

CATAWBA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH Annual Report

FY 2023-24

HEALTH DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

PLANNING OUT A STRATEGIC PATH

Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, Catawba County Public Health knew we needed to look strategically at how we would



Jennifer McCracken,
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Catawba County
Public Health Director

need to evolve to best address our community's changing needs. We grounded our work through the Community Health Assessment and its cross-cutting health priorities of healthy foods, brain health and access to safe, engaging and active spaces, as well as through a new Strategic Plan, which lays a foundation

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for continued operational excellence and improvement.

Our innovative approach to incorporating Community Health Workers into public health; initiative in developing a program for grandparents raising grandchildren and our tenacity in identifying the cause of lead poisoning in children all resulted in state and even some nationwide recognition for Catawba County Public Health.

Our regional work with the REACH grant, along with increased community engagement, has helped us assess and address the community's needs in unique ways. We also focused on internal capacity and excellence, building a multidisciplinary team that worked to modernize data and explore the future of public health modeling and forecasting, accomplishing Reaccreditation with Honors and receiving the NC Department of Labor's highest recognition for our employee safety program.

All of these things have demonstrated our ongoing commitment to providing the highest-quality, groundbreaking service our community deserves.

LAUNCH OF A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

Public Health set a clear direction for the future with our new Strategic Plan. We remain committed to building upon our history, our role and impact in the community, our purpose as a local health department, and our organizational identity.

We established strategic directions based on emerging trends in our community and organization and began reviewing potential opportunities for action that could advance these directions while aligning with organizational and community needs.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- » Foster and develop a strong public health workforce
- » Strengthen capacity for data-driven decision-making and performance improvement
- » Align organizational priorities with the 2024-27 Community Health Improvement Plan
- » Intentionally address drivers of health



EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

KACEE MORGAN, COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CHARGE NURSE

Communicable Disease Nurse Kacee Morgan participates in disease investigations, serves patients with Tuberculosis, and works with our Adult Health and Immunizations clinics. Kacee's determination, work ethic and knowledge made her a great 2024 Catawba County Public Health Employee of the Year.

From her nomination: "Being a nurse is so much more than just a career choice for Kacee. It is truly who she is at her core. She remains unbelievably graceful and organized in all situations. She has a decorative sign in her office that says, 'I'm a nurse. What's your superpower?' And it couldn't be more fitting. She really is a super hero."



FINANCE

REVENUES

State Grants: \$2,281,367.92
 Private Grants/Donations: \$96,196.45
 Outside Funding (School Health): \$1,224,705.00
 Fee Revenue: \$736,480.24
 Medicaid Revenue: \$1,456,922.86
 Other Revenue: \$6,627,456.70

EXPENDITURES

Administration: \$1,902,888.85
 Care Management: \$1,112,676.90
 Environmental Health: \$1,982,557.54
 School Health: \$2,713,874.62
 Clinical Programs and Services: \$4,711,324.28

2022-23 FY TOTAL: \$12,423,322.19

DEMOGRAPHICS

CLINICAL PROGRAMS



FEMALE: 69%
MALE: 31%

PRIMARY LANGUAGES

English..... 80%
 Spanish... 20%
 Others <1%

AGES

0-19 26%
 20-39 ... 43%
 40-59 ... 21%
 60+ 10%



WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC)

AGES

Infants 26%
 Children 1-5.... 49%
 Women 25%

SERVICE AREAS

- » **BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCER CONTROL PROGRAM (BCCCP):** Provides cancer prevention services to adult women
- » **CARE MANAGEMENT FOR AT RISK CHILDREN (CMARC):** Supports healthy development of children ages birth to 5
- » **CARE MANAGEMENT FOR HIGH RISK PREGNANCY (CMHRP):** Connects pregnant women with resources during pregnancy and after childbirth to help ensure healthy outcomes
- » **COMMUNICABLE DISEASE:** Monitors disease reporting and provides management and treatment of communicable diseases
- » **COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS:** Connect clients with community resources to address underlying determinants of health
- » **EARLY CHILDHOOD SUPPORT TEAM:** Provides health services to children, staff, and families of children at child care centers
- » **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH:** Provides inspection and plan review services to ensure clean water, sanitary septic services, and works with facilities and restaurants to encourage the use of procedures that protect the public from illness
- » **FAMILY PLANNING:** Provides services related to family planning and birth control
- » **IMMUNIZATIONS:** Offers immunizations for children, adults, and international travelers
- » **SCHOOL HEALTH:** Ensures children in grades K-12 have access to health care services
- » **SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE:** Confidential services to prevent the spread of common sexually transmitted diseases
- » **WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC):** Nutrition program that serves children from birth to age 5 and women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or who have recently delivered

