



2023 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 years 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, identifies emerging concerns, summarizes new and discontinued programs and guides 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.

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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 2023.

Priority 1

Mental Health

Progress on the priority of mental health in Polk County reflects a collaborative and multifaceted approach involving various stakeholders and initiatives. Throughout the year, numerous mental health training events, workshops, and seminars have been organized, covering topics such as anxiety management, substance use awareness, and understanding mental health disorders. These efforts signify a commitment to raising awareness, reducing stigma, and equipping community members with the knowledge and skills to address mental health concerns effectively. Collaborative partnerships with local organizations and healthcare providers have been instrumental in advancing mental health initiatives, resulting in the establishment of support groups, the launch of new programs like the Telehealth Pilot Program, and the creation of innovative solutions like the Parent Advisory Council. These partnerships demonstrate a collective commitment to addressing mental health challenges holistically and inclusively.

Priority 2

Prenatal Care

In 2023, significant strides were made in advancing the prenatal priority in Polk County, characterized by proactive efforts to enhance maternal and infant health outcomes. Initiatives focused on providing comprehensive prenatal care, education, and support to expectant mothers and families. Partnerships with local healthcare providers and community organizations facilitated the implementation of prenatal education programs, breastfeeding support groups, and parenting classes. These initiatives aimed to empower parents with the knowledge and resources necessary for a healthy pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum period. Notably, data revealed a remarkable increase in WIC breastfeeding rates, soaring from 31% in May to an impressive 62% in November, signifying the effectiveness of targeted interventions and community support initiatives. Through collaborative efforts and innovative approaches, Polk County has continued to prioritize the well-being of expectant mothers and families, laying a foundation for healthier pregnancies and brighter futures for all residents.

Priority 3

Substance Misuse

In 2023, Polk County made significant strides in addressing substance misuse through a multifaceted approach that prioritized prevention, intervention, and harm reduction efforts. Collaborative partnerships and community-driven initiatives played a pivotal role in advancing these efforts, with organizations joining forces to host educational events, trainings, and support groups aimed at promoting substance misuse prevention and providing assistance to individuals and families impacted by addiction. Notably, harm reduction strategies, including the distribution of naloxone kits, were instrumental in mitigating the risks associated with opioid overdose and preventing fatalities. These initiatives underscored a commitment to holistic approaches to substance misuse, focusing on reducing harm, enhancing access to resources, and supporting individuals on their paths to recovery within Polk County.

New Initiatives, Emerging Issues, and Morbidity and Mortality Changes

New initiatives are highlighted in our 2023 SOTCH including Healthy Opportunities Pilot, Parent Advisory Council, Telehealth Pilot Program, #StandbymePolk, and more

Emerging issues highlighted in our 2023 SOTCH include rising cases of communicable disease related to drug use, elder abuse, childcare, housing, increase in vaping in our youth, food costs, transportation, and long COVID.

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

- NC Opioid Dashboard
 - Drug overdose ED visit rate in 2023 was 111 for Polk. (rate per 100,000 residents. Number of ED visits: 23)
- RWJF County Health Rankings
 - Polk County ranked 14th in health outcomes. (Measuring length of life and quality of life)

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 or contact Haley Suskauer at hsuskauer@polknc.org or 828-894-8271.

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https://www.polknc.gov/consolidated_human_services/public_health