



2015

## STATE OF THE COUNTY HEALTH REPORT



Andy Smith, Health Director, Warren County Health Department  
Hilda H. Baskerville, Health Education Supervisor, Warren County Health Department  
Gwendetta Tunstall, Chairperson, Healthy Carolinians of Warren County  
Rhonda Mushaw, Healthy Carolinians Coordinator of Warren County

Approved by Warren County Board of Health

January 19, 2016



## **HISTORICAL WARREN COUNTY**

**Photography by: Economic Development Commission, Warren County**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Warren County is located in the northeastern Piedmont section of North Carolina. Warren County is bordered by Virginia to the north, Northampton and Halifax Counties to the east, Franklin and Nash Counties to the south and southeast, and Vance County to the west. The climate of Warren County is an average of 59 degrees Fahrenheit.

State and local government is the leading employment in the county, followed by manufacturing, health care and social assistance. Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting and Fishing is a way of life for some county residents. There are 218,000 acres of forest land in the county, and 90-95% of this land is privately owned. There are various programs available to help landowners with planting young trees and middle age trees prior to the process of maturity. Tobacco was the earliest cash crop grown in Warren County. This crop is still being produced today along with cucumbers, cantaloupes, and grains. Although many residents make their living working for state and local government, there are a few industries remaining in the county.

Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts 2014, Warren County's estimated total population is 20,231. A total of 4.7% ages 0-4, 18.9% age 5-17, 45.1% ages 18-64 and 21.5% 65 and over. The racial breakdown is 41.0 % white and 51.5% black, 5.5% American Indian, 0.4% Asian, 4.0% Hispanic or Latino and 1.6% two or more races. In Warren County, the per capita income is \$19,052 which is much lower than the State's average of \$25,256 for the past twelve months (2013 dollars). Unemployment is a major factor in such a low per capita income. When the unemployment rate of Warren County is compared to the State, the county is much higher. In 2015, Warren County has a range of 7.9 % -9.3% unemployment rates as compared to the state range of 5.2%-6.1%. Persons living below poverty levels in Warren County are 26.2% as compared to the state rate of 17.5 %. The rate slightly increased for both the state and the county from last year. There is a high level of undeveloped areas of the county, which may be a contributing factor to the poverty percentage.

## **Morbidity & Mortality**

The major causes of illness and death in Warren County are chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease and blood pressure or stroke. The leading causes of death for all ages are cancer, diseases of the heart, chronic lower respiratory diseases, Cerebrovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, Nephritis, nephritic syndrome, and nephrosis, pneumonia & influenza, septicemia, Alzheimer's disease and other unintentional injuries. The leading causes of death for the state are cancer, diseases of heart, chronic lower respiratory diseases, cerebrovascular diseases, Alzheimer's disease, other unintentional injuries, diabetes mellitus, influenza and pneumonia, nephritis, nephritic syndrome and nephrosis, and motor vehicle injuries. It is believed that these chronic illnesses can be reduced dramatically though lifestyle changes, including nutrition education, exercise, smoking cessation, and limited alcohol use.

According to the North Carolina Department Health Human Services (NCDHHS) communicable Disease Branch, Warren County exceeded the state with Chlamydia in 2011. Warren County recorded 110 cases of Chlamydia in 2012 which is decreased from the previous year by 5 cases.

There were a total of 108 cases of Chlamydia in 2013. Warren County recorded 66 cases of Gonorrhea for 2012 which is up from the previous year of 52. The number of cases recorded for Gonorrhea in 2013 went down to 43 cases. However, there were no reported cases of primary and secondary syphilis in the past 3 years. Warren County recorded 29 teen pregnancies ages 15 to 19 and a 54.4% pregnancies rate in 2012 while the state recorded 12,535 pregnancies and a 39.6 % rate for the same age group. Warren County reported 8 teen pregnancies for ages 15-17 and the state reported 3,604 for the same age group in 2012. Warren County recorded 29 pregnancies also for the 2013 year for the same age group.

Our area has its share of chronic respiratory problems including asthma, emphysema and lung cancer. The county has a low rate of injury or death from industrial work sites due to little manufacturing in the area and an intense safety program at the county's largest employer.