ASSURANCE PARTNERSHIPS

- » **CATAWBA VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER - MATERNITY SERVICES:** Prenatal care for women, including those with high-risk medical conditions
- » **KINTEGRA FAMILY DENTISTRY - HICKORY:** Family dental services for children and adults who qualify
- » **CATAWBA PEDIATRIC ASSOCIATES, PA:** Comprehensive medical care and immunizations for children

CATAWBA COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

THANK YOU TO BOARD MEMBERS WHO SERVED EITHER ALL OR PART OF THE 2023-24 FISCAL YEAR.

Susan Knowles, Dr. Bruce Carlton, Dr. Steve Sanderson, William Pitts, Dr. Hannah Glenn, Austin Allran, Dr. Dana Greene, Dr. Eugene Modlin, Shad Walters, Vidal Sipe and Rebecca McLeod.



catawba county
 public health



COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

After more than a year of gathering and analyzing community feedback and available data for our county, Catawba County Public Health released its 2023 Community Health Assessment in early 2024. With help from partner organizations, community members and Catawba County Public Health staff, we identified three priority areas: Brain Health; Access to Healthy Food; and Safe, Engaging and Active Spaces. All three priorities were chosen because they are inclusive and cross-cutting, which means gains in these areas can have a positive impact on multiple health issues in our community.

The health priority selection process involved reviewing community survey results and gathered group feedback; and reviewing health statistics and other data, which shaped the final selection of our community health priorities.

Some important findings from the CHA that led us to these priorities:

Access to Healthy Food: This has been a long-term health priority and, while we are seeing progress, there is still work to be done to improve food security in Catawba County.

Brain Health: This CHA transforms what had previously been called mental health into brain health, providing a

2023 COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT PRIORITIES



more encompassing umbrella over this work. This has been an ongoing health priority in Catawba County for nearly a decade.

Safe, Engaging and Active Spaces: COVID-19's impact on residents extended into their overall wellbeing, and one of the clearest trends emerging from this CHA was a sense of social isolation or lack of connectivity to the community. Less than half of the people who took our community survey reported feeling connected to their community and only half said they felt a sense of belonging. Community spaces are an important place where connections are often made. Creating spaces that are safe and accessible, allow for engaging community

READ THE REPORT

The full Community Health Assessment (CHA) report is published every four years and features a comprehensive overview of the county's health status and health priorities.

The 2023 Community Health Assessment is available online at https://catawbacountync.gov/site/assets/files/2488/catawba_2023_cha_final3.pdf.

The State of the County Health report includes updates to the health priority areas and is available online at <https://scorecard.clearimpact.com/Scorecard/Embed/87888>.

connections, promote opportunities for activity, and take into account individual needs and neighborhood dynamics gives all Catawba County residents an opportunity to make these critical connections and improve their overall health and quality of life.

These priorities will shape initiatives for Public Health and community partners for the next several years as part of the Community Health Improvement Plan, which serves as an action plan that outlines strategies to address the county's health priorities.

REACCREDITATION



Catawba County Public Health has been reaccredited with honors by the North Carolina Local Health Department Accreditation Board. The purpose of the accreditation program is to assure that each local health department has a baseline level of capacity and services to allow them to serve their community. Accreditation assures that agencies are continually assessing

the needs of their communities and striving to provide the highest quality service, all while meeting consistent standards. Catawba County is one of only six agencies in the state that received reaccreditation with honors this year. This is the second time in a row Catawba County has received this designation. Our reaccreditation is effective through 2027.





ENGAGING PRIORITY POPULATIONS

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER PROGRAM

The Catawba County Public Health Community Health Workers Program is founded on the principle that all families in Catawba County should have the opportunity to make choices that allow them to live long, healthy lives, regardless of their income, education, neighborhood or background. The Community Health Workers (CHWs) help make this a reality by linking families to available community services that address the Social Determinants of Health. This includes housing support; utilities; food pantries and other nutrition programs; transportation resources; employment and vocational rehabilitation resources; navigation of clinical care systems, insurance and charity care; and assistance in filling out applications and forms required to receive these services.

