in nontraditional settings and during non traditional hours including weekend hours, with the goal for these community-based interventions for increasing vaccine rates.

- HCHD provided vaccines in approximately 14 nontraditional settings. HCHD collaborated with vaccination vendor RCL and community partners to provide vaccination clinics within churches, public housing communities, within local businesses, barbershops, fire departments, and community centers. In efforts to reach underserved areas and vulnerable populations throughout the county.
- HCHD also held three (3) mass drive thru vaccination events at Harnett Central High School with the assistance of Harnett County Emergency Management and other community partners. For our mass-vaccination events, 2,857 persons were vaccinated.
- Pharmacies increased their participation in vaccination activities. HCHD increased access to vaccine by transferring approximately 30,000 doses to vaccinating providers and pharmacies throughout the county.

Media/Communications: The HCHD utilized the NCDHHS, COVID-19 Communications Toolkit to inform and educate residents about testing, contact tracing and preventative measures they can take to slow the spread of COVID-19. Health Education produced numerous print materials, flyers, newspaper and social media posts on COVID-19. In 2021 approximately, 53 articles were featured in the Dunn Daily Record newspaper related to COVID-19.

The State of the County Health Report-2021 will be disseminated to key stakeholders and community partners including the Board of Health, Healthy Harnett Partnership and others. Copies of the report will be available at the HCHD for the public. Copies of this report will be available on the Health Department’s website www.harnett.org/health. For more information about this report, contact the Harnett County Health Department at 910-893-7550-Health Education Division.