2024 Polk County Community Health Assessment (CHA) Briefing

Overview

Summary: Polk County HHSA would like to thank its community partners for their time, passion, and ideas in contributing to the 2024 CHA Process. The purpose of the process was to leverage community stakeholders' expertise to develop plans of action in each of our three, community health "priority" areas: Mental Health, Substance Misuse, and Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL).



As intended, each team engaged in productive, open conversation to successfully develop a logic model draft, which will be finalized with further input and discussion. These plans will guide our efforts to improve community health outcomes over the next three years and form the blueprint of our eventual, state-required Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). "Connection" continues to arise as a key theme in committee discussions, which will inspire our coming work.

Achievements: Multisectoral, collaborative development of 3 logic models (1 per focus area) using community partner-provided, evidence-based strategies and impacts.

Attendance and Participation

More than 30 individuals— representatives of nearly 20 organizations, programs, or communities— attended our Community Forum to learn and work. Additional individuals who were unable to attend contributed strategies and perspectives that community partners referenced to develop the logic models.

Partners Providing Resources and Expertise

- The Free Clinics
- Blue Ridge Health
- Polk County Schools
- Polk County Health and Human Services
- Vaya Health
- Polk County Mental Health Advisory Committee
- AdventHealth Polk
- WithALL
- Family Preservation Services and Access Family Services d.b.a Clarvida
- City of Saluda
- RHA Prevention Resource Centers
- Foothills Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging
- Polk County Public Libraries
- Do Not Lose Hope
- Allied Comprehensive Recovery Network / National Alliance on Mental Illness
- Guardian Ad Litem
- Polk County Community Foundation
- Columbus Police Department
- Pea Ridge Partnership
- Roseland Community Center

- Building on Existing Services
- Expanding on Community Ideas
- Collaborating on Funding Options

