

Columbus County Summary of Assessment Findings

Purpose/Overview

Southeastern North Carolina and northeastern South Carolina is a region with large numbers of ethnic minorities, increased poverty and high risk for chronic health conditions that burden the health care system and reduce quality of life. The region is largely rural with diminished access to many services. In order to assess and prioritize the greatest needs of the community, Coastal Carolinas Health Alliance (CCHA) in conjunction with other contributing community organizations conducted a regional needs assessment. Through the use of both quantitative and qualitative data, health disparities within the region can be identified. Once the disparities are recognized, a plan of action to improve the health of the region can be formulated with focus in such areas. The assessment comprises secondary health statistics as well as primary data collected from local residents via surveys and in some areas, focus groups. This compilation of information provides vital information necessary to identify the overwhelming needs of the area's residents and develop programs to address those needs. CCHA also hopes to obtain grant funding, where appropriate, to aid in launching suitable initiatives.

* All data is calculated as the rate of change over a period of time. Data sets are rate per 100,000 of the population, unless otherwise noted. *

Cause of Death/Health Issues

- The Columbus County incidence rate for AIDS cases **increased 53.23% from 1994 to 2006**. From 2002-2006, the Columbus County AIDS rate also exceeded the NC rate by 53.23%.
- According to hospital discharge reports, the asthma hospitalization rate for all ages in Columbus County decreased 30.29% from 2000-2006. **In 2006, the Columbus County rate was 54.43% higher than the NC rate for all ages.**
- The Asthma hospitalization rate for children ages 0-14 in Columbus County **decreased 61.26% from 2000-2006**; however, the **Columbus County rate exceeded the NC rate in 2006 by 81.48%**.
- The total cancer mortality rate in Columbus County decreased 4.81% from 1994-2006 and remained slightly higher than the NC rate from 2002-2006. **Minority males demonstrated the highest cancer mortality rate** from 2002-2006, with white males coming in second.
- The Colon, Rectum and Anus cancer mortality rate increased slightly by 1.65% from 1994-2006. From 2002-2006, the average rate in Columbus county closely aligned with the average rate for NC.
- The breast cancer mortality rate for Columbus county decreased slightly by .76% from 1994-2006.
- From 1994-2006, the prostate cancer mortality rate in Columbus County **decreased 54.43% and moved below the NC rate for 2002-2006**.



- The Columbus county lung cancer incidence rate **increased 22.97% from 1995-2004**. From 2000-2004 the county rate remained slightly higher than the NC rate by 10.3%.
- The Columbus county mortality rate for Cerebrovascular Disease (stroke) decreased 19.54% from 1999-2006. **From 2002-2006, the Columbus County rate aligned closely with the rate for NC at 62.6 per 100,000 and 61.1 per 100,000, respectively.** Minority males demonstrated the highest rates at both levels.
- The Columbus county mortality rate for Diabetes Mellitus **increased 49.46% from 1994-2006; however, the county rate only exceeded the NC rate by 2.58% from 2000-2006.**
- The total heart disease mortality rate for Columbus county decreased 14.9% from 1994-2006. The **county rate exceeded the NC rate by 46.81% from 2002-2006**, while minority males continued to demonstrate the highest mortality rate with while males coming in second.
- The mortality rate for acute myocardial infarction (heart attack) in Columbus County decreased by 33.72% from 1994-2006; however, **the county rate was 46.08% higher than the NC rate for 2002-2006.**
- The mortality rate for other ischemic heart disease in Columbus county decreased by 4.85% from 1994-2006. **From 2002-2006, the county rate exceeded the NC rate by 81.49%.**
- The Columbus county mortality rate for homicide was **126.39% higher than the NC mortality rate from 2002-2006.**
- The syphilis incidence rate for the total population in Columbus County decreased 5.71% from 1994-2006; however, **the county rate exceeded the NC rate by 135.71% from 2002-2006.** The incidence rate for the minority population increased 4.71% from 1994-2006.

Lifestyle Issues

- The number of persons in poverty in Columbus county decreased 8.58% from 1980-2000. The percent of persons in poverty in Columbus county decreased 14.34% from 1980-2000; however **the county rate exceeded the NC rate by 84.55%.**
- The unemployment rate in Columbus county decreased 28.75% from 1996-2006, yet **remained consistently higher than the NC rate** during that time.
- In Columbus county the number of household recipients of food stamps decreased slightly from 1994-2003 by 1.84%.
- The number of persons served in area Alcohol and Drug treatment centers in Columbus county **increased from 1996-2006 by 350%, from 2 people served in 1996 to 9 people served in 2006.**
- The number of persons served in area mental health programs in Columbus county increased 10.78% from 1994-2006.
- In Columbus county the number of public high school dropouts increased slightly by 1.99% from 1994-2005. From 1999-2005 the number of public **high school dropouts in NC decreased 17.49%.**



- The Columbus county mortality rate for unintentional motor vehicle injuries **exceeded the NC rate by 130.37% from 2002-2006.**

Maternal and Infant Health

- The percent of teen pregnancies for girls ages 15-19 in Columbus county **decreased 34.91% from 1994-2006.** The percent of teen pregnancies for girls ages 15-19 in Columbus county exceeded the percent in NC by 44.6% from 2002-2006.
- The percent of teen pregnancies for minority girls ages 15-19 in Columbus county **decreased 40.1% from 1994-2006.** The percent of teen pregnancies in the **minority population exceeded the percent in the white population by 30.37% from 2002-2006.**
- The percent of low birth weight births in Columbus county increased 25.27% from 1994-2006. The percent of low birth weight births in the **minority population exceeded the percent in the white population by 47.85%.**
- In Columbus County the percent of births to mothers who smoke remained fairly consistent at 18.1% in 1994 and 18.7% in 2006.

Community Survey Results

- Based on community survey results, **heart disease/stroke** was strongly felt to be the greatest cause of death, which correlates well with secondary data results discussed above. Cancer was second.
- When asked what the biggest health issue of concern within the community is, the majority reported **drug/alcohol abuse.** Obesity was second.
- **Lack of health insurance and/or unable to pay for doctor's visits** were reported as the major factor which keeps people in the community from seeking medical treatment. No appointments available at the doctor when needed/having to wait too long at doctor's office was second.
- **Income or insurance status** was strongly felt to be the biggest factor affecting the health care of people in the community. Race was second.
- It was felt that people in the community lack funds for **health insurance.** Medicine was second.
- Community members would like to see more: **1) job opportunities;** 2) wellness screens, within the community to help improve the health of family, friends and neighbors; and 3) safe places to walk/play.
- Community members would like to see more: **1) cholesterol/blood pressure/diabetes;** 2) breast cancer; and 3) prostate cancer / Family Planning and HIV/Syphilis screenings or classes in the community all tied at third.
- **64%** of participants in this study support all public places/buildings being tobacco-free. 26% support, but not in or at all public places/buildings. 10% do not support tobacco-free public places/buildings.

