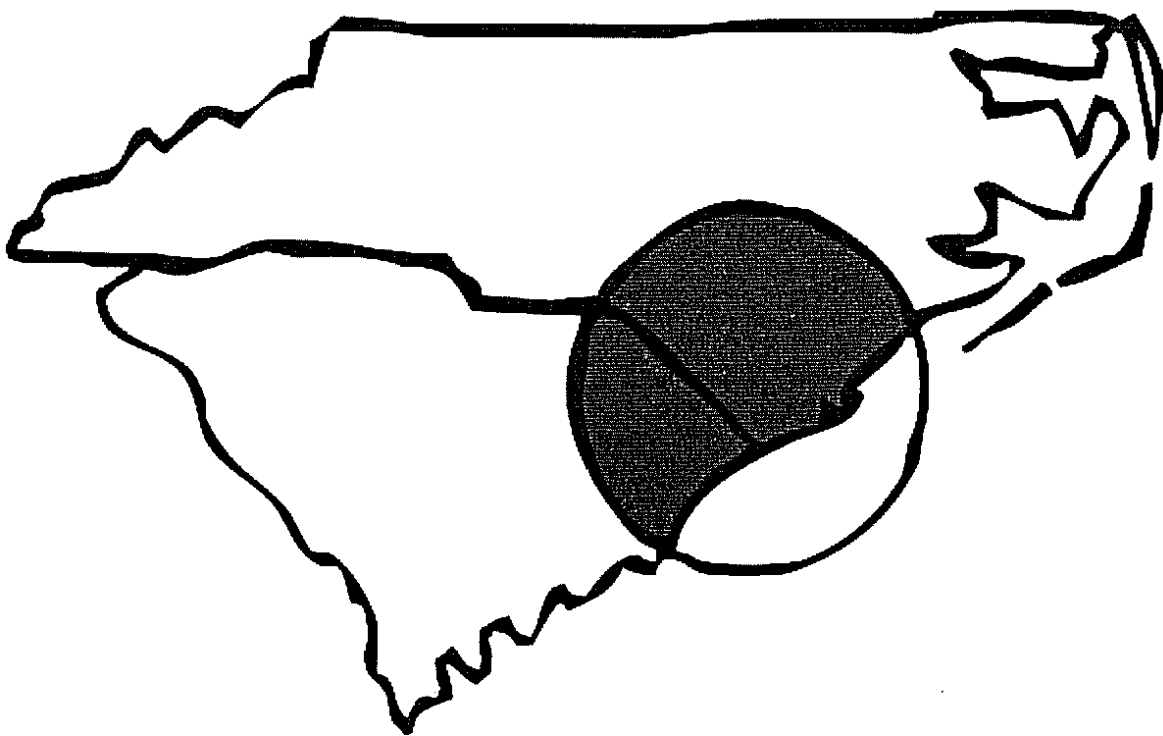


# Health Department Assessments



**COASTAL CAROLINAS**  
**HEALTH ALLIANCE**

**ONSLOW COUNTY  
COMMUNITY HEALTH  
ASSESSMENT  
2004**

## **Introduction**

Onslow County has a flat, gently rolling terrain that slopes from an altitude of 63 feet at the town of Richlands to sea level and covers a total of 756 square miles encompassing nearly 500,000 acres. Of this total, 151,000 acres make up U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. The city of Jacksonville is home to the County government, and the areas surrounding Jacksonville comprise the major population centers and growth area in the County. The County is home to nearly 150,000 people and in addition to Sneads Ferry, includes the towns of Holly Ridge, Jacksonville, North Topsail Beach, Richlands, Swansboro, and parts of Surf City. Onslow County is also home of Camp Lejeune, the US Marine Corps largest amphibious training facility

Onslow County also offers a natural playground for the ultimate in outdoor coastal recreation and sports with over 30 miles of beautiful beaches sprinkled with shells, waters teeming with an abundance of marine life, forests filled with sporting wildlife, and farmland rich with harvests. The New River, despite its name, is known to be one of the oldest rivers in America. It is the only large river in the continental United States with headwaters and mouth in the same County, Onslow. It is also one of the few rivers of any size in the U.S. that flows almost due south.

