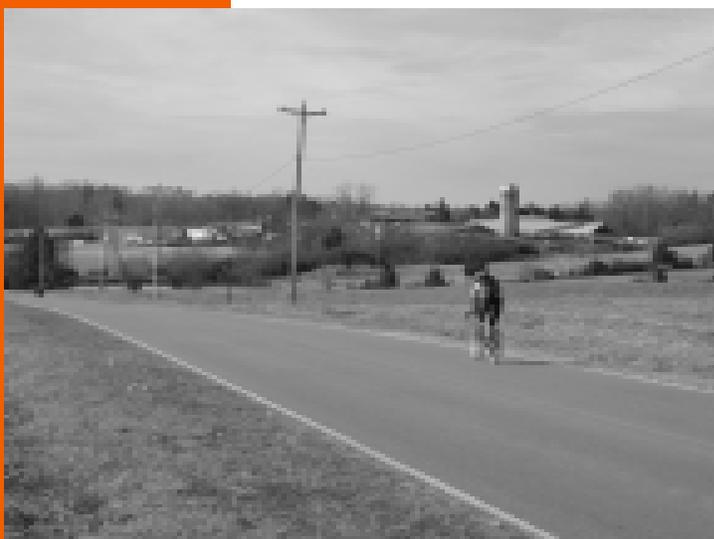


2003

Orange County Community Health Assessment Executive Summary



Healthy
Carolinians
of Orange
County



*Choose Health!
For a Better Orange County*

Healthy Carolinians 2010

Healthy Carolinians Partnerships are umbrella groups that organize coalitions to address leading health issues in their own communities. These local groups work together to achieve the North Carolina Healthy Carolinians 2010 health objectives developed by the Governors Task Force on Healthy Carolinians. Healthy Carolinians 2010 objectives mirror the national Healthy People 2010 objectives, developed by the US Department of Health and Human Services. Overall goals of Healthy Carolinians include increasing the span of healthy life, removing health disparities and promoting preventive health services. There are dozens of objectives that cover 12 focus areas of health including:

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| access to health care | infant mortality |
| chronic disease | infectious disease |
| community health | injury |
| disability | mental health |
| environmental health | older adult health |
| health promotion | oral health |

The aim is to achieve all of the objectives for the entire state by the year 2010. To meet these objectives, each community needs to address health issues that are important on the local level and that is the role of Healthy Carolinians of Orange County.



Community Health Forum Carrboro, NC November 5, 2003

In Orange County

Throughout 2003, Healthy Carolinians of Orange County and the Orange County Health Department worked with many community members to assess the health of Orange County residents. The result of both primary and secondary data gathering and analysis involving more than 700 residents and more than 50 agencies and organizations throughout Orange County is found in the full assessment report.

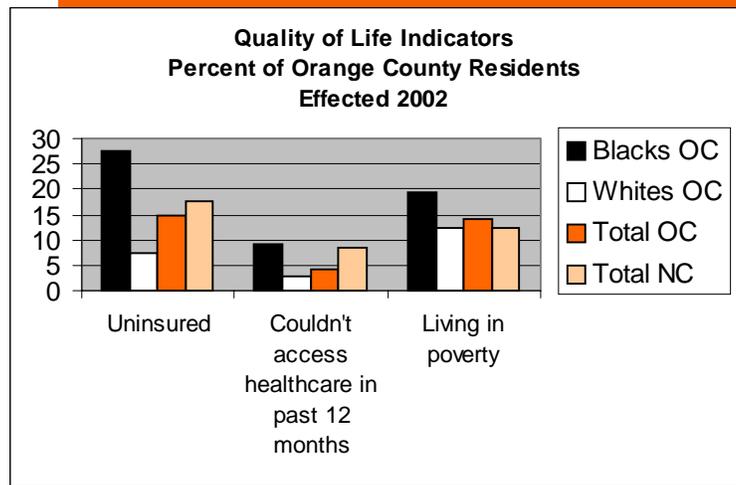
(NOTE: hard copies are available in the Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Orange County Public Libraries. The full report is also available on-line at the following link:

www.co.orange.nc.us/health/CHARreport.pdf

This summary publication does not reflect all of the data or nuances in the full report, rather it is intended to provide county residents with a picture of areas of celebration and areas of concern for our county.

