



Macon County Public Health

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Press Release

Macon County Public Health Releases State of the County Health Report

Macon County Public Health recently issued Macon County's State of the County's Health Report (SOTCH) for the calendar year of 2012. The purpose of this report is to inform community members, leaders, and organizations about Macon County's progress on certain health issues. It also provides the most current data on a number of leading health indicators such as: county demographics, leading causes of death, chronic disease mortality, access to care, and health promotion.

The SOTCH Report highlights both the county's progress and barriers during the year in relation to the three health priorities identified in the 2011 Comprehensive Community Health Assessment. These priorities included reducing the incidence of chronic diseases related to obesity; reducing the incidence and mortality rates associated with breast, colorectal, and lung cancers; and promoting the recruitment and retention of primary care physicians and dentists. The report also recognizes the accomplishments of local collaborations and coalitions that have made an impact on Macon County's health through chronic disease prevention and access to care.

A number of positive outcomes were noted in the 2012 SOTCH Report. These 2012 highlights included:

- Macon County Schools' Child Nutrition Department received the Gold Award of Distinction from the US Department of Agriculture for 4 elementary sites. Macon County now stands as the first district in NC to receive this award.
- In November of 2012, Macon County Public Health received approval from the Macon County Board of Commissioners to expand their Adult Dental Clinic. This expansion will include re-location to a new facility and an increase in the number of dental chairs.
- Angel Medical Center initiated a 16-week on-line weight loss challenge called Lighten Up 4 Life. Participants were asked to form teams and then documented their weight loss on-line. Teams

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were eligible for rewards at the end of the challenge. In the first challenge round, the total weight loss recorded for the county was over 2,500 pounds.

- The Macon County Zonta Sorority conducted a fundraiser in the Spring of 2012. Proceeds in the amount of \$7,209 were allocated for mammograms, biopsies, colposcopies, etc. for needy women.
- Ladies Night Out and Men's Night Out are partnerships between Angel Medical Center and Macon County Public Health. The initiatives provide periodic programs on a variety of health topics. In addition, funding was raised through the programs to assist the uninsured or underinsured in receiving mammograms and other health screenings. LNO has averaged 100 women per evening and the first MNO had 11 attendees.
- The Hi-Top ASSIST Consortium received a grant to fund a Youth Tobacco Coordinator during 2012. This position worked in Macon County to continue and sustain the TRU Youth Groups at Macon Middle School and Mountain View Elementary.
- The American Cancer Society began sponsorship of a Community Health Advisor Program in Macon County. An ACS representative began recruiting and training volunteers, who in turn will encourage their peers to participate in breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer screenings.
- Access to in-county OB-GYN Physicians increased by two providers during 2012.

Issues were also noted in the SOTCH report that indicted opportunities for further collaboration and improvement. These 2012 issues included:

- The Franklin Community Care Clinic (a non-profit organization that provides health care for financially eligible, uninsured patients) experienced increasing financial insecurity. Long-term operating funds and qualified medical staffing were identified as resources needed to keep this clinic operational. Acute and emergency care facilities in the county may see an increased demand for services from clients without a payer source if the clinic cannot sustain operations. In addition, many uninsured residents may find it increasingly difficult to get needed medical care.
- In 2012, in-county access to pediatric physicians decreased by four providers and family practice providers decreased by three.

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In addition to noting these areas of progress and barriers to care in Macon County, the SOTCH report also identified several potential emerging health issues that the public health center and other health care providers are monitoring. These emerging health issues include an upward trend in the suicide rate for Macon County. According to the NC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, in 2012, Macon County experienced eleven confirmed suicides, up from two in 2010 and four in 2011. A second potential emerging health issue is elevated lead levels in certain private drinking water wells in Macon County. Environmental health specialists at Macon County Public Health are currently collaborating with the state and the property owners to investigate and isolate the cause of the elevated lead levels.

Macon County Public Health values the public's input, questions, and comments about the SOTCH Report as well as the Community Health Assessment process. If you would like to make comments or ask questions about any of these reports, please contact Macon County Public Health at 349-2437. In addition, Macon County Public Health maintains a comprehensive collection of community health resources. These resources include demographic data; local, state, and federal health status information; information about health programs and services available to Macon County residents, and a variety of reports, like the SOTCH, the Community Health Assessment, and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey. All of this information is available free of charge for the public to view. Access to many of these resources is also available online at <http://www.maconnc.org/healthy-carolinians.html>.

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