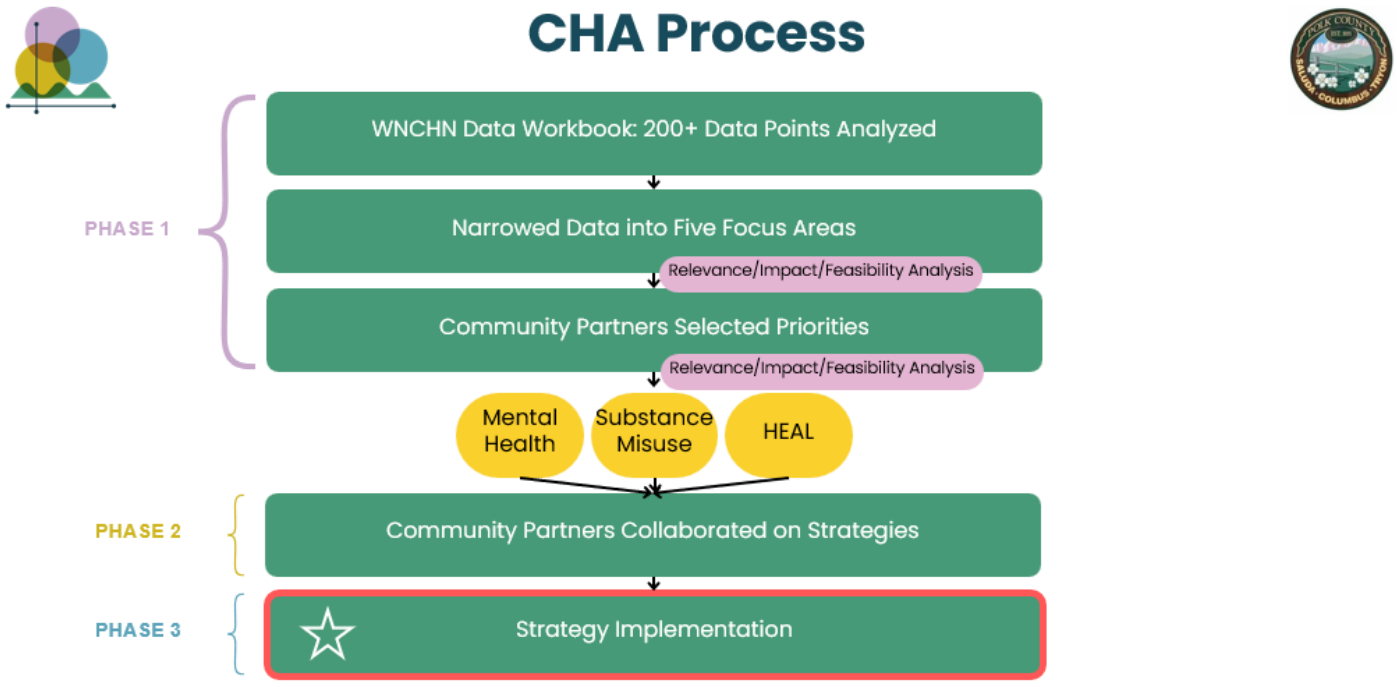


Background

The CHA/CHIP Cycle: The Community Health Assessment Cycle is a state-mandated, three-year cycle whereby local health partners identify health issues of greatest concern and develop and implement strategies to improve population health outcomes in these areas. The three phases include the Data Collection and Analysis Phase, the Planning Phase, and the Action Phase. Polk County HHSA and its partners are currently in the early stages of the Planning Phase, ahead of our deliverable timeline.

Methods: WNC Health Network generated an intricate dataset with primary and secondary, state-, region, and county-level data for analysis. Primary data collection involved 5,898 surveys throughout Western North Carolina—a statistically representative sample of county populations by sociodemographic characteristics—and key informant interviews with 22 Polk County stakeholders.

Polk County HHSA and partners analyzed the finalized data workbook, narrowing the data into three "priority" areas based on what they considered to be the most impactful data indicators of poor health in the county.



Data Overview

- Primary and secondary, state-, region-, and county-level data
    - Primary data: information generated by the researcher, first-hand, through methods like surveys, interviews, observations, or experiments
    - Secondary data: information that is collected by someone else and already exists, which is then analyzed by another researcher; obtained from sources like government publications, research articles, or organizational records
- 5,898 surveys throughout WNC
    - Telephone, online, social media
    - English and Spanish
    - 75 questions
- Allows for high participation and random selection for a large portion of the sample
- Critical to achieving a representative sample (of county and regional populations by gender, age, race/ethnicity, income)
- Key informant interviews

Age-Adjusted Leading Causes of Death: *Overall*

2018-2022

Rank	Cause of Death	Polk		
		# Deaths	Death Rate	% Difference from State
	All Causes (some not listed)	1,641	778.9	-8.3
1	Diseases of Heart	368	148.6	-7.8
2	Cancer	291	138.7	-8.8
3	All Other Unintentional Injuries	84	64.9	23.6
4	COVID-19	86	44.5	0.2
5	Cerebrovascular Disease	86	35.3	-18.9
6	Alzheimer's disease	89	32.7	-17.8
7	Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases	78	31.1	-15.0
8	Suicide	23	25.7	-4.8
9	Unintentional Motor Vehicle Injuries	18	**17.4**	5.5
10	Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis	26	16.9	5.0
11	Diabetes Mellitus	30	15.3	10.9
12	Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and Nephrosis	28	14.6	8.1
13	Pneumonia and Influenza	32	14.5	14.2
14	Septicemia	12	**5.1**	-58.5
15	Homicide	4	**4.2**	-49.4
16	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	0	**0.0**	-100.0

Age-adjustment: Age adjustment (calculated with a specific equation) breaks the rates down by age, allowing us to compare across categories or across populations where the age compositions are very different

Leading Causes of Death: *by Age*

2018-2022

Polk County				
Age Group	**Rank**	**Leading Cause of Death**	**# Deaths**	**Death Rate**
00-19	1	Motor vehicle injuries	3	17.1
	2	Conditions originating in the perinatal period	2	11.4
	3	Suicide	2	11.4
	4	Other Unintentional injuries	1	5.7
20-39	1	Other Unintentional injuries	17	99.0
	2	Suicide	8	46.6
	3	Cancer - All Sites	8	29.1
40-64	1	Cancer - All Sites	49	145.8
	2	Diseases of the heart	40	119.0
	3	Other Unintentional injuries	23	68.4
65-84	1	Cancer - All Sites	175	637.1
	2	Diseases of the heart	148	538.8
	3	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	47	171.1
85+	1	Diseases of the heart	179	3865.3
	2	Cancer - All Sites	62	1338.8
	3	Alzheimer's Disease	58	1252.4

