

2010 MCDOWELL SOTCH

State of the County Health Report

McDowell Health Department
McDowell County Health Coalition

Working Together For A Healthy Community



Overview

Every four years the State of North Carolina requires every local health department to conduct a community health assessment. A community health assessment is a process that allows the members of the community and stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the health needs and concerns of the community.

During the three interim years, the local health department is responsible for issuing the State of the County Health (SOTCH) report. The 2008 McDowell County SOTCH report is an annual review of the priority health issues that were chosen in the 2008 Community Health Assessment. The report serves to inform the community and stakeholders about the health status of our residents and update the past year's progress on addressing the health issues identified in the 2008 Community Health Assessment.

Review of Data

Over the past years, the majority of the leading causes of death have been chronic diseases. Despite the preventable nature, chronic diseases account for more than 75% of the nation's \$2 trillion medical costs. In McDowell County, the leading cause of death includes cancer, diseases of the heart, cerebrovascular disease and chronic lower respiratory disease. These diseases can be prevented through behavioral changes, such as eating healthy, being physically active, and avoiding tobacco use.

Leading Causes of Death	
McDowell County	North Carolina
Cancer	Diseases of the Heart
Diseases of the Heart	Cancer
Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease	Cerebrovascular Disease
Cerebrovascular Disease	Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease
Other Unintentional Injuries	Other Unintentional Injuries
Alzheimer's Disease	Alzheimer's Disease
Diabetes	Diabetes
Pneumonia and Influenza	Pneumonia and Influenza
Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, & Nephrosis	Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and Nephrosis
Motor Vehicle Injuries	Motor Vehicle Injuries

Priority Health Issues

In November 2008, the community voted and chose obesity, substance abuse and teen pregnancy as the top three priority health concerns of the community. In January 2009, the community voted to add access to care as a health concern.

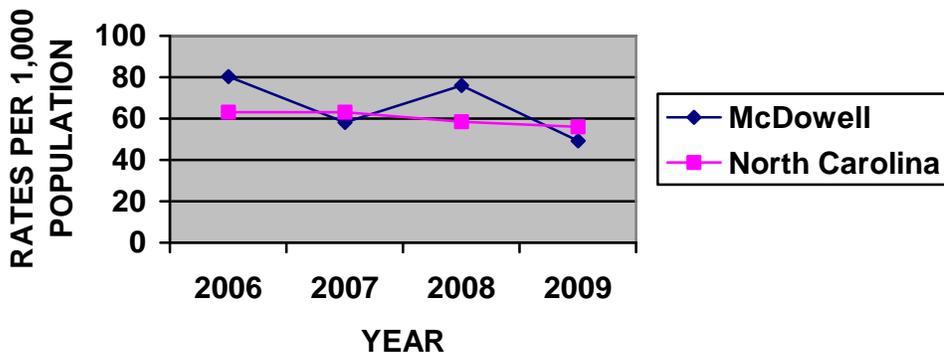
Teen Pregnancy

In an article, released in October 2010, the *McDowell News* reported that teen pregnancies have decreased in McDowell County, as well as in the state of North Carolina. In 2009, there were 71 teen pregnancies, a decrease from the 108 teen pregnancies in 2008. Despite the impressive strides done by the county and the state, there is still much work to be done. The average annual cost associated with a child born to a teen 17 years of age or younger is \$3,868. Not only is teen pregnancy a huge financial strain on the economy, statistics show that the children are more likely to drop out of school, be incarcerated and live in poverty.

The Board of Health for the Rutherford-Polk-McDowell Health Department appointed members to a task force and hired a facilitator to lead the group over the next eight to twelve months in developing strategies that will work best for McDowell County. The strategies will then be reported back to the Board of Health for approval and financial support.

Since the passing of House Bill 88, the Healthy Youth Act, the McDowell County School System has been working hard to train teachers and develop a reproductive health and safety education curriculum. The curriculum should be ready for parental review by January 2011.

**NC RESIDENT PREGNANCY RATES PER 1,000
POPULATION: FEMALES AGES 15-19**



Obesity

North Carolina has the 10th highest adult obesity rate and the 11th highest childhood obesity rate in the nation. According to data collected on children seen in North Carolina Public Health sponsored WIC and Child Health Clinics and some School Base Health Centers in 2009, out of 444 children between the ages of two and eighteen, 13.7% were considered overweight and 12.2% were obese in McDowell County. These numbers do show improvement from the 2008 data: 14.5% overweight and 12.9% obese. The prevalence of obesity has more than doubled among adults and has tripled among children and adolescents from 1980 to 2004. Currently, two-thirds of adults and nearly one in three children are overweight or obese. Increased food intake, a sedentary lifestyle, and environments that make it difficult for people to make healthy choices but easy to consume extra calories, all contribute to the epidemic of overweight and obesity. This epidemic threatens the progress we have made in increasing Americans' quality and years of healthy life. Curbing the obesity epidemic requires parents, neighborhoods, the medical community, employers, schools and individuals to take a coordinated and comprehensive approach to combating overweight and obesity.