### **Other Health Concerns for Warren County**

Warren County is one of the poorest counties in the state; citizens are often forced to choose between regular healthcare and doctor visits or such things as groceries, heating fuel or payment of utility bills. The economic situation has always limited a certain group of the population from receiving the services that they not only desire but also desperately need. According to the County Health Ranking & roadmaps for 2015, Warren County has 22% of uninsured citizens compared to the state of 19%. Some citizens when asked if they have health insurance through Marketplace.gov, it is still a challenge for some to get affordable health care insurance. In comparison with the state ratios for primary care physicians Warren County have 6,859:1 while the state shows 1,448:1. Adult obesity for Warren shows 36% and the State shows 29%. The three main industries within the county provide very little stimulus as far as competitive wages, employee insurance benefits, or preventive healthcare programs for its workforce. Even those persons who are self-employed often are not afforded health or dental insurance because of the high cost and their small amounts of working capital.

Where we live has an impact on our health. The health of a community depends on many different factors, including quality of health care, individual behavior, education, jobs and the environment. Health outcomes represent how healthy a county is while health factors are what influences the health of the county. Warren County ranked 79 in health outcomes and 92 in health factors. Health outcomes have been improved by addressing all health factors with effective, evidence-based programs and policies. The Health Department continuously seeks funding sources to provide as many services as possible for the citizens of the county.

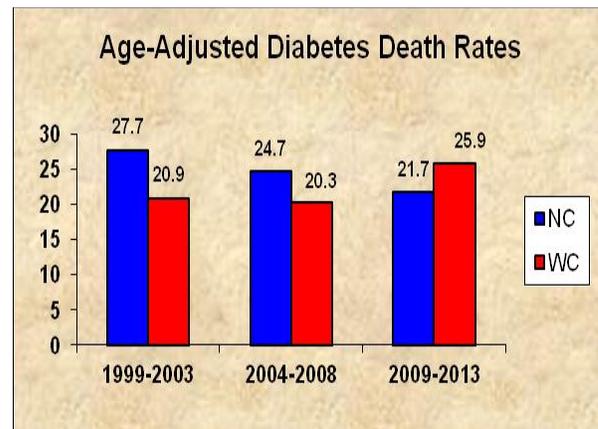
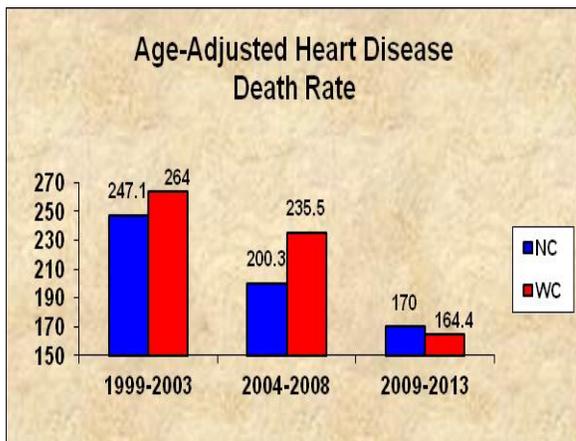
### **Priority Health Concerns**

In 2014, Warren County conducted a community health assessment, which, through use of surveys and study of patterns in the community, gave the Health Department a feel for the needs of the area. The surveys identified unhealthy behaviors such as unsafe sex, smoking/tobacco use, poor eating habits, and lack of exercise, not having routine dental and medical check-ups, screenings, reckless driving and violent behavior. The top community issues were drugs/alcohol, dropping out of school, having no hospital here, low income/poverty, unemployment, affordable health services, lack of inadequate health insurance, no health insurance, lack of recreational

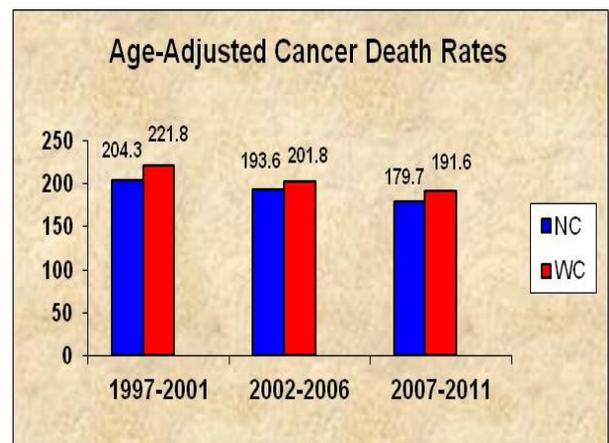
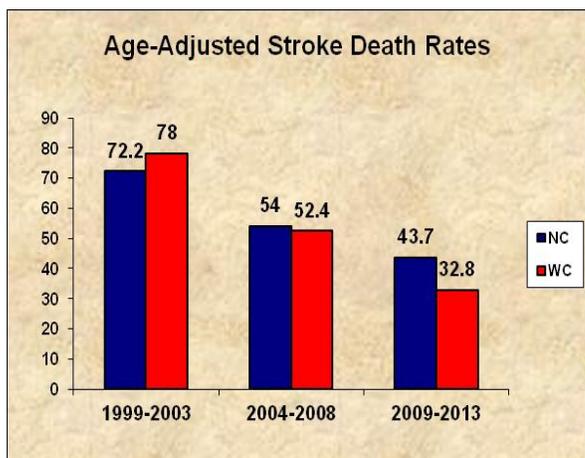
facilities, and availability of positive activities for teens. Through this assessment, the group was able to determine areas of major concern and make efforts to continue to address the problems in these areas. The efforts of the Healthy Carolinians of Warren County Partnership appears to stimulate genuine interest by government officials, private citizens and special interest groups in that problems are being identified and someone is taking the lead in seeking and providing solutions to the population in a reasonable fashion. **The six areas of concern** that are identified by the committee are Chronic Disease (heart disease, cancer, diabetes, Cerebrovascular disease and kidney disease); Physical Activity & Nutrition (chronic disease, obesity, poor eating habits); Social Determinants of Health (economy, education, community resources); Substance Abuse (drugs, alcohol); and STD/Unintended Pregnancy (unsafe sex)