By providing these linkages in a peer-support model, the Community Health Workers give everyone a chance to live a healthy life, clearing barriers that prevent people from being able to achieve good health.

Community Health Workers have become an integral part of the community and are an important way for us to operationalize our Strategic Plan by intentionally addressing drivers of health. They were called upon this

year to aid people in the Town of Catawba after a tornado ripped through a neighborhood and again after a large manufacturing layoff. The program has also been awarded \$50,000 by the Catawba County United Way to support our continued work in 2025.



COMMUNITY PRESENCE STRENGTHENS RELATIONSHIPS

Members of the Health Promotion and Strategy Team, with the help of other Public Health staff, attended many community and one-on-one meetings and participated in numerous community events as a way to connect with others and promote the work of Public Health. As we saw in the Community Health Assessment, there are several geographic areas with overlapping health disparities within our county and we have intentionally built and strengthened partnerships and increased our presence in those target areas to better connect with those communities and serve individuals who live in those areas.



REGIONAL REACH GRANT PROVIDES SUPPORT

Catawba County Public Health is a regional co-recipient of a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) REACH (Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health) grant. The total award for our region is more than \$1 million. It helps counties address health disparities in some of our most vulnerable populations and aligns with our current health priorities that were determined during our 2023 Community Health Assessment.

Catawba County Public Health and other local health departments in our region are jointly receiving this 5-year grant aimed at improving health, preventing chronic disease, and reducing health disparities. In Catawba County, we are primarily focusing on increased access to nutritious foods and physical activity opportunities; and supporting places that adopt or strengthen tobacco prevention and control policies.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CAPACITY BUILDING

We received nearly \$30,000 in grant funding from the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) to enhance communicable disease response capabilities by leveraging modeling and forecasting tools to address respiratory disease.

With a focus on Tuberculosis (TB) our interdisciplinary project team conducted

more than 100 hours of training on disease modeling and forecasting and collaborated with a community partner to produce two online, on-demand training videos for providers on TB skin test administration, reading and reporting, and a rack card and TB test reading ruler to assist providers as they conduct tests and report results.

The funding also allowed us to work closely with state epidemiologists and TB consultants to create a staffing model to assist in predicting staff needs in the future based on the complexity of the case.

The project provided us with valuable skills that can be applied to additional communicable diseases.



INVESTIGATION LEADS TO NATIONWIDE FOOD RECALL

A local lead investigation resulted in a nationwide food recall after Environmental Health Specialists identified fruit puree pouches as the source of lead exposure in two Catawba County children with lead poisoning.

Our team conducted multiple site visits to the children's home and child care center, and interviewed parents to identify the possible source of lead exposure. As part of the investigation, extremely high concentrations of

LOCAL

HICKORY DAILY RECORD

Recall initiated

Catawba County health workers play role in identifying lead poisoning

KEVIN GRIFFIN
kgri@hickoryrecord.com
Catawba County health workers played a role in the investigation which spurred a recall of a lead-laden fruit puree for children over the weekend.
On Saturday, the Food and Drug Administration announced a recall of WanaBana apple cinnamon fruit puree, which is sold through Amazon and by retailers Sam's Club and Dollar Tree. The recall came after



ROBERT C. REED, RECORD

Catawba County Environmental Health Administrator Megan McBride discusses the investigation the county undertook that led to a recall of the WanaBana apple cinnamon fruit puree.

lead were found in WanaBana apple cinnamon fruit puree that the children were eating. This resulted in a nationwide recall of the product. Our team was instrumental in identifying

this product and getting it off of the market, thus protecting the health of children everywhere. An advisory was issued to parents and retailers after completion of a joint investigation by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, local health departments, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Teams from Catawba, Cleveland and Madison counties all participated in the investigation.

OPIOID & SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER COORDINATOR

Public Health hired an Opioid and Substance Use Disorder Program Coordinator as a point person to strategically coordinate use of Catawba County's share of opioid settlement dollars. This position serves as an important conduit between the County and local service providers, stakeholders and the public, and is responsible for developing a collaborative plan and guidelines for how opioid settlement

money will be spent in Catawba County. The County will receive approximately \$24 million by 2038, with additional funding expected as further settlements are reached. The coordinator has begun making linkages throughout the community that support prevention and treatment efforts. Several projects have included inmates being released from the Catawba County Detention Center, including initiation

of substance use disorder treatment at release and facilitating the introduction of Community Health Workers to assist inmates in lining up healthcare and other resources prior to release. The coordinator's work has also helped bring available resources together and lay the groundwork for an overdose response team, training support for local school system staff and a substance use education series for Public Health staff.