## **Establishment of the Community Assessment Team**

The Community Health Assessment team formation began in early 2004 by compiling a committee made up of interested agency and community representatives. The following comprise our Community Health Assessment Team:

- Community Health Improvement Process (CHIP)
- Onslow County Health Department
- Onslow Memorial Hospital
- Onslow County Behavioral Health Services
- Onslow County Partnership for Children
- Jacksonville Police Department
- United Way
- MCCS Health and Fitness
- City of Jacksonville Community Development
- Coastal Carolina Health Alliance

Media Partners Include:

- Beasley Broadcasting (KISS 102 FM)
- Jones Onslow EMC
- Jacksonville Daily News
- Channel 10, Time Warner
- City of Jacksonville Water Department
- Onslow Memorial Hospital Website
- Onslow County Health Department Website

The committee initially met to determine its major tasks, develop a timeline, and form subcommittees for data collection, forum planning and publicity. The committee met monthly throughout the process to evaluate and discuss current strategies of the Community Assessment. During the month of May the subcommittees met to determine potential focus groups, interviewees, and question formats. Between June and August four focus groups consisting of Health Care Providers, Hispanics, Daycare Providers/Parents, and Senior Citizens were held to discuss needs of the community. The Community Health Assessment Survey went online July 1, 2004 to be filled out by interested County Residents. In addition, paper surveys were distributed at multiple events such as Onslow Memorial Hospital and Onslow County Health Department Registration, various Community Health Fairs, Wal-Mart, National Night Out, Car Dealerships, Apartment Complexes, Grocery Stores, Pharmacies, Senior Center, Library, Department of Social Services, Coastal Carolina Community College, Boys and Girls Club Parents, and distributed via e-mail lists. During the month of September, 150 paper surveys were mailed to local Faith Based Organizations. In October and November the Onslow County Health Department Staff met to collect and analyze the data to be presented to the Community Health Assessment Team for review and discussion of community needs. Also, the Committee discussed the best way to disseminate the information to the public and interested parties.

### **Agency Collaborations:**

In early 2004, interested agency and community representatives were invited to participate on the Community Health Assessment team. The Community Health Assessment team met monthly in addition to frequent communication through e-mail, phone and personal contact. Committee members were asked to identify sources to distribute surveys throughout the County. Committee members participated in distribution of surveys and leading of focus groups.

### **Methodology Used to Collect Data:**

To start, a regional needs assessment was conducted by the Coastal Carolina Health Alliance based on 180 names provided by the Onslow County Health Department. These names were comprised of key leaders and professionals in Onslow County.

Several surveys used by various organizations were examined to assist in development of a tool to assess the needs of Onslow County Residents. The final survey was comprised of questions that dealt with a number of issues important to various Committee Members and Organizations as well as coinciding with secondary data available.

An attempt was made to identify 10% of the population to survey through Onslow County tax records. However, due to the large number of military families stationed throughout the County, and high numbers of rental homes and apartments, it would have been impossible to get an accurate picture of Onslow County's needs by excluding this sect of the population. Based on the above mentioned it was determined that the best method of surveying would be to distribute surveys through outreach activities and various establishments within strategic locations throughout the County.

The Community Health Assessment Survey was published online through the Onslow County Health Department website on July 1, 2004 to be filled out by interested County Residents. The online survey website was linked through multiple collaborative agency websites such as Onslow Memorial Hospital. In addition, paper surveys were distributed at multiple events such as Onslow Memorial Hospital and Onslow County Health Department Registration, various Community Health Fairs, Wal-Mart, National Night Out, Car Dealerships, Apartment Complexes, Grocery Stores, Pharmacies, Senior Center, Library, Department of Social Services, Coastal Carolina Community College, Boys and Girls Club Parents, and distributed via e-mail lists. During the month of September, 150 paper surveys were mailed to local Faith Based Organizations. In October and November the Onslow County Health Department Staff met to collect and analyze the data to be presented to the Community Health Assessment Team for review and discussion of community needs.

