



Alexander County

State of the County's Health Report—2008

Overview of Alexander County

This is a yearly report that gives a snapshot on the health status of our county. The report provides an overview of the progress of our efforts toward improving the priority areas identified in our Community Health Assessment. The county wide needs assessment was conducted in Alexander County in October of 2006. Local media venues reported where the survey could be assessed. Staff surveyed at the local Wal-Mart, local industries and at the Alexander County Health Department.

The five health priorities identified with our Community Health Assessment process are:

1. Influenza
2. Asthma
3. Cardiovascular Disease
4. Sexually Transmitted Diseases
5. Mental Health

Review of Morbidity and Mortality Data

Alexander County had a higher age adjusted average death rate from 2002-2006 than the state average per 100,000 people for the diseases:

1. Cerebrovascular Disease—61.4 versus 61.1 for the state.
2. Cancer: Trachea, Bronchus, and Lung— 75.9 versus 59.8 for the state.
3. Pneumonia and Influenza— 43.3 versus 22.5 for the state.
4. Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases— 47.5 versus 47.1 for the state.

5. Alzheimer's disease—31.3 versus 27.7 for the state.

Mortality statistics (2002-2006) for Alexander County were higher than the State's rate for the following causes of death per 100,000 populations:

1. Unintentional Motor Vehicle Injuries-- 23.0 versus 19.1 for the state.
2. All Other Unintentional Injuries—30.8 versus 27.0 for the state.
3. Suicide—18.1 versus 11.6 for the state.

Alexander County had a lower death rate in 2002-2006 than the State average per 100,000 population for the following diseases:

1. Colon, Rectum, and Anus Cancer—17.5 versus 18.2 for the state.
2. Pancreas Cancer—9.8 versus 11.0 for the state.
3. Female Breast Cancer—19.6 versus 25.7 for the state.
4. Prostate Cancer—24.0 versus 29.1 for the state.
5. Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis—7.2 versus 8.8 for the state.
6. Septicemia—10.4 versus 14.4 for the state.
7. Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and Nephrosis—12.6 versus 18.2 for the state.

Mortality Statistics (2002-2006) for Alexander County were lower than the State's rate for the following cause of death per 100,000 populations:

1. Homicide—4.0 versus 7.2 for the state
2. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome—1.5 versus 5.1 for the state.

2002-2006 NC Resident Race and Sex- Specific Age-Adjusted Death Rates
Standard = Year 2000 U.S. Population; *Rates per 100,000 Population
Alexander County

| CAUSE OF DEATH: | White Male Deaths | White Male Rate | White Female Deaths | White Female Rate | Minority Male Deaths | Minority Male Rate | Minority Female Deaths | Minority Female Rate | Overall Deaths | Overall Rate |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| All Causes | 719 | 1064.8 | 685 | 741.8 | 46 | 1160.8 | 42 | 682.0 | 1,492 | 882.3 |
| Diseases of Heart | 188 | 295.4 | 148 | 159.6 | 8 | 185.9 | 18 | 277.2 | 362 | 216.6 |
| ----Acute Myocardial Infarction | 71 | 106.0 | 59 | 63.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 83.5 | 135 | 79.4 |
| ----Other Ischemic Heart Disease | 77 | 122.6 | 41 | 44.0 | 3 | 79.9 | 4 | 56.2 | 125 | 74.7 |
| Cerebrovascular Disease | 33 | 53.3 | 59 | 63.9 | 3 | 64.9 | 3 | 53.8 | 98 | 61.4 |
| Cancer | 186 | 250.9 | 146 | 154.5 | 11 | 314.8 | 4 | 70.0 | 347 | 193.8 |
| ----Colon, Rectum, and Anus | 14 | 19.9 | 17 | 18.2 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 31 | 17.5 |
| ----Pancreas | 8 | 10.5 | 7 | 7.4 | 2 | 71.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 17 | 9.8 |
| ----Trachea, Bronchus, and Lung | 85 | 111.5 | 49 | 51.4 | 4 | 97.2 | 2 | 35.7 | 140 | 75.9 |
| ----Female Breast | 1 | 1.2 | 19 | 19.8 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 20 | 19.6 |
| ----Prostate | 15 | 23.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 35.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 16 | 24.0 |
| Diabetes Mellitus | 16 | 22.4 | 11 | 11.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 75.9 | 31 | 18.1 |
| Pneumonia and Influenza | 27 | 49.1 | 38 | 41.3 | 1 | 36.1 | 1 | 13.3 | 67 | 43.3 |
| Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases | 40 | 64.0 | 36 | 37.3 | 5 | 127.5 | 1 | 14.9 | 82 | 47.5 |
| Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis | 10 | 13.1 | 3 | 3.2 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 13 | 7.2 |
| Septicemia | 9 | 15.1 | 7 | 7.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 17.9 | 17 | 10.4 |
| Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and Nephrosis | 10 | 14.7 | 9 | 9.9 | 1 | 35.9 | 1 | 13.3 | 21 | 12.6 |
| Unintentional Motor Vehicle Injuries | 22 | 27.5 | 18 | 22.0 | 1 | 20.1 | 0 | 0.0 | 41 | 23.0 |

| CAUSE OF DEATH: | White Male Deaths | White Male Rate | White Female Deaths | White Female Rate | Minority Male Deaths | Minority Male Rate | Minority Female Deaths | Minority Female Rate | Overall Deaths | Overall Rate |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| All Other Unintentional Injuries | 26 | 36.2 | 23 | 26.4 | 2 | 43.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 51 | 30.8 |
| Suicide | 23 | 27.7 | 9 | 10.8 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 32 | 18.1 |
| Homicide | 4 | 5.0 | 3 | 3.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 7 | 4.0 |
| Alzheimer's disease | 11 | 23.0 | 35 | 38.6 | 1 | 36.1 | 0 | 0.0 | 47 | 31.3 |
| Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome | 2 | 2.1 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 20.8 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 1.5 |

Alexander County Health Priorities

1. Influenza

The Flu (Influenza) is no longer the leading cause of death in Alexander County. With the impending potential for a flu pandemic our community has focused efforts to improve interventions. Accomplishments to date include:

1. Collaborating with community partners on our local pandemic flu plan.
2. Outreach education efforts to prepare our citizens with personal home plans.
3. Developed and disseminated preparedness education packets to over 2,000 homes.
4. Provided multiple community presentation on pandemic flu preparedness.
5. Distributed preparation and family ready checklists to all students.
6. Exercised our mass vaccination and preparedness plans.
7. Flu vaccination clinics have been provided throughout the county.