Major Themes

Two overarching themes emerged from this assessment. The first is that the **cost of living and the cost of staying healthy are too high** in Orange County and the second is that there are **significant health disparities** between minority populations and the white population. While Orange County boasts one of the highest median incomes in the state, we also have one of the higher rates of poverty in the Triangle area. The issue of health disparities is not unique to this county, however, in a county with health statistics that present a picture of good health overall, it is of heightened concern.



How to Become Involved

In this summary, you will find a brief description of ten areas of celebration and ten areas of concern for Orange County. The areas of concern tend to be complex issues that have deep tendrils in many

facets of our lives. They will require a total community involvement to affect change. Committees and work groups are currently being formed to address the top ten areas of concern. Healthy Carolinians needs community participation to find creative solutions so that all Orange County residents can choose health as their first priority. To find out **how you can become involved**, please contact the Coordinator of Healthy Carolinians of Orange County at 968-2022 ext 291.

“A healthy community would be less about the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’. It would be for everyone, and everyone would participate.”

Focus Group participant

For Orange County – Choose Health!

Orange County is a wonderful place to live, and our health statistics bear that out. We have many reasons to celebrate including good health and quality of life. Most Orange County residents are able to live a healthy lifestyle. But like any place, we also have areas of concern and residents who are unable to improve their health because they lack resources, access to, or knowledge of available services. Healthy Carolinians of Orange County is striving to improve the health of all residents of Orange County by working together with community members to promote healthy lifestyles, advocate for better access to health care services and programs, and in so doing, empower all our residents to choose health.

Areas of Celebration

Low Heart Disease Death Rates

The death rate in Orange County is 190.7 per 100,000 and the statewide objective for 2010 is 219.8 deaths per 100,000. Thus, Orange County already has a lower death rate than the Healthy Carolinians heart disease objective for 2010. This can, in large part, be attributed to an excellent health care system that has active screening, treatment, and aftercare programs. UNC Hospital's Cardiac Rehabilitation program has been very successful in providing aftercare and secondary prevention measures for those with heart conditions. Heart disease is still the leading cause of hospitalization in the county. While this data is clear cause for celebration, there are disparities even in this success as minorities experience higher death rates than whites do.



Excellent Educational Systems

Nearly half of Orange County residents possess a bachelor's degree or higher compared to a 20% national average. This is in large part due to the presence of UNC at Chapel Hill, consistently ranked as one of the top public universities in the nation. Educational achievement for both the Chapel Hill- Carrboro City School district and the Orange County School district is also higher than the state averages on most indicators. The Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School district is rated as the top achieving school district in the state. Both districts also experience lower than state average drop out rates, although there is a considerable difference between the two districts. There is still a minority achievement gap present in our schools that many are working to narrow.

Extremely Low Teen Pregnancy Rates

The 2002 rate of teen pregnancy in Orange County for young women ages 15-19 was 23.1 per 1000 compared to the state rate of 64.1. Only one other county in North Carolina reported a lower rate. Despite this good news, there were still 114 pregnancies among women 18 or younger in the year 2002, including 6 pregnancies to girls ages 12-14. Again, there are significant disparities between whites and minorities with a four-fold difference in pregnancy rates. Several area programs are working to prevent teen pregnancy such as Teens Climb High at the Women's Center and the Teen Talk peer education program through Planned Parenthood. The Adolescent Parenting Program through DSS works with teen mothers to help them stay in school and avoid second pregnancies.

Strong UNC Health Care System

The UNC Health Care System contains physician practices located in community settings both in this county and in other counties, extensive outpatient services, specialty referral services, and four hospitals (Children’s, Women’s, Neuropsychiatric, and North Carolina Memorial). In addition, the hospital is a Level III Trauma Center. While UNC is a state hospital that serves patients from all 100 counties in North Carolina, nearly 38,000 Orange County residents saw a physician associated with one of the UNC Health Care System practices in the past year.

Low Diabetes Rates

The death rate due to diabetes in Orange County is far below both the 2010 North Carolina Healthy Carolinians goal and the US Healthy People 2010 goal. It is difficult to determine how many people are actually living with diabetes, though the 2002 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey indicated only 3% of Orange County residents had been told by their doctor that they were diabetic. A low death rate may indicate that those persons with diabetes are successfully managing their disease; not that we have less of it in our population.