To address the obesity issue in McDowell County, our partners have developed and implemented many initiatives.

Environmental Improvements

- Regional Trail Plan Completed - McDowell Trails Association members worked with the NC Division of Parks and Recreation – State Trails Program and Isothermal Planning and Development Commission to develop a regional trail system that will interconnect the trails in McDowell County to a statewide trail network. The goal of the regional plan is to guide federal, state, and local efforts for trail development. The plan and maps are available on IPDC's website: www.regionc.org
- Corpening YMCA was awarded \$365,285 by the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund to construct a walking trail around their facility and connect to the McDowell Hospital and Health Department. Corpening Foundation and McDowell County Government each provided the \$182,642 grant match required.
- 1.3 miles of the Joseph McDowell Historical Catawba River Greenway was completed in September.



- 1035 feet of the Round Hill Extension was completed and a footbridge to the Round Hill is under construction.
- Right of way agreements were obtained for greenway access for Phase II and III that include 13 +/- acres for a future canoe launch site and nature park.
- Right of way agreements were secured from two property owners to provide a parking area at the Buncombe County end of Point Lookout Trail.
- On 9/28/2010, the City of Marion purchased 3.5 miles (33.3 acres) of abandoned railway known as the Peavine from Norfolk Southern Railway Company for \$2500 to use as a walking trail.
- The US Forest Service has made improvements to the popular Kitsuma biking trail
- The Old Fort Mountain Heritage Alliance, working in partnership with the Town of Old Fort, completed a feasibility study and plan for the Mill Creek Greenway. The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area and the N.C. STEP program through the N.C. Rural Center provided funding. The greenway will connect Old Fort Elementary School, Mountain Gateway Museum, Point Lookout Trail and the Geyser. The Town has also worked with NCDOT to rework Main Street providing a safer crossing and sidewalk improvements.
- City of Marion's Safe Routes to School Plan nearing completion.
- The new Eastfield Park, located next to Eastfield Elementary School, opened in October and contains playground equipment, swing sets, a basketball court, walking trail and picnic shelter.
- The City of Marion plans to construct a community park in the Clinchfield neighborhood in 2011. Mr. Frank Boldon donated land for the Clinchfield community park.
- The City of Marion is implementing the adopted Downtown Streetscape Plan. The Downtown Streetscape Plan is designed to improve pedestrian safety and slow down traffic.
- The US Forest Service purchased 88 acres from Foothills Conservancy securing public access to the Catawba Falls. The US Forest Service purchased the property for \$713,000 using funding appropriated in the 2010 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill that was signed into law

in December 2009. The Forest Service plans to build a parking lot at the trailhead.

- McDowell County Department of Social Services supported gardening through assistance with buying seeds, helped to begin a garden and provided a garden space to DSS clients.
- In 2010 The Home Depot Foundation awarded the Partnership a \$2,500 grant for a preschool gardening project. Five gardens were installed at local childcare centers in May, including First Baptist Children's Center, First United Methodist Early Childhood Enrichment Center, Early Head Start, Little Wonders, and McDowell Technical Community College Child Development Center.
- The Rutherford-Polk-McDowell District Health Department's Eat Smart Move More NC Health Promotion Program funded the development of North Cove Elementary and McDowell Technical Community College pre-school gardens.

Health Promotion

- NC Cooperative Extension Service and the local Senior Center teamed up to provide the first Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less program in McDowell County. Each of the one-hour lessons informs, empowers and motivates participants to live mindfully as they make choices about eating and physical activity. The program also provides opportunities for participants to track their progress and keep a journal of healthy eating habits and physical activity behaviors. There were 11 participants who successfully completed the 15-week long program resulting in a total weight loss of 142.9 pounds and 20 inches of waistline. One participant stopped by the McDowell County Center after the program ended to personally say "thank you" and report that he had gone on to lose an additional 5 pounds and really appreciated the adaptability of the "Move More" activities since he and his disabled wife were now able to be physically active together in their home! Research has shown that losing as little as 5-10% of your excess weight and keeping it off will benefit your health and reduce risks for chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.
- In 2010 the McDowell County Partnership for Children & Families funded two home visiting programs with our state Smart Start grant. These programs, First Steps and Healthy Start, are administered under a contract by The McDowell Hospital. First Steps provides short-term home visitation services for new mothers. During the home visit with a registered nurse the mother and new baby receive a physical assessment, a home safety inspection, and education on health topics, including breastfeeding. Additional home visits can be made to address specific problems as

needed, such as breastfeeding problems or jaundice and telephone contact is maintained for six months. Healthy Start is an intensive, three-year home visiting program for new moms based on Partners for a Healthy Baby curriculum. Home visits are made by a trained paraprofessional-Family Support Worker for support and instruction on positive parenting and child development. Some of the results of the program as of June 30, 2010 are:

- **58% (7/12)** of mothers who initiated breastfeeding at birth have continued breastfeeding for at least six months.
 - **81% (21/26)** of parents/caretakers maintained or increased the number of times that they read to their baby/child on a monthly basis.
 - **100% (30/30)** of participants are able to identify three parenting skills they have learned as reported on the Healthy Start Parenting Skills Survey.
- The Partnership joined forces with the McDowell Trails Association to provide children's events during the first Annual Triathlon in July. Children participated in a trail mix station, a nature hike, and sand play.
 - McDowell Trails Association hosted 140 participants at its first Triathlon at the new Lake James State Park on 7/24/2010.
 - YMCA of WNC received a \$50K grant from Mission Hospitals to support the Y in its efforts to reduce childhood obesity rates by expanding its Youth Fit for Life Program. YFFL is a 12-week program to engage the entire family through a web of activities, resources, and community support to achieve their individual wellness goals. Currently, there are 35 children enrolled in McDowell County.

- Healthy Kids Day was held at Corpening YMCA, Saturday, April 17, featuring the 2nd annual Iron Baby Triathlon



- McDowell Mission Hospital and community partners began the Lighten Up 4 Life community-wide weight loss competition and over 580 participants lost a total of 5,641 pounds during the first 2 trimesters.
- In 2009-2010, McDowell Schools, participated in the NC Prevention Partners initiative *Zone Health, School Wellness*. This statewide effort is intended to gain executive level support for creating healthy school

environments. During the 2010-2011 school year, McDowell Schools created action plans that promote healthy environments in the schools. Increasingly, students are taught that eating right and getting plenty of physical activity will help them succeed in school, and, ultimately, in life. The school system consistently increases community awareness about the importance of healthy eating and physical activity. McDowell Schools plans to move toward a centralized menu that will maintain continuity, provide nutrient analysis, caloric comparisons and provide additional fruit and vegetable choices. The school system is currently working with the North Carolina Procurement Alliance, which is a statewide group that closely scrutinizes all products that are available to our children. Current lunches are nutritionally adequate and are provided at a below average meal cost equivalent which is also important to families during these hard economic times.

- A physical activity guide published for McDowell County and is posted at http://www.rpmhd.org/new/health_res/guides/mcdowell.pdf

Nutrition Education/Services

- McDowell County Cooperative Extension and Rutherford-Polk-McDowell District Health Department partnered with the Marion Tailgate Market and provided food demonstrations. The purpose of the food demonstrations was to offer shoppers opportunities to learn how to creatively use local, seasonal produce and market products. The food demonstrators whipped up kale smoothies, grilled rabbit, salsa and much more. The Historic Marion Tailgate Market was honored by the N.C. Main Street program as one of the best public/private partnership projects in the entire state. Marion is one of only two cities in the state to receive this honor in 2010.
- A registered dietitian is now available through McDowell Children's Clinic and McDowell Pediatrics ½ day each.
- Kristin Mart, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent, has implemented the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP-Ed) in the 3rd grade at Eastfield Elementary School. The program is nine, 30-45 minute sessions. The program consists of 1 pre-test and introductory class, 6 nutrition lessons, 1 physical activity lesson, and 1 post-test and wrap-up/graduation class. Behavioral outcomes are evaluated by using a pre and post nutrition test and parent and teacher feedback forms. Here are some of the results:
 - 75% of students improved their overall knowledge of nutrition
 - 81.8% of parents report that they have observed positive behavior change in regards to drinking fewer soft drinks.

- “My son loved the food tasting and the recipes that were sent home. It was good for him to see what vegetables his classmates liked. It made him want to try more foods.”

Substance Abuse

In February 2009, the Health Coalition assumed responsibility of implementing a Strategic Prevention Framework -State Incentive Grant (SPF-SIG) to reduce crashes and fatalities due to drinking and driving. The target populations based on a needs assessment are Hispanic males 21-24 and white males and females 30-50. The focus of the substance abuse committee for 2010 has been to educate residents on the laws and consequences of drinking and driving and to begin evaluating the program. Throughout the year, various committee members have done numerous community outreach events to get the message out that “drinking and driving is no way to live.”