Potential areas for future interventions:

Our community will continue to educate and prepare for potential flu pandemic. More work needs to be done to ensure that our community is knowledgeable. Many of our citizens are financially unable to prepare surplus in the event of an emergency. Therefore our community must continue to develop contingency plans for most vulnerable populations.

2. Asthma

Asthma is the most common chronic condition in school age children in our community. According to the annual school health report more school days are lost from asthma related illnesses than any other condition. Accomplishments to date include:

1. Completed 1st full year of Asthma Coalition.
2. Asthma Coalition has distributed 1000 clipboards to coaches. Clipboards are printed with Asthma information.
3. Surveyed local restaurants on smoking vs. non smoking environments and influenced many to go smoke free.
4. Developed and provided Asthma education program to all coaches in Alexander County Recreation Department.
5. Developed brochure to distribute to community events (ex. Hiddenite Celebration, Apple Festival, etc...)
6. Asthma Coalition has developed asthma coalition logo and strategic plan.

Potential areas for future interventions:

Asthma coalition's next steps include seeking funding for Air Quality flags for every school. Air Quality flags would increase awareness and assist in Asthma Management of our students.

We are also in the process of putting together first aid kits that will be given out to the recreation department.

We will be holding an Asthma Forum on April 23, 2009 at CVCC's campus in Taylorsville for all students and parents who have been diagnosed with Asthma.

The Coalition will continue to address improving asthma management to reduce hospitalizations. With better asthma control, those affected can live a healthier, more active lifestyle.

3. Cardiovascular Disease

Heart disease and strokes are the most common cardiovascular disease. The economic impact of cardiovascular disease for our community continues to rise.

Sedentary lifestyles, high fat diets and increased Body Mass Index are leading contributors. Our student populations continue to have higher BMI's. Our latest BMI screening in 2006 revealed 46.5% of our seventh graders were considered overweight.

Accomplishments to date include:

1. Applied for a grant to improve a park in Alexander County but was denied.
2. Eat Smart Move More Programs offered in Alexander County in partnership between The Alexander County Health Department and The Alexander County Cooperative Extension.
3. County employee wellness program enhanced, wide variety of wellness programs are offered.

Potential areas for future interventions:

We must continue to develop more accessible walking tracks in all our communities. More work needs to be done to educate our community on reducing risk factors for cardiovascular disease

Continue to collaborate with community partners to increase awareness of prevention.

Strategies to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease

4. Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Sexually transmitted diseases remain a major public health challenge in Alexander County. Substantial progress has been made in diagnosing and treating sexually transmitted diseases. From recent years data, we saw an estimated 300% increase in new infections. We think this number has improved within our county. Accomplishments to date include:

1. Alexander County Health Department is Continuing Outreach efforts to educate the public on sexually transmitted diseases in hopes to cause a decline in new cases of sexually transmitted diseases in our county.

Potential areas for future interventions:

Efforts must continue to raise awareness and educate citizens on prevention strategies. We must continue to work with our community partners to identify at risk populations for increased education, prevention efforts and enhanced screenings.

5. Mental Health

Mental health is defined in Health People 2010 as encompassing the ability to engage in productive activities and fulfilling relationships with other people, to adapt to change, and to cope with adversity. Mental health is an integral part of personal well being. Accomplishments to date include:

1. New collaboration between Alexander County Health Department and New River Behavioral Healthcare.
2. Alexander County now has a new LME, recently changed from Foothills Mental Health to Smokey Mountain Regional Group.

Potential areas for future interventions:

The continued expansion of health services is a tremendous need for Alexander County. With expansion of services a focus area on substance abuse interventions need to be at the forefront. Access to Mental Health services has been greatly reduced with the implementation of Mental Health reform. A new mental health sub committee has recently been formed within Alexander County. The committee is developing strategies to overcome challenges in recruiting qualified local LME's.

New Initiatives

Alexander County Commissioner's Task Force obtained certification for Healthy Carolinians for the years 2008-2010. The Thad. B Wester Community of Excellence Award was also presented to the group at the annual Healthy Carolinians Workshop on October 10th, 2008 for outstanding achievement in promoting important health objectives and increased awareness of disease prevention In the Healthy Carolinians community.

Alexander County received a grant from the Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF-SIG). A DWI taskforce was formed in hopes to reduce alcohol related crashes in Alexander County. The community advisory panel consists of a variety of community representatives from local agencies. The committee has developed a strategic plan and various health education programs and media advocacy events to draw attention to educational activities concerning personal consequences of drinking and driving, DWI laws, and responsible adult drinking behavior.

Alexander County has also recently developed a new mental health sub committee; this committee will use strategies to combat emerging issues with mental health in our county.

Community Advertisement

Alexander County Health Department plans to distribute this year's SOTCH report to the Alexander County Board of Health, County Commissioners Office, posting at various other county departments (library, school board administration, DSS), and will also be linked to our county website.