PROVIDING A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Catawba County Public Health is able to best serve our county when we are healthy and safe ourselves. That is why we place a strong emphasis on workplace safety through training, implementing practices that protect our workforce and engaging employees throughout everything we do to ensure that we are doing everything we can to prevent accidents or illness from work-related causes.

The North Carolina Department of Labor recognized our ongoing efforts Catawba County Public Health as a **Public Sector Carolina Star** safety site for the third time in a row. The



Star program recognizes excellence in occupational safety and health management systems that serve as models for other organizations. We are currently the only health department in North Carolina to be recognized as a Public Sector Star site and the

organization first earned the Star certification in 2013.

The North Carolina Department of Labor also honored Public Health for the fourth year in a row with a **Gold Safety Award** in recognition of our exceptional commitment to workplace safety and health. The Gold Award is primarily determined by the DART rate, which stands for "days away, restricted, transferred." This rate takes into account instances when employees have had to take time off work, had limitations on their activities, or had to change duties due to injuries or illnesses they've experienced while on the job.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS, ACCOLADES & AWARDS

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS CAPABILITIES EXERCISED

Public Health and staff from several other County departments successfully participated in the **McGuire Nuclear Graded Exercise**, which demonstrates coordination among the counties in the McGuire power station's 10-mile Emergency Preparedness Zone, local emergency management, public information and other officials in each county, Duke Energy and the state. This exercise is conducted every two years to meet Federal Emergency Management Agency and Nuclear Regulatory Commission requirements.

WIC BREASTFEEDING PROGRAM RECOGNITION

Our breastfeeding program was recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service as a gold level **WIC Breastfeeding Award of Excellence** recipient. This is the first time we have received this designation. We joined 7 other WIC agencies in North Carolina that received either the Gold or Premiere designations.

AWARDS RECEIVED FOR VAPING, TOBACCO WORK

We were awarded the **Region 4 Transforming Health Youth Champion Award** for our ongoing work to provide training for classroom educators on the CATCH My Breath vaping prevention program and American Lung Association's Not on Tobacco cessation program in all three Catawba County school districts and for providing an opportunity for 15 Kintegra professionals working with students in the schools to attend the Duke-UNC Tobacco Treatment Specialist program to enhance their ability to address student tobacco use. Health Services

Manager Jennifer Lindsay also received an individual award in conjunction with this work.



SUPPORTING LEARNING ABOUT PUBLIC HEALTH

We also had the opportunity to share what public health really means to our community with the inaugural **County Civic Leadership Academy** cohort for residents interested in learning more about County government. We educated these individuals on the role of public health for population health and the services we offer here through direct service provision and partnerships.

MEDICAL RECORDS TEAM RECOGNIZED

Our Medical Records team was recognized as a **North Carolina Health Information Exchange Super User**. This designation is given to agencies that are currently submitting data using the state's system and that submit quarterly audits in a timely manner. Fewer than a third of North Carolina counties were given this recognition. The state's Health Information Exchange is a tool that links together health records from separate locations and medical records systems. It gives health care providers a way to access complete records, reducing duplicated services and giving providers an efficient way to review labs and other tests, medical histories, allergies, medications and more, leading to more accurate diagnoses, improved

coordination between providers and better treatment of medical conditions.

SCHOOL HEALTH RECEIVES INNOVATION AWARD

Catawba County Public Health's School Health program was honored with a prestigious and highly competitive **2023 Civic Excellence in Innovation Award** from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners and Civic Federal Credit Union. Statewide, only 10 innovation award winners are selected each year. Catawba County Public Health's project was for the Grandparents Café program, which serves grandparents and other non-biological parents who are raising school-age children. That program was initiated by one of our School Nurses and has been transitioned to the Western Piedmont Council of Governments to ensure its long-term sustainability.



AMY PHILLIPS NAMED STATE SCHOOL NURSE OF THE YEAR

Amy Phillips was named **School Nurse of the Year** by the School Nurse Association of North Carolina and her accomplishment was recognized by the Catawba County Board of Education. She also received the prestigious North Carolina Public Health Association's Glaxo SmithKline Individual Achievement Award. This award recognizes public health workers and programs that improve children's health.