“I have learned a lot that I didn’t know before about my condition (diabetes), medications, and how to take them. This clinic was very helpful.”

Diabetes Foot Clinic Participant

Community-based programs such as the foot clinics sponsored by the Department on Aging, Orange County Health Department, and the Student Health Action Coalition provide health education on diabetes management to those living with the disease.

Low Smoking Rates

Only 12.8% of Orange County adults reported that they were smokers in 2002. The NC 2010 objective is 12.5%. Among high school students however, the rates are higher. Both school districts are now 100% tobacco free and there is a new teen tobacco prevention project being implemented in both school districts. A significant number of area tobacco farmers have begun growing alternate crops such as strawberries, lessening the dependence of the community on tobacco.

Good Maternal and Infant Health Indicators

Orange County rates for infant deaths, low birth weight, and neonatal mortality are all either right at the NC 2010 objectives or are slightly better than those desired levels. 90% of Orange County women who were pregnant started prenatal care in the first trimester, which meets the 2010 objective. Unfortunately, maternal and infant health are also areas where disparities between whites and African-Americans continue to exist.

Good Dental Prevention Indicators

This is particularly true of children where we have had success with early prevention programs. 85% of the fifth graders receiving screening were cavity free in 2001-2002, right at the NC 2010 objective. 49% of fifth graders had sealants on their permanent teeth. All major public water systems in Orange County fluoridate their water, a significant preventive measure for reducing caries.



In 2004, the Orange County Partnership for Young Children paired up with the Orange County Health Department, the UNC School of Dentistry and the Durham-Orange Dental Society to "Give Kids a Smile". Eighteen dentists provided free screening for 700 preschool children.



The Healthy Choices Committee of Healthy Carolinians, along with 20 Healthy Carolinians partner agencies, hosted a Family Fun & Fitness Day in October 2003 at the Chapel Hill Community Center Park to promote physical activity.

Family Fun & Fitness Day



Two hundred people enjoyed the events of the day including a walk on the Bolin Creek trail, demonstrations, information booths and games for all ages.

High Level of Physical Activity

Based on data from the 2002 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 51.4% of Orange County adults participate in the recommended amount of physical activity. The current recommendation is for adults to perform at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on 5 or more days of the week. The NC 2010 Goal is only 20%, so we are far ahead on this measure.

Low Crime Rates

Residents often stated during focus groups that they found Orange County to be a safe, secure place to live. Over a ten-year period, the average was 6,092 index crimes per year, the vast majority of which were larcenies. The crime rate both on the state and local level has dropped over the past ten years, and the rate of crime in Orange County remains lower than the state average.

“In our community, police and courts are tremendously talented and caring and work very hard to collaborate”

Causes for Concern

While the areas of celebration are evidence that Orange County lives up to its reputation of being an excellent place to live and raise a family, secondary data reveals some areas of concern and residents have identified other areas important to them that need serious attention to improve our collective living situation. This summary will highlight ten areas of concern starting with six issues that were chosen by the community for focus and another four health issues that are strongly substantiated by recent statistics.

Barriers to Receiving Health Care Services...

- ▶ cost of healthcare
- ▶ lack of insurance
- ▶ geographic availability of services

This was the top community priority. Despite the affluence of Orange County with a median family income of \$59,874, nearly 15% of Orange County residents are without health insurance; and more than 14% were living below the federal poverty level. The presence of the large UNC student population does skew the poverty figure. However, there are areas separate from the University, within the county, where many residents have incomes below the federal poverty line and a significant number of these are families with young children.

Barriers to health care services go beyond affordability, although affordability of health care was the number one concern that arose in the community assessment. Other barriers include the disparity in treatments provided to minority residents even when they access health care, and the concentration of services in the southern part of the county was also noted as a barrier to northern residents, especially those with lower incomes and without adequate transportation.

“I took my child there...and when I showed them my Medicaid card, they told me they couldn’t see him, and I left with my spirits on the floor.”