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2021: Leading unintentional injury was unintentional poisoning,* 96% of which were due to medication/drug overdose

One third of these deaths may be preventable through lifestyle changes, including diet and exercise†

Leading Causes of Death: *by Age*

2018-2022

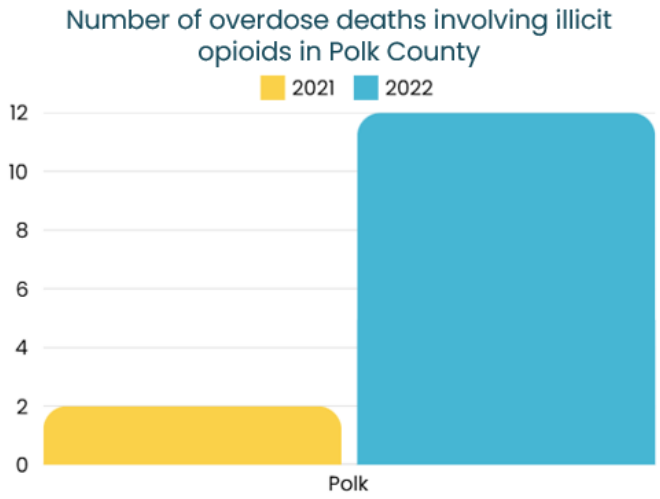
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Mental Health

Substance Misuse

Healthy Eating/Active Living

Substance Misuse

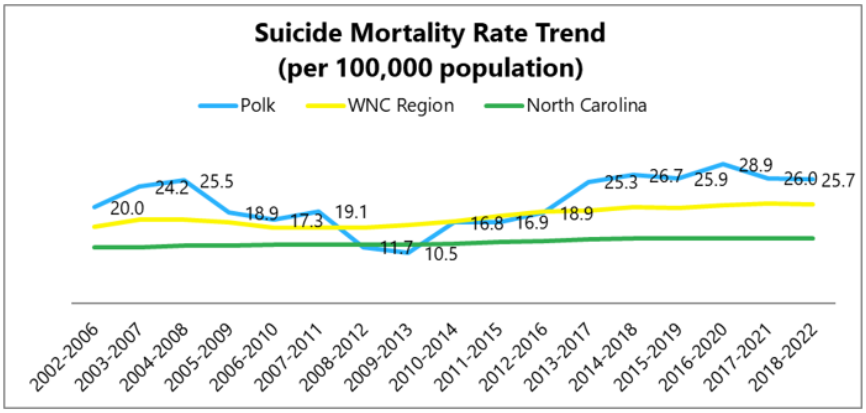


Polk county had **12 overdose deaths involving illicit opioids** (heroin, fentanyl, and fentanyl analogues) in 2022, compared to 2 in 2021 according to state DHHS data.

Source: NCDHHS Data Dashboard: https://www.dph.ncdhhs.gov/programs/chronic-disease-and-injury/injury-and-violence-prevention-branch/north-carolina-overdose-epidemic-data#data-dashboard

Represents a rate of 60.0 per 100,000 persons, which is among the HIGHEST rates seen in NC

