



# 2022 SOTCH Report

Polk County, NC



# Overview

## INTRODUCTION

The State of the County Health Report is a comprehensive report that provides an overview of the health status and health-related issues of Polk county. It includes a range of information on health indicators such as mortality rates, prevalence of various diseases, healthcare access and utilization, social determinants of health, and other factors that impact the health of Polk County residents.

The report is a requirement for local health departments in North Carolina for the year between Community Health Assessments (CHA). It serves as an abbreviated version of the CHA and is titled as State of the County Health (SOTCH) Report. The purpose of the report is to identify any progress made on priorities that were identified in the CHA, highlights new morbidity and mortality data, identify emerging concerns, summarize new and discontinued programs and guide the development of local health policies and programs.

The State of the County Health Report can be a useful tool for policymakers, healthcare providers, community organizations, and residents to understand the health needs of their community and work together to improve health outcomes.

## SNAPSHOT OF POLK COUNTY

Polk County is known for its scenic beauty, with much of its land being covered by the Blue Ridge Mountains, including the eastern slopes of the Appalachian Mountains. The county is home to several notable landmarks, including the Green River Gorge, the Tryon International Equestrian Center, and the Pearson's Falls and Glen.

***“The State of the County Health Report is a comprehensive report that provides an overview of the health status and health-related issues of Polk county.”***

# Progress on Health Priorities

In response to the 2021 Community Health Assessment, a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) was developed. The CHIP outlines a coordinated plan of action that leverages the strengths and resources of the community to improve health outcomes. Using the CHIP as a guide, and building on efforts from past years, the following was accomplished in 2022.

## Priority 2

### Prenatal Care

In the area of prenatal care, we have worked to improve access to care and resources for pregnant individuals in our community. This has included the establishment of pregnancy and breastfeeding support groups, the distribution of educational materials on healthy pregnancy practices, and the expansion of resources for pregnant individuals.

## Priority 1

### Mental Health

Over the past year, we have made significant strides in addressing the mental health needs of our residents and improving access to services and support. Our mental health initiatives have included the expansion of mental health services and resources, including expanding Mobile Crisis and creating a wrap-around network. We have also expanded training programs for our community on best practices for identifying and providing support mental health conditions.

## Priority 3

### Substance Misuse

Finally, we have made significant progress in our efforts to address substance misuse in our community. We have established partnerships with local organizations to increase awareness of the dangers of substance misuse and to improve access to substance misuse treatment and recovery programs. We have also expanded public awareness campaigns on the importance of safe storage and disposal of prescription medications.

# New Initiatives, Emerging Issues, and Morbidity and Mortality Changes

**New initiatives** are highlighted in our 2022 SOTCH including Healthy Opportunities Pilot, Innovative Approaches Program, #standbymePolk initiative, YMCA facility discussions, parenting classes, health equity trainings, diaper bank.

**Emerging issues** highlighted in our 2022 SOTCH include rising cases of communicable disease related to drug use, health equity, childcare, housing, senior services, food costs, transportation, long COVID, respiratory illnesses.

**Morbidity and mortality changes** since our last CHA are highlighted in the below resources:

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-County Health Rankings
  - Polk County ranked 13th in the state for health outcomes and health factors.
- Opioid and Substance Use Action Plan Data Dashboard
  - The rate of overdose ED visits among residents of Polk in 2022 (Annual) was 115.8.
    - (Rate per 100,000 residents. Number of ED visits: 24)

## WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Each health priority identified in the report is addressed in designated subcommittees of the Polk County Health and Wellness Coalition. To learn more about the Polk County Community Health Assessment, Community Health Improvement Plan, and State of the County Health Reports, please visit [www.polknc.gov](http://www.polknc.gov) or contact Haley Suskauer at [hsuskauer@polknc.org](mailto:hsuskauer@polknc.org) or 828-894-8271.

Published March, 2022

---

Polk County Health & Human Services Agency  
2881 NC-108 Hwy E  
Columbus, NC 28722  
(828) 894-8271

[https://www.polknc.gov/consolidated\\_human\\_services/public\\_health](https://www.polknc.gov/consolidated_human_services/public_health)