Obesity Among Children and Adults

Obesity was the second issue selected by the community for a priority area of focus. There has been an alarming increase in overweight and obesity in all age groups in NC and Orange County is no exception. In this county, almost 50% of the over 45 population are overweight and over 20% of women are obese according to the 2002 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey. Of particular concern is overweight and obesity in children, because of the long-term implications for heart disease, diabetes, and stroke. Overweight and obesity are complex conditions that can be reduced by improved nutrition and an increase in physical activity. Community efforts will be needed on multiple levels, to change environments and policies, as well as individual behaviors, in order to effect long lasting results.

“When you’re a freshman, you go to health [class], and they tell you about being overweight, and nutrition....and then you go to the cafeteria, and you can’t eat healthy [food] there.”

Orange County Teen

The Healthy Choices Committee of Healthy Carolinians is focused on adult health promotion including increasing physical activity, improving nutrition, and thus decreasing obesity and overweight, while the Cooperative Extension’s Orange on the Move Coalition, is focused on these same issues for children.

High Rates of Substance Abuse

Applying national study statistics to Orange County data, the Orange, Person, Chatham Mental Health Area Program estimates that there could be between 5,600 and 11,000 Orange County residents who are in need of some type of substance abuse service. Data indicates that in a best case scenario only half of those who need such services are receiving them.

Alcohol use by middle and high school students is also alarmingly high as is the prevalence of drug use by high school students. There is very little difference between the districts in the use of either alcohol or drugs. This area was the third of the high priority areas chosen for further work by the community.

“People have a perspective that alcohol addiction is only kids that come from a certain type of family, and I don’t think that’s true. I work with just as many kids who come from well-educated families who are well off as I do from lower-income families. I think it’s just that people who have more money hide it better, and have the ability to get private treatment.”

Service provider

Access to Mental Health Services

This was the fourth priority area of concern identified by the community. Residents felt that there was already a shortage of mental health services and an inability to afford them. Combined with the stigma associated with mental illness and the impending changes in mental health services due to statewide reform, there was great concern expressed about mental health in Orange County. The Advocates for Adolescents Committee of Healthy Carolinians is working on a collaborative effort with the school systems, mental health agency and other community agencies to improve mental health services for adolescents.

Access to Dental Health Services for Low-Income Populations

While Orange County has positive preventive indicators for oral health, the limited access to dental health services for low-income populations was ranked as the fifth most important health issue. The high cost of dental care makes it virtually unaffordable for those families with middle incomes who do not have dental insurance. Increasingly high dental insurance premiums, high co-pays and deductibles are also making it difficult for families to get dental care. Finding a provider that will accept Medicaid is also an issue.

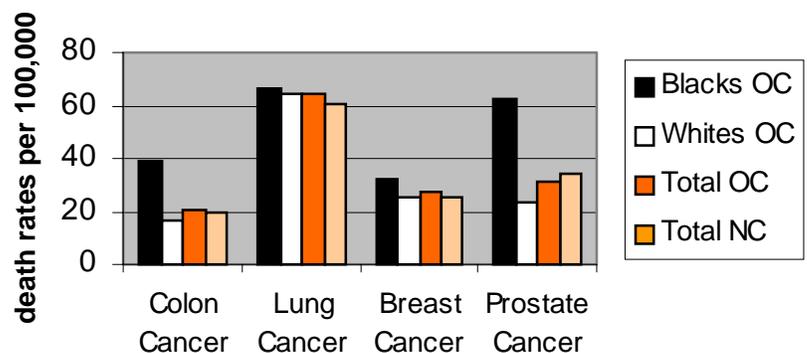
Degrading Air Quality

Finally, there is community concern over the quality of the air we breathe. Although many participants mentioned the beauty of living in Orange County, the quiet and green spaces, they also lamented the traffic and problems of ozone and air pollution. Due to the crisscrossing of the county by interstate highways 40 and 85 and a high level of commuter traffic, the air quality of the county has worsened over the past few years.

High Cancer Rates

Cancer was the leading cause of death in the County from 1999-2001. The overall death rate attributable to cancer is 213.5 per 100,000 in Orange County. Statistics indicate the number of people with lung, breast, colon, and prostate cancer is also high. For example, the breast cancer incidence in Orange County was the highest in the state over the five-year period from 1996-2000. There are also large disparities in the death rates between minority residents and their white counterparts with minorities experiencing more than twice the rates of colon and prostate cancer as whites. While cancers may not be totally preventable, early screening and detection can often lead to improved health through early treatment. A healthy lifestyle can also help reduce the risk of some forms of cancer.