Death rates reveal major areas of health concern in our county. The leading cause of deaths in Warren County and the state are related to heart disease, cancer, diabetes and stroke. Death rates are compared to the state are per 100,000 Population.

### AGE-ADJUSTED DEATH RATES GRAPH AT A GLANCE

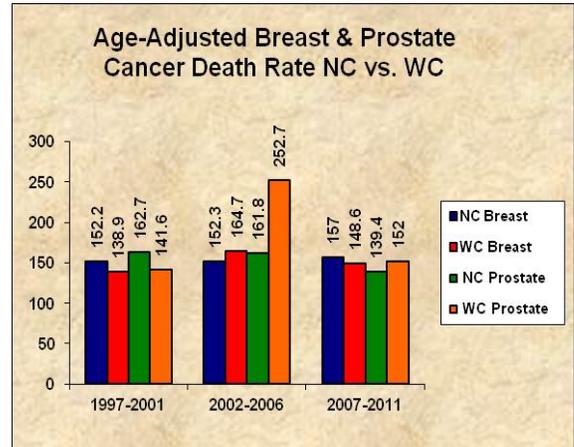
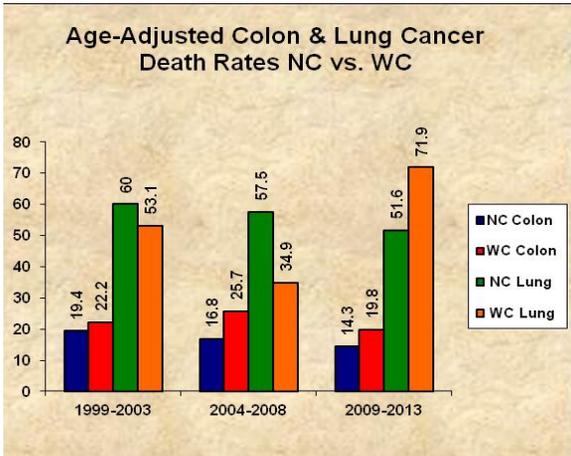


(Source: County Health Data Book, North Carolina Statewide and County Trends in Key Health Indicators 2015)



Source: County Health Data Book, North Carolina Statewide and County Trends in Key Health Indicators 2015

**Warren County & NC Cancer Incidence Rates  
1997-2013 Per 100,000 Population**



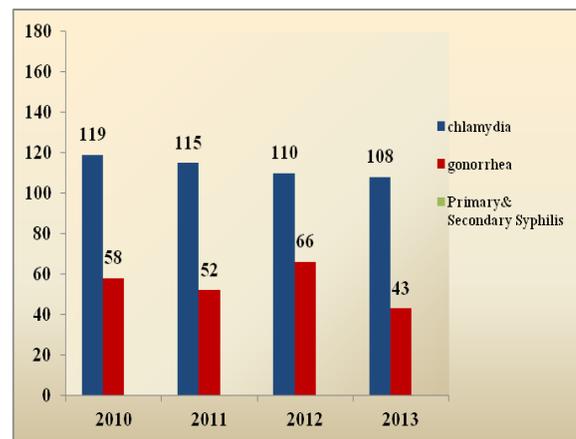
Source: County Health Data Book, North Carolina Statewide and County Trends in Key Health Indicators 2015

Warren County slightly exceeds the state with all cancers with the exception of female breast cancer that had been up and down over the past 10 years.

