

Executive Summary
**Department of Health and Human Services' State Health Director's
Annual Report to the North Carolina Medical Society**
October 2019

BACKGROUND

General Statute 130A.33 requires the State Health Director to submit an annual report on public health at a joint gathering of the North Carolina Medical Society (NCMS) and the Commission for Public Health. This year's report acknowledges North Carolina standing as 33rd in *America's Health* Ranking, and it highlights areas of improvement and successes, identifies areas that continue to need improvements, describes the priorities and plans for improving population health, and discusses emerging threats to the health of North Carolinians.

STATEWIDE PRIORITIES, PLANS AND METRICS

Healthy North Carolina - *Healthy North Carolina*, the state level version of the national Healthy People framework, has served as a decennial foundation for North Carolina's population health improvement plan since 1990. Over the past decade, NC has made some variable improvements on the Healthy North Carolina 2020 (HNC 2020) goals. We have seen improvement in 9 metrics, including overall life expectancy, percent of people living in poverty, and new HIV infections. We have seen little changes in 4 metrics, including obesity and overweight, diabetes in adults, dental disease, and unintended pregnancies. We have seen worsening health status in 4 areas including chlamydia rates in young people, unintentional poisoning mortality, high housing costs, and the disparity in infant mortality between white and African American babies. For the upcoming decade, NC DHHS Division of Public Health (DPH) has been engaged in a year-long process with the NC Institute of Medicine to of engaging stakeholders to develop the *HNC 2030* population health indicators. The framework will be underpinned by population health and health equity and will include 20 indicators that encompass health behavior, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment. These indicators will be officially released in January 2020 at the North Carolina Public Health Leaders' Conference.

NC Medicaid Transformation - DHHS is transitioning its Medicaid and NC Health Choice programs from a predominantly fee-for-service delivery system to managed care. These programs can be powerful levers to purchase health and to improve public and population health. As such, DHHS' vision for managed care is to improve the health of North Carolinians by creating an integrated and well-coordinated system of care that addresses all drivers of health. DHHS is committed to providing the tools and resources needed to support stakeholders as they transition to Medicaid Managed Care, and has launched a [Provider Playbook](#) and a [County Playbook](#) to provide easy-to-access information. For more information on Medicaid Transformation, please visit ncdhhs.gov/medicaid-transformation.

The Opioid Action Plan - DHHS released the Opioid Action Plan 1.0 in June 2017. Developed with input from statewide community partners and stakeholders, it included a multi-sector approach to addressing the crisis. A [data dashboard](#) tracks and monitors the metrics in the Opioid Action Plan. We have finally begun to see progress in this epidemic. There were nearly 10 percent fewer emergency department visits for opioid overdoses in 2018 than in 2017. For the first time in five

years, the number of unintentional opioid-related overdose deaths among North Carolina residents has fallen, with a five percent decrease from 2017 to 2018. The [Opioid Action Plan 2.0](#) was launched in June 2019 and prioritizes: **Connection to Care, Prevention, Reducing Harm.** It also includes [local strategies](#) that counties, coalitions and stakeholders can use to fight the opioid epidemic.

Early Childhood Action Plan - All North Carolina children should get a healthy start and develop to their fullest potential in safe and nurturing families, schools, and communities. Following an executive order by Governor Roy Cooper, NC DHHS spearheaded the development of a statewide Early Childhood Action Plan in February 2019 to move this vision to action. The plan creates a cohesive vision, establishes ten statewide goals relating to young children being Healthy, Safe and Nurtured, and Ready to Succeed, sets benchmarks for impact by the year 2025, and establishes shared stakeholder accountability to achieve these goals. Providers can read more about North Carolina's focus on early childhood by visiting www.ncdhhs.gov/early-childhood.

Perinatal Health Strategic Plan - In 2017, North Carolina's infant mortality rate of 7.1 deaths per 1000 live births was tied for 10th worst in the country, and our disparity ratio of 2.5 between black and white babies is persistent and has increased over the past 10 years. The North Carolina Perinatal Health Strategic Plan was developed to include a focus on infant mortality, maternal health, maternal morbidity, and the health of men and women of childbearing age. and includes a focus on health equity and social determinants of health. This collaborative 12-point plan is divided into the following three goals: Improving Health Care for Women and Men, Strengthening Families and Communities, and Addressing Social and Economic Inequities. The plan can be accessed via <https://whb.ncpublichealth.com/phsp/>

Healthy Opportunities - All North Carolinians deserve the opportunity for good health. While access to high-quality medical care is critical, research shows up to 80 percent of a person's health is determined by social and environmental factors and the behaviors that emerge as a result. Through state and local partnerships, DHHS is creating a multi-faceted strategy to unite our communities and health care system to effectively deliver health, not just healthcare. Elements of this strategy include Standardized Screening, NCCARE360 and Healthy Opportunities pilots. More information on Healthy Opportunity initiatives can be found at: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/about/department-initiatives/healthy-opportunities>

EMERGING PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES

North Carolina is dealing with several emerging public health issues. Chief among those issues are rising youth e-cigarette use, ensuring early identification of diabetes, addressing environmental contaminants, promoting childhood immunizations, ending the HIV epidemic, addressing climate change, ensuring the health of citizens post disasters (such as hurricanes), and reducing child lead exposure. Details about these emerging threats are provided in the full report, which also includes suggestions for providers on how they can be involved with and address these issues.

The full 2019 annual report can be accessed at <https://publichealth.nc.gov/docs/2019-NC-MedicalSocietyLegislativeReport.pdf>