### **Data Collected:**

Data was collected through the following avenues: focus groups, online surveys, drop boxes at strategic locations throughout the county, and outreach activities.

The following information was collected from online and paper surveys that were made available:

- Demographic information: gender, ethnicity, age, education, income, number of persons per household
- Health Care: Insurance (medical and/or dental), accessibility to healthcare, received flu shots, current health conditions
- Health Habits: tobacco use, alcohol intake, physical activity participation, dining out, seatbelt usage, weapons in the home
- Health Screening: male/female yearly exams (pap smear, mammogram, prostate), colon cancer screening
- Community Needs (issues selected from multiple choices in each category): chronic diseases, community issues, community environmental concerns

The following are questions asked of each focus group participants:

#### Questions about the Community

- When you think about Onslow County, what are some of the first things that come to your mind?
- What are some of the best things about your community?
- What are some of the major problems for Onslow County?

#### Health and Welfare Improvement

- What would a healthy community look like to you? Think in broad terms: physical, mental, social well-being.
- Think about Onslow Co. What do you see as the major health concerns in our county?
- What do you see as the major social concerns in county?
- What environmental issues concern you in the Onslow County?

## Services

- What are some of the services for senior citizens that you would like to see provided in county?
- What are some of the services for adolescents you would like to see in our county?
- What are some services for children that you would like to see provided in our county?
- Think back; tell about some of your experiences accessing health care, both positive and negative.
- Do you or anyone you know have difficulty with transportation to appointments?
- If you or someone you know needed special services or health education for issues such as substance or alcohol abuse, AIDS/HIV, mental health or other issues such as housing, where would you go? Do you feel it is easy to receive these services?
- What additional services or changes to existing services do you feel are needed?
- If you had unlimited resources to improve the quality of life in our county, how you spend the money? What would you do first?

Secondary data was gathered from the State Center for Health Statistics and compiled by Coastal Carolina Health Alliance and Onslow County Health Department.

## **Data Analysis:**

Epi Info™ was utilized to develop a database to enter and analyze data collected. Through this program a total of ~1450 surveys were entered and analyzed.

## **Demographics:**

- The total population of Onslow County based on the 2000 Census is 152,424. Of this total population 116,422 are Caucasian and 36,002 are Minority. Males comprise 83,565 (55%) and females total 68,859 (45%) of the Onslow County population. The largest age group in Onslow County for both male and female is the age bracket of 15-24 years. This is largely due to the presence of Camp Lejeune military base and their families. *Based on results of our survey, the 20-45 year age range was the largest number of respondents. Non-military residents of Onslow County completed the majority of the surveys. However, this does not exclude retired military or dependents of military personnel. Of the approximately 1450 surveys collected, 71% of the respondents were Caucasian, 19% African American and 10% other ethnicities.*
- *Based on survey results the average household has between 2 (32%) and 3 (23%) persons living in the home. In Onslow County 62% of the respondents were homeowners whereas 28% rent, with the remaining 10% living with others.*
- The 2000 Census indicates the per capita personal income in Onslow County to be \$14,853. *According to the Community Health Assessment data, 30% of the respondents earned \$20,000 or less, with the next highest percentage of respondents earning \$20,000-35,000 at 26%.*
- *Regarding education, the majority of respondents have a high school/GED equivalent or less at 50% and 40% of the respondents have an Associates or Bachelors degree. Having a graduate degree accounts for 9% of the respondents.*