**Warren County Teen Pregnancies 2010-2013**



**Warren County's STD 2010-2013**



Source data: NCDHHS (Communicable Disease Branch) 2015

Over the last four years, teen pregnancies are going down, but Chlamydia is higher than the cases for gonorrhea as well as primary & secondary syphilis.

## **Quality Health Care Services**

Warren County has no hospital and there is a tremendous need for primary care physicians when compared to the state. The ration for dentist is slightly lower than the state. Rural Health Group, Warren County Health Department, Warrenton Health Center (Free Clinic) and Beckford Health Center are the only choices citizens have to get healthcare.

### **Education/Dropout**

The dropout rate is based on students who do not return to school from the previous year. Students who transfer to other public or private schools or who are home schooled are not included. The dropout rate does include students who enroll in community college high school equivalency programs. The dropout rates for the county 2013-2014 school year are 3.25% as compared to the state rate of 1.52% .

### **Healthy Carolinians of Warren County Goals & Progress**

With Warren County being one of the poorest counties in the state, it is obvious that there is a need to address health issues here in the county. The vision of Healthy Carolinians of Warren County (HCWC) is children, teens and adults living healthy and safe lives through goals of:

- ~ Increased citizen participation in physical activities
- ~ Increased citizen commitment to healthy eating
- ~ Decreased use of illegal drugs by children, teens, and adults
- ~ Decreased abuse of alcohol by adults
- ~ Decreased use of alcohol by children and teens
- ~ Increased use of vehicle safety belts
- ~ Decrease the number of teen pregnancies
- ~ Decrease the number of STD'S
- ~Increased the number of children wearing bike helmets

HCWC continues partnering with individuals as well as organizations to address the concerns. After the completion of the 2014 CHA (Community Health Assessment) the priority areas changed their focus. There are currently three working groups within the partnership: a continuation of Fitness and Nutrition (FAN), PSPT (Pregnancy/STD Prevention Team) and a newly formed committee Substance Abuse.

#### **FAN (Fitness & Nutrition Committee)**

- The FAN Committee along with other local partners is in the process of developing Placemats with a map of availability of where Warren County citizens can access points of physical activity and locally grown fruits and vegetables in the county. These placemats will be distributed via the following venues: Parks & Recreation Departments, Medical Offices, Dentist Offices, Faith & Community Groups, Schools & Libraries, Community Coalitions, and Businesses (non-profits & for-profits).

- **Pickleball:** Pickleball celebrated its 5<sup>th</sup> year Anniversary on January 16, 2016. Since January 2015 they have met for 89 sessions at our Parks and Recreation Department at John Graham Gym where they play on Wednesday and some Friday mornings. At the end of 2015, over 665 players had signed in for play. July was the group's highest attendance with 76 in 9 meetings and September was the lowest count in 5 sessions, with only 45 coming out to play.
- **WC Farmers Market:** The Warren County Farmers Market is operated by the Warren County Growers Association. The Market is open on Saturdays from 8 am to noon, spring through fall. Opening day is usually in April and closing day in October. The community is encouraged to go partake and learn. The Farmers Market is located in the BB&T parking lot in downtown Warrenton, corner of Macon and Bragg Streets. The farmers market is an opportunity for citizens to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables grown locally. Nutrition classes and taste testing is available every Saturday.

### **PSPT (Pregnancy/STD Prevention Team) of Warren County**

- The committee along with other agencies in the community are working together to decrease the number of teen pregnancies for middle and high school students. The committee is also working with Warren County Middle School Principal to implement an evidence based program that will provide an education and prevention curriculum.
- The committee developed a survey for parents to fill out. Upon approval, the survey will be used to determine how the PSPT Committee can better serve the citizens of Warren County
- The committee plans to reach out to the community to raise awareness through the PTSA (Parent/Teacher Student Association) meetings and solicit help from parents and students.

### **Substance Abuse Committee**

Warren County Substance Abuse Committee is a newly formed committee. The local organization is working with other community agencies and organizations to prevent underage drinking and address community issues related to prescription and over-the-counter drug use.

- The committee is in the process of disturbing substance abuse/youth risk behavior surveys in the local high schools. The survey will be given to 9th graders in the Warren County school district. These students will be tracked for the next 4 years.
- The Substance Abuse Committee partners with the Warren County Sheriff's department in the Community Operation Medicine Drop. We collected 5lbs. of medication during the last event which was disposed of by the Sheriff's Office. One of the goals in the Substance Abuse Action Plan is to increase the amount of medication collected annually and to meet this goal, the committee decided to look into getting a permanent fixture.