The biggest accomplishment for the committee was to establish strong relationships with the Hispanic community and support the opening of a Hispanic Resource Center. Centro Unido Latino Americano is a North Carolina non-profit bilingual county resource and referral center. Centro Unido’s vision is a healthy, educated, racially unified community where *all* families are given every opportunity to succeed.

The mission of Centro Unido is to strengthen the community of McDowell by providing information, educational opportunities and support to Latinos while building bridges of understanding and opportunity for everyone in the county. Many members of the McDowell Health Coalition have been instrumental in providing encouragement and support through information, referral and educational opportunities.

With help from McDowell Health Coalition members, Centro Unido Latino Americano has received a small grant from the Hispanics in Philanthropy for a .25 staff position for two years. This part time temporary position will allow Centro Unido to establish a sustainable financial base through a membership and donor campaign. You can expect to see many Health Promotion events led by local Latinos with a goal of integrating cultures and improving health outcomes. Volunteers are currently needed to provide leadership and have a presence at the new center on 14 North Main Street. Because we have no funding for services, Centro Unido acts as a resource and referral service only and relies on the services available throughout the county. If you have services to offer or are interested in becoming more involved, please see Conrad Gonzalez 925-2224 or Marjorie Vestal 925-0081.

The Adult Treatment Court in Judicial District 29A is in the third year of accepting participants. Drug Court is a place where instead of prison addicts receive the right mix of treatment and accountability needed to change their lives. The first participants were brought into the program in September 2007.

In McDowell County:

- 123 offenders have been referred to DTC
- 67 participants have been admitted to the program
- 11 participants have successfully graduated from Drug Court
- 2 drug-free babies have been born to mothers in the program
- 9 participants have earned their GED while in drug court
- 4 are currently enrolled in a GED program
- 4 participants have been able to obtain their driver's license

McDowell County Impaired Driving Cases Closed

Original Charge	2008*	2009*	Statewide 2009
Total Disposed	234	241	72,926
Habitual Impaired Driving	1	0	474
Aid and Abet Impaired Driving	2	3	1,555
Drive After Consuming	39	0	1
Driving While Impaired	189	28	10,423
DWI Commercial Vehicle	3	210	60,369

*Because the AOC reporting year runs from July 1 through June 30, the year 2009, for example, reflects July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010

McDowell County Injury Data

Alcohol Related Crash Injuries	2008	2009	Statewide 2009
Non-Fatal Injuries	71	44	8,767
Fatal Injuries	1	3	394
Total Injuries	72	47	9,161

Access to Care

Unfortunately, the most recent estimate for the uninsured, 6500 or 17.7% is from 2005. The estimates lag behind due to the intensive nature of collecting and reporting the data and are not able to capture the true picture of the issue. The economic downturn of the past couple of years has turned a bad situation worse. Families and individuals who were covered with medical insurance through employer plans have seen a significant loss of this coverage as jobs were eliminated. The beginning of 2010, McDowell County Department of Social Services (DSS) hired a Health Resource Navigator. The primary role of the Health Resource Navigator is to help place the uninsured and the underinsured into appropriate primary care settings. This strategy is developing around a multi-faceted approach. DSS is trying to certify as many families as possible for Medicaid and referring those who fall through the cracks to the Navigator. As of August 15th, the Health Resource Navigator has outreached to 208 uninsured in McDowell County. The resources available to the Navigator are an ever-evolving process. DSS has partnered with the hospital and its group of physicians and also the Good Samaritan Clinic. An outcome of this partnership has been to link the uninsured to primary care in the county and tackle chronic medical issues that many individuals end up in the Emergency Room with. The hope is to continue this work with other physicians in the community. Our goal is for the citizens of the county to see this as a community wide problem and not just one of that effects people who access services at the Department of Social Services.

In September, many agencies partnered together to host a Community Resource Fair to provide residents with information about the services available in the county and to provide educational sessions. McDowell County was also one of the first counties to host the North Carolina Farm Bureau (NCFB) Mobile Unit. With the medical needs of most rural areas in the state outweighing the number of available doctors, clinics and hospitals, NCFB has established the Healthy Living for a Lifetime initiative. The initiative will offer free health screenings, such as blood pressure, body mass index, bone density measurements, cholesterol and glucose, among others. On October 19th, 168 people were screened.

Most of the funding for this effort has occurred through a HealthNet grant at the present time. Our goal would be to continue with this funding but also to expand our funding base within the community. We know that physicians are providing some charity care now and we would like to coordinate under the umbrella of a Project Access type model. Due to current economic conditions in the county the need for medical care and the number of uninsured citizens in the county continues to increase.