## Health Care:

- *Of the approximate 1450 surveys completed, 80% of the respondents declared having seen a physician within the last year. Additionally, 50% sought care through the local hospital, 35% received treatment from a specialty doctor, 2% were seen at the Caring Community Clinic, and 15% received services at the Onslow County Health Department.*
- *In regards to having an established physician, 83% of respondents answered that they did have an established physician. Conversely, 15% responded that they sought care primarily through the ER.*
- *According to survey data, 62% of respondents indicated that they had dental insurance and 89% indicated they had medical insurance. Of interest, 82% indicated they or a member of their household visited the dentist over the last year.*
- *26.5% of respondents reported having Governmental Insurance (Medicaid, Medicare, Health Choice). Tricare (Active/Retired Military) was reported by 29% of respondents. Private/Other insurance was indicated by 48%. These statistics include persons who may carry multiple insurances.*
- *Respondents were asked to check what medical/chronic conditions that they currently are experiencing. Of the choices, the top three selected were high blood pressure, weight problems, and diabetes. According to the State data, the leading causes of death in Onslow County are heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. According to the State Center for Health Statistics data from 1999-2001, Onslow County has a diabetes rate of 29.3% compared to the state rate of 26.9%. In addition, the rate for total heart disease was 270.1 for Onslow compared to the State rate of 250.2. The age-adjusted rate for cancer deaths in Onslow County is 225.2 compared to the State rate of 201. Also of note, minority males and females in Onslow County are found to have the highest risk for total heart disease, total cancer, diabetes, and stroke.*

## Health Habits

- *According to the 2001 Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data, 34.3% of Onslow County residents over age 18 are current tobacco users. Survey results indicate that 28% of the respondents are tobacco users. Of those who reported yes to the being tobacco users, 6% indicated they smoke around children. With this data a strong correlation is seen with lung cancer rates in Onslow County. From 1996-2000, the rate of lung cancer for Onslow County was 86.8% compared to the state rate of 69.3.*
- *Alcohol use was reported by 53% of those surveyed. Of these, 7% claimed they did not use a designated driver.*
- *Survey results indicated that 15% of respondents do not exercise. However, 54% report that they currently exercise 1-3 times per week, in comparison to the 30% who exercise 3-5 times per week. The Healthy People 2010 goals call for 30% of adults participating in vigorous activity for 20 minutes at least 3 times per week. Onslow County is very close to meeting this goal at 29.8% according to BRFSS data.*
- *Survey results indicate that 84% of respondents dine out 1-3 times a week while 12% dine out 4-5 per week. In addition, 4% stated they dine out daily. Of note, the majority of those who dined out daily were found to be older adults.*

- *Seatbelt usage was reported by 96% of the respondents. Of those who reported having a child under the age of 5, 4% indicated they do not use a child safety seat. In addition, 1% of those stated they used a child safety seat sometimes.*
- *Those who reported having weapons in the home, 31% do not store them in a locked cabinet or use a trigger lock while 69% do. Of those surveyed, 704(53%) promulgated they do not own weapons.*

### Health Screenings

- *Females who answered the survey disclosed 47% had a pap smear this year while 33% had one last year, with 14% not having one in the past two years. 6% of those who answered never had or do not remember having one.*
- *Women who reported having a breast exam/mammogram this year total 41% of responses, while 27% had one last year, with 12% not having an exam in the past two years. 21% disclosed not having an exam at all.*
- *Males who divulged having a prostate/testicular exam this year comprised 29% of total respondents, last year 22%, and greater than 2 years being 19%. 33% reported never having a prostate/testicular exam.*
- *Half of respondents who were over the age of 50 reported having a colonoscopy as a part of a colon cancer screening.*

### Community Needs:

Survey respondents were asked to check what they felt were the most important chronic disease issues (multiple choices). The following is a breakdown of how they reported:

- Cardiovascular disease – 75%
- Stroke – 56%
- Diabetes – 64%
- HIV/AIDS – 48%
  - The Onslow County age adjusted death rate for HIV from 1999-2001 is 2.2 compared to 5.7 for the State.
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases – 34%
  - The Syphilis rate from 1997-2001 was 0.9 in Onslow County compared to 7.2 for the state.
- Asthma needs – 36%
  - In 2001, the asthma hospitalizations rate for Onslow County was 172.8 compared to the State rate of 203.
- Cancer – 67%
- Tuberculosis – 10%
- Other – 5%

Survey respondents were also asked to check what they felt were the most important community issues (multiple choices). The following is a breakdown of how they reported:

- Teen pregnancy – 58%
  - Of note, the teen pregnancy rates for Onslow County (104.4) for females aged 15-19 are much higher than the State (76).
- Mental health – 37%
- Drug and alcohol abuse – 65%
- Dental health – 18%
- Automobile accidents – 34%
- Crime related issues – 44%
  - The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data from 2001 indicated that the rate of physical assault by a stranger, partner, or someone you know for Onslow County (32.7) to be almost double that of the State (17.5) rate.
- Domestic violence – 55%
- Obesity in children – 42%
- Infant mortality – 21%
- Homelessness – 25%
- Other – 2%

And finally, respondents were asked to check what they felt were the most important community environment issues (multiple choices). The following is a breakdown of how they reported:

- Safe places to walk and play – 61%
- Sidewalks and crosswalks – 40%
- Transportation – 45%
- Healthier food choices – 47%
- Smoke free places – 40%
- Job opportunities – 63%
- Wellness screens – 42%
- Access to parks and recreation – 37%
- Other – 6%

### Focus Groups

Health Care Providers focus group was held at the Onslow County Health Department with 10 representatives from various disciplines. Of concern to this group was lack of public transportation, industrial growth, dental care, and a strained working relationship between public services and military resources. Strengths identified include increase in retail growth, the number of public service programs available, and the relationship between community and military in emergency situations (bioterrorism preparedness). Improvements identified by this panel would include affordable access to recreation facilities, better relationship between health care providers and faith organizations, better dissemination of available resources to the public, and increase diversity of medical specialists. This panel divulged the need for increased outreach to the Hispanic population and the need for more free or affordable health care services.

Child Care Providers focus group was held at the Partnership For Children Office with 6 representatives from various day cares. Of concern to this group was unavailability of public

transportation, lack of resources for teenagers and the elderly, and poor environmental policy enforcement. Strengths identified include the slow pace of the county, employment and volunteer opportunities, increased awareness of community and family resources. Improvements identified by this panel would include more smoke-free environments, safe access sidewalks and bike paths for persons of all ages, and low-income summer programs that target teens.

Hispanic residents focus group was held at the Infant of Prague Catholic Church with 14 representatives of this community. Of concern to this group was the difficulty of teens integrating into the public schools with limited English skills, communication from schools in English only, and use of children as interpreters for parents. Improvements identified by this panel would include increased public transportation to outlying areas of the county, translators available in all public agencies, and Hispanic speaking health clinics.

Senior residents focus group was held at the Onslow County Senior Center with 16 representatives of this community. Of concern to this group was the litter on roadways, increase in crime and drug rates, lack of employment opportunities, industry growth, and public transportation. Strengths identified include pleasant community, growth of the community, and a complex for seniors. Improvements identified by this panel include a need for increase in the number of medical services and specialists in the area along with hospital expansion, and transportation throughout the county. They also believe there should be more social activities for teens and seniors, better road and sidewalk conditions, and home improvement opportunities for elderly and disabled.

The common theme among all focus groups include the need for a YMCA and/or a public swimming pool, better job opportunities with industrial growth, a more complete public transit system, and an increase in medical services and specialties in the area.

### **Selection of Health Priorities:**

Upon review of the Community Health Assessment Survey, secondary data, focus group information, and data compiled by the Coastal Carolina Health Alliance, the Community Health Assessment Coalition has determined that the following are health priorities for Onslow County

#### **Medical Priorities:**

- Cardiovascular disease to include hypertension and obesity
- Diabetes and contributing behaviors
- Cancer to include all forms
- Substance Abuse

#### **Community Priorities:**

- Public transportation
- Needs of the Hispanic community
- Safe places to walk and play
- Accessibility to recreational opportunities
- Smoke Free establishments
- Domestic Violence

## **Conclusion**

Many of the health priorities identified by the Community Health Assessment Survey were verified by the secondary data collected and analyzed. This aided the Community Health Assessment Coalition in selecting the medical and community priorities. The medical and community priorities are intertwined in such a manner that improvement in a priority can impact several other priorities. As a result, collaboration beyond the existing coalition will be necessary for Onslow County to improve the health of the residents.