- The Substance Abuse Committee along with the Sheriff's department ordered a RX Drug Drop Box through CVS Safer Communities Project, which will be used to safely collect and properly dispose controlled and non-controlled pharmaceuticals. Once delivered, the Drug Drop Box will be placed at the Sheriff's Department. All citizens of Warren County will be encouraged to use the Drop Box to dispose of all un-used drugs.

The Healthy Carolinians of Warren County has been successful in reaching out to a diverse population for participation in the partnership. The program has reached out to the American Indians, Hispanics, churches, civic organizations, county agencies, government officials, politicians and county residents in the community to create cross culture participation.

### **Early Preventive Health**

The Warren County Health Department has several programs in place to address the area of preventive health. Those programs, Exerstyle and Exerstyle plus, provide the wellness center with treadmills, stationary bikes, rowing machines, and low impact aerobics. Also, walking trails have been marked, along with health fairs being held at the local industries.

Cooperative Extension provides many classes on nutrition. EFNEP (Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program) promotes good nutrition and physical activity as a means of maintaining a healthy lifestyle free of chronic disease. Their goal, while advocating for nutrition, is to help adults and their families establish & maintain healthy eating habits & physically active lifestyles. Participants learn to: plan nutritious meals, increase physical activity, stretch their food dollars, practice safe food handling and preventing obesity through healthy lifestyles. The farmers market is another opportunity for citizens to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables grown locally. They have classes every Saturday and taste testing from 8-12 during the spring and fall seasons each year.

The Senior Center is a facility where older adults come together for services and activities that reflect their skills and interests and respond to their diverse needs. The meals on wheels have provided the nutritional meals to the elderly population.

Many churches in the county have implemented a health ministry by taking control of their health. There are active exercise programs as well as community gardens that are providing fresh fruit and vegetables for the community.

### **New and Emerging Issues**

In 2014, the North Carolina Division of Public Health (DPH) was awarded Obesity, Diabetes, Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention (ODHDSP) funding for the implementation of population-wide and priority population approaches to prevent obesity, diabetes, heart disease and stroke, and the reduction of related health disparities among adults. This award will be administered by the Community and Clinical Connections for Prevention and Health Branch, housed within the Chronic Disease and Injury Section of DPH.

The work will focus on the following: Environmental strategies to promote and support healthy eating and active living, Strategies to build support for healthy lifestyles, particularly for those at high risk to support diabetes, heart disease and stroke prevention efforts, Health system interventions to improve the quality of health care delivery to populations with the highest hypertension and pre-diabetes disparities and Community-clinical linkages that bridge community prevention efforts with health care systems.

Beginning in 2015, environmental strategies were directed toward the entire adult population within five funded regions. Lifestyle change programs and health care system activities will specifically target populations at high risk for type 2 Diabetes; racial/ethnic groups with significant disparities in the burden of stroke, diabetes and obesity; and Medicaid beneficiaries with uncontrolled high blood pressure.

Effective January 6, 2016 Warren County Health Department expanded its Child Health Clinic from Mondays of each week to Mondays and Wednesdays of each week with the exception of normal holidays in which the agency is closed. The Warren County Health Department offers the following services: Well child physicals ages birth through twenty, Problem visits, Kindergarten physicals, Daycare physicals, Sports physicals, College physicals, Developmental screenings, Immunizations, Lead testing and follow up and Age appropriate education for parents.

### **Community Involvement**

Citizens in the county enjoyed the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Fest that's held on the court house square in downtown Warrenton. Along with the many vendors, crafts, food, and music, a 5k run was also done this year. There were many information booths, as well as area health care providers. The event is sponsored by Warrenton Revitalization Committee and the Town of Warrenton.

The Annual Ridgeway Cantaloupe Festival is enjoyed by all, it was held on the third Saturday in July. They have historical displays, food, games, kiddy rides, horseback rides and variety of vendors. This event is sponsored by the Ridgeway Historical Society and Ridgeway Volunteer Fire Department.

### **Summary**

The Healthy Carolinians of Warren County Partnership has pursued and solicited interest from all areas of the county. A collaborative effort continues between Healthy Carolinians of Warren County (145 partners), the Warren County Health Department, local government officials, county agencies, the Warren County School System, and civic organizations in pursuing every opportunity to address, reduce and/or eliminate the health concerns of the county residents. This goal has been reached by visiting high traffic areas such as grocery stores, chamber of commerce offices, convenience stores, government facilities and healthcare provider agencies. This, in addition to placing printed materials such as brochures and posters at various health fairs, schools and faith based organizations, has been a large part of their initial campaign and efforts towards the healthy lifestyles initiative.