Rowan County
2018
Community Health and Human Service Needs Assessment:
Executive Summary and Proposed Action Plans
November 2018

Dear Rowan County Citizens,

Rowan County is a county of historical significance to our great state. It is branded with the uniqueness for originality and sustained by the contributions of many. Our willingness to partner and rally together is one of our main strengths of why we have been and will continue to be so successful.

Since 1991, Rowan County United Way, Novant Health Rowan Medical Center, Rowan County Health Department, and this year Healthy Rowan, have joined together to analyze the health and well-being of our community. The partnership underscores the importance of working together to make measurable improvement in the quality of life for all citizens in Rowan County.

This process, which occurs every three to five years, is a comprehensive community examination known as the Rowan County Health and Human Service Needs Assessment. It gathers information from citizen opinion surveys, focus groups and statistical data. This information helps our community to identify the health and social needs within our community.

As part of this process, both guidance and leadership were provided through an Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from the Blanche and Julian Robertson Foundation, City of Salisbury, Rowan Department of Social Services, Rowan Salisbury Schools, Rufty-Holmes Senior Center, Smart Start Rowan, as well as the four previously mentioned partners. Broad community involvement by non-profit, government, education, and business organizations occurred through a series of Steering Committee meetings. The many hours volunteered by the Advisory Committee and the input provided by Rowan County residents have been invaluable to this process. Additional funding support was provided by the Salisbury Community Foundation.

UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health has provided the expertise and capacity to support a multi-faceted project of this significance. It is with appreciation that we acknowledge their role with the assessment and report.

We hope the findings of this needs assessment will be used to focus our communities’ energies and resources toward the creation and implementation of three action plans. By doing this, our community will grow and improve, while preserving the tradition of greatness and our desire to be an original.

It takes all of us working together to make a positive impact on the issues identified. Please join us in making Rowan County a healthier community for all.

Sincerely,

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Rowan County United Way

Jessica Ijames  
Novant Health Rowan Medical Center

Nina Oliver  
Rowan County Health Department

Alyssa Smith  
Healthy Rowan
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the organizations, community stakeholders and residents of Rowan County who participated in the assessment process and helped us to select priorities aligned with the community’s needs. We are grateful to residents for their generosity in sharing their perspectives and experiences in the Community Opinion Survey, the focus groups and the three Steering Committee meetings. Their gift enabled us to include their voice in this assessment.

We would also like to thank the members of our Advisory Group, who guided the assessment from beginning to completion through instrument review, survey collection, focus group hosting and coordination and action planning.

Community Assessment Advisory Group

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Executive Summary

The social, economic and physical well-being of a community is affected by the way the community is built and resources available to residents as they live, learn, work and play. To use resources effectively, it is important to understand the strengths and weaknesses that exist, how people know about and access resources and what barriers exist that create gaps of unmet needs in the community.

Leadership and Collaboration

To accomplish this, the Rowan County United Way worked with the Rowan County Health Department, Novant Health Rowan Medical Center and Healthy Rowan to do a community needs assessment with support from the North Carolina Institute for Public Health at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. Between March and November 2018, agency and community partners completed a Community Health and Human Service Needs Assessment.

Data Collection and Findings

As the Community Health and Human Service Needs Assessment progressed through phases, major milestones included establishing the Advisory Group and Steering Committee teams, developing a survey and doing door-to-door interviews with a representative sample of Rowan residents, collecting secondary data through publicly available sources and community partners and holding seven focus groups with selected groups of residents. The information gathered during this phase is summarized in Chapter 3: Assessment Findings.

Priorities and Action Plans

The next phase’s major milestones included hosting two Steering Committee meetings to examine and discuss the data findings. From the data presented, nine areas were selected as being the most critical areas for Rowan County to focus and act upon. Data on these focus areas were presented in a third Steering Committee meeting that was open to the public and attendees were asked to vote on the top three priorities. Following the selection of three priority areas, topic stakeholders for each area met to develop potential action plans. Information collected during this phase is found in Chapter 4: Community Priorities and Chapter 5: Prevention and Health Promotion Resources.

Priority 1: Substance Use

Addiction to drugs or alcohol is a chronic health condition and those who suffer from it are at risk for early death, certain diseases, injury and disability. Misuse of prescription painkillers and use of heroin and opiates have increased dramatically nationwide, including in North Carolina and in Rowan County. Substance abuse can contribute to family instability, loss of employment, child neglect, poverty, involvement in the criminal justice system and violence.