Cancer Death Rates 1999-2001
for Orange County (OC) by Race
and OC Compared to North Carolina



“Rising rates of cancer are a huge problem and they come from diet and smoking.”

Health care provider



Child Abuse Prevention Month Display, April 2004

High Rate of Reported and Substantiated Child Abuse and Neglect

Orange County is ranked 51st among the 100 counties in the number of child abuse investigations per 1,000 children. Reports of child abuse and neglect have increased over the last four years. It is unclear whether this represents an increase in actual

abuse or reflects a growing community awareness resulting in more reports. Regardless, this area is of concern, since child abuse has long-term effects on children and families and ultimately our whole community. Strong collaborations have begun between related service agencies and it will be important to continue and strengthen those collaborations.

The Advocates for Children committee of Healthy Carolinians has brought together over 15 community agencies to address the issue of child abuse, raise awareness about the problem, provide education and training to professionals on recognition and response as well as education and prevention information to parents.

High Suicide Rates

In Orange County in 2002, there were 12.8 suicides per 100,000, which is higher than the NC 2010 target of 8 and slightly higher than the state rate of 11.6. Substance abuse and mental illness are both significant contributing factors to a high suicide rate. While residents did not express a great deal of concern about suicides, substance abuse and mental health were two of the community's top priorities.

High Unintentional Injury Rates

Deaths and non-fatal injuries due to motor vehicle crashes were lower than the Healthy Carolinians 2010 objectives. However, the number of such incidents that were alcohol-related was extremely high, with 26.5% of fatal crashes and 7.9% of non-fatal crashes being alcohol-related. In addition, non-motor vehicle related injury deaths were significantly higher than the state average with 29.4/100,000 deaths in Orange County versus 22.3/100,000 on average in the state. Non-motor vehicle related injuries were the 5th leading cause of death in Orange County, most often caused by falls and poisonings. Injuries and poisonings were the 4th leading cause of hospitalizations.



Our Call to Action

Many efforts are currently underway to address some of the priority issues, especially in the area of weight management and nutrition, but new initiatives will be required to respond to some of the more pressing and difficult issues such as barriers to accessing health care and the need for more substance abuse services. The overarching issues, relating to the economy and the cost of living, will require long-term commitment. To improve quality of life for the citizens of Orange County, particularly those who face economic, emotional and physical challenges; government, business, industry and all residents will need to be involved.

To find out how you can become involved, please contact the Coordinator of Healthy Carolinians of Orange County at 968-2022 ext 291. Committees and work groups are currently being formed to address the top ten areas of concern. Healthy Carolinians needs community participation to find creative solutions so that all Orange County residents can choose health as their first priority.

Healthy Carolinians Member Agencies

Adolescent Parenting Program
ARC of Orange County
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of NC
Carol Woods Retirement Community
Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce
Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools
Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation
Chapel Hill Police Department
Child Care Services Association
Communities in Schools of Orange County
Department of Juvenile Justice and
Delinquency Prevention
Early Intervention and Family Services
El Centro Latino
Family Home Visiting Program
Family Resource Centers
Family Violence Prevention Center
Flynt-Mullinix Healthcare Consulting
Freedom House
Health Check/Health Choice
Hillsborough Exchange Club Family Center
Horizons Program
Interfaith Council of Social Services
OC Board of Commissioners
OC Board of Health
OC Cooperative Extension
OC Department on Aging
OC Dept of Social Services
OC Early Head Start
OC EMS
OC Health Department
OC Managers Office
OC Partnership for Young Children

OC Rape Crisis Center
OC Recreation and Parks
OC Schools
OPC Mental Health
Planned Parenthood of Central NC
Safe Communities
Teens Climb High
The Community Backyard
UNC-Chapel Hill School of Nursing
UNC-Chapel Hill School of Public Health
UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work
UNC Hospitals
UNC Injury Prevention Center
UNC Wellness Center
Volunteers for Youth
YMCA



Thanks to the residents of Orange County, the Community Health Assessment Team members and all of the Healthy Carolinians partners and member agencies who helped to guide and make the assessment a true community process.

Thanks also to UNC Hospitals for partially underwriting the printing of this publication.

Cover photos by David Hunt.

