Public Health Challenges

The Obesity Epidemic

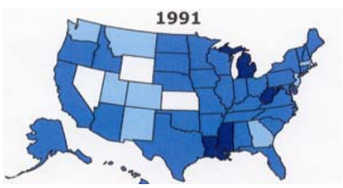
Overweight and obesity have emerged as serious health threats to our nation. If these trends continue, our current generation of children will become the first in American history to live shorter lives than their parents. Unhealthy eating and insufficient physical activity are at the heart of this epidemic which has affected men, women and children of all racial and ethnic groups.

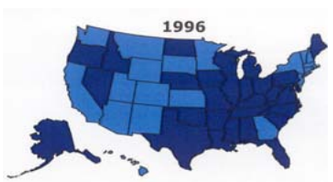
Without appropriate lifestyle changes, healthcare costs will continue to increase and quality of life will be reduced. Comprehensive, proactive and preventive programs must be established to reverse this trend – at stake is the political and economic strength of the country with reduced productivity and reduced economic resources for programs due to healthcare needs.

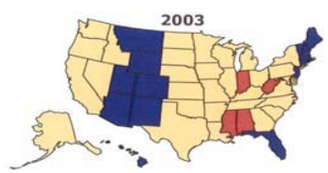
Obesity Trends* Among U.S. Adults

BRFSS, 1991, 1996, 2003

(*BMI ≥ 30, or about 30 lbs overweight for 5'4" person)







No Data | < 10% | 10% -14%

15% -19% | 20% -24 | i 25%

Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, CDC

Rapid Rise in the Number of Uninsured Union County Residents

Union County has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of residents who do not have insurance and do not qualify for Medicare, Medicaid or Health Choice. An estimated 30,000 undocumented Hispanics now live in Union County, and most do not have health insurance. (Children born in this country are automatically American citizens and are eligible for Medicaid and Medicare). Health Department clinics currently range from 48% to 75% Hispanic. In 1989-1990, there were 2 Hispanic deliveries in the Maternity Clinic compared to 688 in 2003-2004.

Most uninsured clients receive services at zero or very low pay, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide needed health services and translating. These residents are likely to remain in Union County and will have increased healthcare needs as they grow older. Preventive services are needed to reduce healthcare costs. Without planning and action, the community will pay an enormous cost for acute care, a disservice to the resident and the community. A comprehensive approach to a solution utilizing the resources in the community and outside sources of funding, such as grants, is needed.

According to Nolo Martinez, director of Hispanic Affairs for the Office of the Governor, the Mexican population in North Carolina has seen a 394% increase in the past 10 years. Hispanic workers have become vital to North Carolina's workforce; for example, 95% of the construction jobs in Charlotte are held by Hispanics.

In addition, the western end of the County has increased in population becoming a bedroom community for Mecklenburg, causing Union to be the fastest growing county in the State. (Many Hispanics are not included in the census figures.) The County has inadequate infrastructure (including schools) which further impacts the resources available for healthcare. The community must plan and act wisely to allow Union County to continue to be a great place to live and work.

Union County Board of Health

2003-2004

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Vice-Chair Mr. A. Keith West, Engineer
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Dr. Katherine Armstrong, Veterinarian
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Dr. Robin Johnson, Dentist

Secretary to Board
Mr. Lorey While. Jr., Health Director

The mission of the Union County Health Department is to promote health, prevent disease, and protect the health of the community.

Union County Health Department

Annual Report

2003-2004

1224 W. Roosevelt Blvd.
Monroe, NC 28110
(704) 296-4800
Fax (704) 296-4887

For a comprehensive report visit our web site
www.co.union.nc.us

Dear County Residents,

Your health department works hard to provide services to accomplish the mission – promote health, prevent disease, and protect the health of the community. I am proud of the many programs provided by our staff, and the diligence with which they work to meet the ever-changing needs of the community.

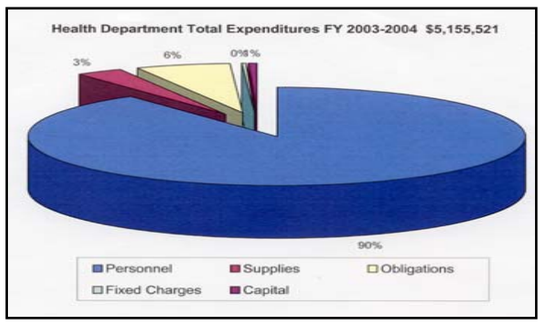
Enrollment in clinic programs continues to increase and resources are spread thinner as the number of uninsured increases. This is compounded by shortfalls in the State budget for healthcare.

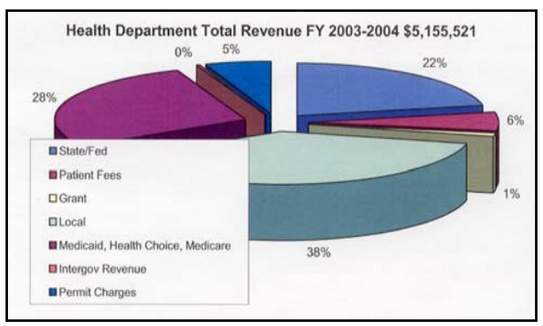
Thank you for taking the time to review the 2003-2004 annual report.