- Illicit drug use, medication misuse and alcohol abuse were identified as the #1, #3, #7 top community issue in the Community Opinion Survey, respectively.
- One in five of respondents reported that a friend or family member had been affected by the use of prescription painkillers such as opioids or heroin. Of those, 45% said that their friend or family member did not seek treatment.
• According to the State Center for Health Statistics, the rate of opiate poisoning deaths for Rowan County is 20.9 deaths per 100,000 (2016). This is higher than both peer counties (16.4 in Davidson, and 18.91 in Gaston), and approximately twice as high as the State rate (11.7).

Existing resources identified during the Action Planning session included treatment centers in Rowan County, initiatives led by the Opioid Task Force and the Rowan County Health Department, a federally funded prevention program, and an upcoming conference for business and community leaders on whole person health. Needs identified as areas of opportunity for the community included additional treatment programs and facilities and the development of resources to be shared between and across agencies.

**Priority 2: Mental Health**

Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being, and it is an important part of our lives. It affects how we function, what choices we make and how we interact with others. Mental health and mental illness are related, yet different. A person could be experiencing a poor mental health day, where they feel sad or anxious, but not have a mental illness. Mental health can change over time, and at different points in a person’s life. Chronic mental illness, especially depression, can put someone at heightened risk for stroke, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

• In the Community Opinion Survey, residents reported an average of 2.9 days per month when their mental health was “not good.” Thirteen percent of residents reported more than 20 days of poor mental health.

• Twenty-two percent of residents surveyed report being diagnosed with depression or anxiety.

• The 2016 suicide rate in Rowan County is 18.2 per 100,000 (Log Into North Carolina Database, 2016). The Healthy NC 2020 target is 8.3.

Resources identified sessions included existing mental health care providers. Opportunities for the county to expand beyond these providers might include additional facilities and programs, specifically to help the recently incarcerated population and combat mental health stigma.

**Priority 3: Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors**

Chronic diseases are among the most common, costly and preventable health problems in the United States. Lifestyle risk factors, which include nutrition, physical activity, tobacco use and excessive alcohol consumption, all contribute to these diseases. Sufficient nutrition is important to human growth and development. However, excessive calorie intake can lead to obesity, which increases the risk of developing health conditions like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney disease and stroke. Increased physical activity helps reduce the risk of disease and contributes to mental well-being. Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.

• The top four causes of death in Rowan County – cancer, heart disease, stroke and chronic respiratory disease – are all affected by health behaviors (NC Center for Health Statistics, 2018).

• One in four residents surveyed reported that they smoke cigarettes or use a tobacco product daily. Sixty-five percent reported they support a tobacco-free policy for the County.

• Nearly 1 in 10 of the survey respondents reported having cut or skipped meals or sought reduced cost community meals because there wasn’t enough money for food.

Resources identified included existing city and county parks and recreation locations and programs, the three YMCA locations in Rowan County, as well as initiatives led by Healthy Rowan and the Rowan County Health Department to improve nutrition, increase physical activity and reduce tobacco and e-cigarette use. Programs needed included expanding access to nutritious food, promoting access to physical activity and developing a mechanism for agencies to collaborate.
Substance Use

Addiction to drugs or alcohol is a chronic health condition, and those who suffer from it are at risk for early death, certain diseases, injury and disability. Misuse of prescription painkillers and use of heroin and opiates have increased dramatically nationwide, including in North Carolina and in Rowan County. Substance abuse can contribute to family instability, loss of employment, child neglect, poverty, involvement in the criminal justice system and violence.

Objective: To increase access to education, harm reduction, crisis intervention, and long-term treatment to effectively reduce substance-use related mortality, disease burden and harm.

Current Conditions

The widespread availability of drugs (over-prescription) and relative low expense with new synthetic substances becoming available.

85% of the children that were taken into RCDSS custody in 2018 have had parental substance use as a contributory factor.

The impact of opioid crisis is felt on all age levels.

Police and first responders could be better equipped to provide referral services to preventative care and treatment.

Rowan County lacks a detox center and a long-term treatment center, and there are insufficient low-cost or no-cost treatment centers.