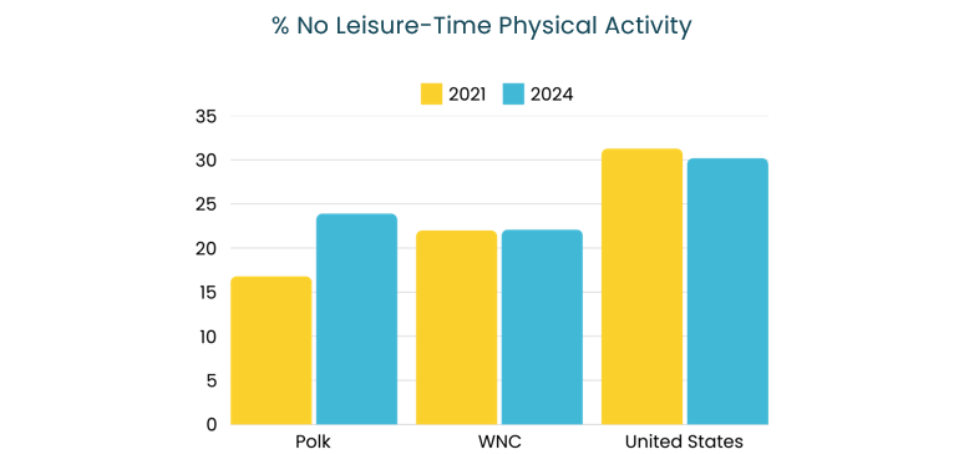
Mental Health



The **suicide mortality rate continues to increase** across the state.
The current age-adjusted suicide mortality rate in Polk County is 25.7 per 100,000 population.
This is the **second highest rate in the region** and higher than both the WNC regional mean (20.6) and the state (13.5) in 2018-2022.

Citation: North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics (NC SCHS). (2024). Race-Specific and Sex-Specific Age-Adjusted Death Rates by County: County Health Data Book. [Data tables]. Available from https://schs.dph.ncdhhs.gov/data/.

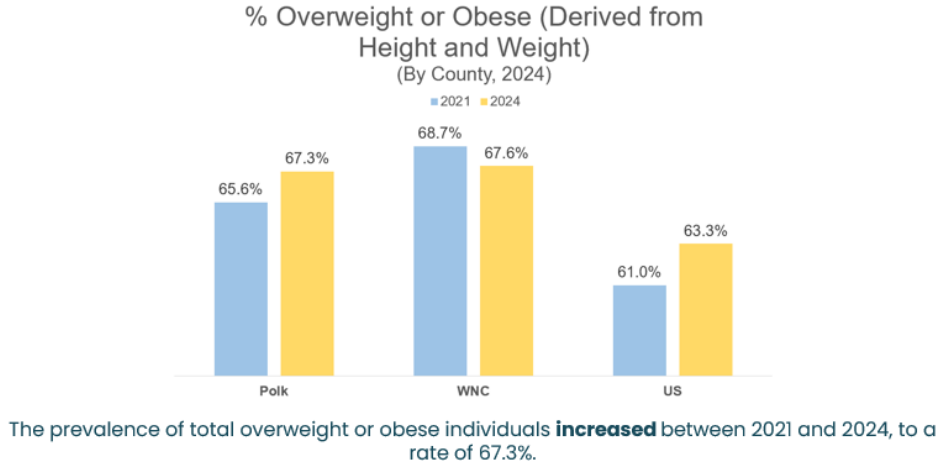
Active Living



The prevalence of individuals who had no leisure-time physical activity (activity outside of work) **increased** from 16.8% in 2021 to 23.9% in 2024.

Citation: WNC Health Network. (2024). 2024 WNC Healthy Impact Community Health Survey: Data Workbook. [Data set]. Available from https://www.wnchn.org/wnc-data/regional-data/.

Healthy Eating/Active Living



The prevalence of total overweight or obese individuals **increased** between 2021 and 2024, to a rate of 67.3%.

Citation: WNC Health Network. (2024). 2024 WNC Healthy Impact Community Health Survey: Data Workbook. [Data set]. Available from https://www.wnchn.org/wnc-data/regional-data/.

Community Health Improvement Focus Areas

With the input from community partners the following focus areas were identified. Over the course of the three-year cycle community partners and healthcare providers will be working to improve health outcomes for Polk County.

Health Priority Area	Strategies	Impact
Mental Health	1. Community Health Workers 2. Mental Health First Aid 3. Health Literacy Interventions	Strengthen healthy community connections through collaboration to improve mental and behavioral health
Substance Misuse	1. START Model 2. "1st Responder Card" PR Campaign/Raising Awareness Initiative 3. Nurse Family Partnership	Build resiliency in substance-affected individuals, families, and communities
Healthy Eating Active Living	1. Community-Based Social Support for Healthy Living 2. Exercise and Nutrition Prescriptions	Foster stronger community connections to encourage healthy lifestyles