Sincerely,

Lorey H. White Jr

Lorey H. White, Jr
Health Director





Program Performance

Preventive Health

- Provided a total of 13,989 immunizations including 3,477 Hepatitis B and 2,111 flu shots
- Investigated 165 communicable diseases including 54 Shigella cases
- Provided 523 newborn/postpartum home visits
- 1,340 maternity clients (51% Hispanic, 19% Black and 29% White), including 392 high risk
- 525 were enrolled in the March of Dimes funded *Folic Acid Now* program
- 151 participated in the Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program and 95 enrolled in Wise Woman
- Implemented Healthy Weights Initiatives grant
- Provided outreach, screenings, and education for breast health through the Susan G. Komen grant
- Received a new *Smoke-Free Babies* grant from March of Dimes and began interventions
- Coordinated the Union County Diabetes Today coalition and support group
- Performed 22,797 laboratory procedures, referred 11,614 and tested 500 water samples
- Served 1,820 patients in the Family Planning Clinic (48% Hispanic, 30%White, 21% Black)
- Smart Start health check coordinator screened 1000 children, referred 282 and 193 were treated
- For the calendar year 2003, 2,394 birth and 900 death certificates were issued
- The Child Fatality Task Force reviewed 16 deaths of children aged 0-18
- Child Health provided 2,322 well visits, 1,305 sick, 600 rechecks (total 4,227), 75% Hispanic
- 1106 blood lead tests were preformed with 5 confirmed elevated
- Provided approximately 5,850 triage calls
- Child Services Coordination had an average monthly caseload of 195, receiving 248 new cases addressing 27 different risk factors
- 1,089 TB skin tests administered, 2 new cases with 115 treated for latent TB requiring 610 visits for directly observed therapy, 150 chest X-rays
- 633 individuals were seen in the Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic-- treated 37 for gonorrhea, 79 for chlamydia, tested 316 and counseled 134 for HIV/AIDS, identified 5 HIV positive, and 1 AIDS

Program Performance

Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

- Monthly participation average of 3,448, (45% Hispanic) serving 849 women and 844 infants
- 29 vendors and 3 pharmacies redeeming over $1.8 million in vouchers
- Provided 240 educational classes

Dental Health

- The NC Oral Health Section provided educational programs to 1,797 children and 30 adults and participated in the statewide survey.
- The Children's Dental Clinic served 3,520 patients providing 754 exams, 612 X-rays, 670 prophylaxis and flouride, 643 sealants, 256 extractions, 50 pulpotomies (root canal in children), 765 fillings, 101 stainless steel crowns

Environmental Health

- 543 new wastewater permits and 133 repairs
- 642 on-site wastewater maintenance inspections
- 451 well permits issued
- 500 bacteria water samples taken, 563 inorganic samples, 59 solid waste investigations and 20 vector complaints
- A total of 2,139 inspections were made for 773 food service, lodging, and tattoo facilities
- Environmental Health provided training programs for 291 people

Animal Control

- 6,281 animals taken into the shelter, 243 returned to the owner, 877 adopted and 5,161 euthanized
- 2,436 vaccinated for rabies, 105 rabies investigations and 25 confirmed rabies

School Nurses Move

The school health nurses moved to a Union County Public Schools' facility, and the services were no longer contracted. The Health Department continues to work with the program and assist with Hepatitis B vaccinations and communicable disease.

New Animal Shelter to Be Built

Plans are to build a larger animal shelter in 2005 and expand the animal control program. The administration of the program will shift to the Sheriff's Department.

Healthy Carolinians

The state of North Carolina has defined Healthy Carolinians as a statewide network of partnerships that addresses health and safety issues at the community level. Key community representatives, leaders, agencies and health advisory groups, and health care service providers come together to organize and mobilize resources around a shared vision of health and safety. Healthy Carolinians focus on eliminating health disparities, expanding access to health care services, and making the best use of limited community resources through collaboration. The benefits of Healthy Carolinians partnerships are coordinated efforts, avoided duplications, increased access to health care, expanded health promotion/disease prevention initiatives, focused efforts to reduce health disparities among North Carolinians, increased efficiency in use of resources, collaborative leadership, and coordination of services.

In 1992 Gov. James Martin established a task force setting Health Objectives for the year 2000. Since 1992, county-based partnerships have responded to the governor's task force and have become certified. Certification of Healthy Carolinians partnerships occurs when the partnership has conducted a community assessment, established health priorities that align with the North Carolina health objectives, mobilized community resources and residents, and implemented action plans to address the priority issues.

Many Healthy Carolinians counties have been very successful in securing grants. The infrastructure produced provides a competitive edge for grant awards. (Some counties with populations similar to Union receive as much as eight million dollars per year in grant monies.) Healthy Carolinians counties also network with each other. Union has lost its coordinator position and is no longer certified.

Union County needs to get on board with Healthy Carolinians. A part-time or full-time position needs to be funded with local monies and start the process for a healthier community.