Environmental factor of I-85 corridor through which heroin and opioids are trafficked.
### Measures of Progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Proposed Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Emergency Department (ED) visits coded with overdose (OD)</td>
<td>Develop a Quick Response Team (QRT) including a social worker, police officer, and peer specialist.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of children in custody for a substance use related reason</td>
<td>Develop prevention and education programs that are trauma-informed for all age groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMS administration of Naloxone</td>
<td>Increase harms-reduction programs including syringe exchange programs and naloxone distribution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug-induced deaths/opiate-poisoning mortality rate</td>
<td>Establish a live information map of overdoses to target place-based reduction efforts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of friends or relatives with known substance use disorder seeking treatment</td>
<td>Establish a detox and long-term treatment center in Rowan County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of low-cost or no-cost addiction and counseling service providers</td>
<td>Increase the number of addiction treatment and counseling service providers that provide low-cost or no-cost.</td>
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2018 Rowan County Health and Human Service Needs Assessment
**Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors**

Chronic diseases are among the most common, costly and preventable health problems in the United States. Lifestyle risk factors include nutrition, physical activity, tobacco use and excessive alcohol consumption. Sufficient nutrition is important to human growth and development. However, excessive calorie intake can lead to obesity, which increases the risk of developing health conditions like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney disease and stroke. Increased physical activity helps reduce the risk of disease and contributes to mental well-being. Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.

Objective: To promote an environment that ensures the availability of healthy and nutritious food to people of all ages, encourages residents to participate in physical activity, and reduces the use of cigarettes, JUULs, and other tobacco products to reduce the burden of chronic diseases on Rowan County.

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**Current Conditions**

- Obesity rates are high and directly associated with causes of mortality, but prevention is less expensive than treatment.
- Prevalence of chronic diseases, specifically diabetes, is high.
- Food insecurity is an issue in our county, and food deserts exist in certain areas.
- Many families do not know how to shop for health food and/or prepare healthy food.
- Convenience and cost are barriers to healthy eating.
- The use of medication sometimes facilitates poor lifestyle habits—the protective effects of a given medication may result in the continuation of unhealthy eating or lack of exercise.
- Employers are not focused on employee health and very few workplace wellness programs exist.

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*2018 Rowan County Health and Human Service Needs Assessment*
Measures of Progress

- The percentage of children, high-school students, and adults who are neither overweight nor obese.
- The cardiovascular disease mortality rate (per 100,000 population).
- Rates of chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney disease and stroke.
- The percentage of adults who are current smokers.
- Number of children and adolescents using JUULs in schools.
- Number of food deserts in Rowan County.
- Daily physical exercise for children and adults.

Proposed Action Plans

- Community-wide programs to target uninsured, high poverty areas with no/low cost options for food and recreation for all age groups.
- Target behaviors through employee wellness program: hands-on cooking classes, parenting classes and “Exercise is Medicine.”
- Community-wide implementation of health lifestyle “clubs” that are organized, supported, tracked groups who support themselves with following organized activities like exercise, healthy food shares, food preparation and coaching.
- Advocate/implement policies to create a smoke-free county.
- Promote anti-vape/anti-smoking campaign in schools.
- Establish community gardens, promote farmers markets, advocate for healthy food in corner stores, and seek grants to address food insecurity.
- Increase number of sidewalk connections, bike lanes, and improve greenway access.
Mental Health

Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being, and is an important part of our lives. It affects how we function, what choices we make and how we interact with others. Mental health and mental illness are related, yet distinct. A person could be experiencing a poor mental health day, where they feel sad or anxious, but not have a mental illness. Mental health can change over time, and at different points in a person’s life. Chronic mental illness, especially depression, can put someone at heightened risk for stroke, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

Objective: To increase the availability, accessibility, and coordination of mental health services to improve the mental health and wellbeing of county residents and reduce suicide mortality.

Current Conditions

- Awareness of mental health needs is rising and stigma is decreasing, BUT stigma is still present.
- Insufficient supply of therapists, long-term and emergency mental health services in Rowan County.
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) contributing to mental health needs as substance abuse and mental health issues of parents’ impact children.
- Need for prison-related mental health services and active treatment in jail for the incarcerated population.
- Stigma and discrimination, specifically against LGBTQ populations, contributing to mental health needs.
- Providers are limited in their understanding of available referrals.

2018 Rowan County Health and Human Service Needs Assessment
The suicide rate (per 100,000 population).

Average number of poor mental health days among adults in the last 30 days.

The rate of mental-health related visits to the emergency department (per 10,000 thousand).

Number of court-ordered step-down programs for mental health services with goal to reduce recidivism in incarcerated population.

Number of referrals between agencies for mental health services.

Explore the possibility of an anti-stigma campaign to increase awareness and likelihood to seek treatment.

Expand free and low-cost services through exploring grant-funded or faith-based services.

Establish a Quick Response Team (QRT) including a social worker, police officer, and peer specialist.

Initiate a step-down program, 60-90 days out of jail, to help inmates transition back into the community by teaching health care navigation, independent living skills and other related skills.

Explore the Project Re-Entry model for possible expansion in Rowan County.

Create a provider collaborative to increase awareness of programs and facilitate referrals between agencies.

Expand agencies involved in mental health work to the school system, prison administration and law enforcement.