The Good Samaritan Clinic (GSC) opened February 16, 2010, operating out of a borrowed office from Dr. Nisah Patel. Currently, the clinic is operating with six volunteer doctors, along with 33 nursing and clerical volunteers. Several local

specialists also offer their services free to GSC patients. In order for patients to be seen at the clinic, they must be between the ages of 18-64, live in McDowell County and have no insurance, Medicaid or Medicare. Patients are not charged for any clinic service and receive laboratory and X-ray testing at The McDowell Hospital at no charge.

In the first nine months, GSC has qualified 405 patients. Open on Tuesday nights and one Saturday morning each month, the clinic has provided 659 patient office visits. Of those, 218 were treated for hypertension, 116 for diabetes, 44 for lung disease, 48 for thyroid conditions, 29 for heart disease and two have been diagnosed with cancer. 87 brand name prescriptions have been obtained via Prescription Assistance Programs through GSC and seven indigent patients have been referred to the McDowell County Dread Disease Society for payment of all their prescriptions in local pharmacies. The clinic is in the process of looking for their own building to provide services on more days out the week.

The McDowell Hospital received a grant for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and has been able to partner with Mission Children's Dental Program to provide a Preschool Dental Outreach Program for children in McDowell County. The program provides free limited oral exams for children ages 6 months to 5 years of age (and before Kindergarten). Thus far, all daycares, preschools and More at Fours children have been screened, as well as two community events held. In 2010, 340 kids have been screened and out of the 340, problems were found in 38 kids that needed more care.

The North Carolina Oral Health Section's Registered Dentist Hygienist has been working throughout the county to provide education and prevention services. Her focus areas for the 2009-2010 year has been dental disease prevention, access to dental care, oral health monitoring systems, health education and health promotion. Some of the results for the year are:

- K - 5th graders screened
 - 21% of kindergarteners had untreated obvious decay in primary teeth
 - 3% of fifth graders had untreated obvious decay in permanent teeth
 - 45% of fifth graders had dental sealant present
- 187 Follow ups
- 2,360 Education services
- 1,250 Students participating in Fluoride Mouthrinse Program at Nebo, Old Fort, and Eastfield Elementary Schools
- 1,200 K, 1st and 2nd graders were provided a toothbrush and cover as part of the Dental Learning Libraries Project

Other Activities include:

- Coordinated Give Kids A Smile Event, where students received free dental care
- Assisted with start up of new Preschool Dental Program and training with the coordinator
- Worked with the Partnership for Children to change the current dental fund to assist school age children
- Team member working in several counties in western NC to provide sealants in a school setting

Emerging Issues

On March 23, 2010, health care reform became law by the signing of the Affordable Care Act. Several provisions became effective September 23, 2010 and others will become effective during 2011-2013. In 2014, the more transformational provisions will become effective, such as the individual mandate requiring everyone to have insurance coverage. The remainder provisions will take effect in 2018. Insurance plans will cover preventative services now, young adults are able to stay on their parents' insurance until they are 26 and people with pre-existing conditions will not be denied coverage are just a few of the changes that will take place. Due to the changes, many more people will be seeking the services of doctors and hospitals. However, there is currently a shortage of primary care physicians. The new law aims to increase the number of physicians, but the efforts will take years to have a significant impact.

New Initiatives

Local agencies have partnered together to implement the Community Healthy Living Index (CHLI). CHLI is an assessment tool that allows community leaders and stakeholders to identify and remove barriers that hinder individuals from living in a healthy community and then create policy and/or environmental changes that support healthy living. The Community Healthy Living Index (CHLI) process involves conducting assessment in at least two afterschool childcare sites, four neighborhoods, two schools, and two work sites each cycle. Thus far, the CHLI team has assessed Marion Elementary, McDowell High, Old Fort Elementary, the Corpening Memorial YMCA Afterschool Program, Glenwood Elementary Afterschool Program, the Eastfield Community, Pleasant Gardens Community, Garden Street Community, Baldor, and Coates North America. After all sites have been assessed, the team will reconvene with the leaders of each site to create action plans. In the meantime, the team is gearing up to assess 10 more sites. For more information about the CHLI process visit www.ymca.net/communityhealthylivingindex/

Anyone interesting in working on any priority issues: (teen pregnancy, substance abuse, access to care, obesity) or desire more information about the SOTCH report, please contact the McDowell County Health Department at 828-652-6811.

This report will be available at the local libraries, on www.rpmhd.org and www.healthymcdowell.com.

