Health Priorities

What are health priorities used for?
Health priorities help guide the planning of public health programs and activities in Chatham County. Programs and activities are done by many individuals and organizations. This document provides an update of progress made over the past four years in addressing priority issues.

How were these priorities created?
The current health priorities were created at the end of the community health assessment process in 2002. A group of individuals interested in improving the health of the people in Chatham County gathered data and the opinions of community members. They reviewed the information and created a long list of the most common concerns.

The group took each concern and assigned it a point value on a scale from 1-10 for each of three questions. The three questions were:

1. How many people does the problem affect, either actually or potentially?
2. What are the consequences of this concern continuing?
3. Is improvement within the span of control/influence of public health groups?

Public Health: The Big Picture:
True or False? Your health is completely in your control.

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Public Health - The Big Picture:

Who Does Public Health in Chatham County?

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Public Health - The Big Picture:

Who Does Public Health in Chatham County?
2. Unintended Pregnancy

Chatham Objective: Reduce the proportion of children and adolescents who are overweight or obese.

Description: In the 2002 health assessment, 30 percent of key informants said that obesity was a major health concern and many community residents are eager to improve their health and well-being. As a result, the county health department has initiated several programs to help residents reduce their body weight. One such program is called the “Healthy Body, Healthy Mind” which encourages participants to focus on healthy eating and regular physical activity.

3. Tobacco Use

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1. Physical Activity

Chatham Objective: Increase the proportion of adults who engage in physical activity.

Description: In 2002, a lack of recreational facilities and programs ranked as number one challenge faced by Chatham County residents. Many adults ranked health as a top concern and this was closely tied to the amount of physical activity a person gets. In 2003, a new park opened in the Bear Creek neighborhood, and health-related programs were held in a workplace setting to encourage healthy eating and physical activity.

4. Obesity/Nutrition

Chatham Objective: Reduce the percent of children and adolescents who are overweight or obese.

Description: In the 2002 health assessment, 50 percent of key informants said that obesity was a major health concern and many community residents are eager to improve their health and well-being. As a result, the county health department has initiated several programs to help residents reduce their body weight. One such program is called the “Healthy Body, Healthy Mind” which encourages participants to focus on healthy eating and regular physical activity.

10. Indoor Air Quality - Asthma

Chatham Objective: Reduce the percent of children in county schools reporting wheezing or breathing problems.

Description: A Chatham County schools asthma survey in 2005 indicated that 9.7% of students had high school and were prescribed asthma medications. In 2004 and 2005, the Breathe Easy Chatham County Coalition and Chatham County Schools worked together to implement the “Breathe Easy” program in 50 schools in Chatham County. The program included training for staff and students on how to prevent and manage asthma. The school’s Asthma Action Plan was developed to ensure that all students had access to medication and were supported by trained staff.

9. Tobacco Use

Chatham Objective: Reduce tobacco use by adolescents.

Description: In 2002, 51.5% of those surveyed indicated that the most serious health concern was cigarette smoking by youth under 18, 49% indicated concern about smoking by adults, and 48% indicated concern about smoking among adults. Smoking has been linked to lower grades in school and increased risk of asthma. The Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Sub-Committee of the Coalition has worked to implement new policies and programs to reduce smoking among youth.

10. Indoor Air Quality - Asthma

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Medical evidence shows that tobacco use can lead to a wide range of respiratory conditions, including asthma. In 2006, 7.0% of Chatham County students reported having asthma. In 2005, 4.0% of students reported having had a heart attack. In 2004, 3.0% of students reported having had a stroke. In 2003, 2.0% of students reported having had a cancer. In 2002, 1.0% of students reported having had a diabetes. In 2001, 0.1% of students reported having had a HIV/AIDS.

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Description: In 2002, 51.5% of those surveyed indicated that the most serious health concern was cigarette smoking by youth under 18, 49% indicated concern about smoking by adults, and 48% indicated concern about smoking among adults. Smoking has been linked to lower grades in school and increased risk of asthma. The Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Sub-Committee of the Coalition has worked to implement new policies and programs to reduce smoking among youth.

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Chatham Objective: 1) Reduce the number of intimate partner violence victims seeking and receiving services. 2) Reduce number of children permanently taken away from their parents.

Description: In 2004-05, 10% fewer children were served from the Family Violence and Rape Crisis Services (PVRC) and the Coalition for Family Peace. It was estimated that at any given time 100 children were in the Department of Social Services care.

In 2004-05, 7.1% victims of domestic violence and sexual assault sought services. The PVRC and Coalition for Family Peace have implemented numerous outreach projects to increase awareness of domestic violence and use of their services. Child Abuse Prevention Month in April has been used to help highlight the issues. Trainings have been provided to child care providers so they can better identify children in need. The Coalition has also worked with congregations, schools and other community events to reach both English and Spanish speaking populations.

Future: Continue to focus on prevention and building healthy relationships from the start by working with children, men and the female community. This should include implementation of recommendations from the court system to build a more effective response to child abuse and neglect.

7. Tobacco Use

Chatham Objective: To reduce tobacco use by adolescents.

Description: In 2002, 51% of those surveyed indicated that the most serious health concern was cigarette smoking by youth under 18, 48% indicated concern about smoking by adults. Smoking has been linked to lung cancer, heart disease, and increased rates of asthma. The Alcohol and Other Drug Program increased its efforts to prevent smoking by youth under 18, 49% indicated concern about smoking by adults.

Future: Programs that encourage youth advocacy and peer education smoke-free restaurants targeting for men only for the smoke-free school policy to further reduce tobacco use.

8. Indoor Air Quality - Asthma

Chatham Objective: reduce the percent of children in county schools reporting wheezing or breathing problems.

Description: A Chatham County Schools asthma survey in 2000 indicated that 5 of 9 schools had high self-reported wheezing or asthma symptoms. This survey was conducted as a joint activity with the Respiratory Disease Surveillance Unit and other county health departments. The survey included two parts: (1) a questionnaire for students to identify respiratory symptoms during the past year, and (2) a respiratory health education program for teachers.

Future: Schools should continue their good work of improving the school environment by instituting integrated pest management strategies to further reduce children’s exposure to asthma triggers such as pesticides. Also, continuing monitoring student breathing difficulties through the Ambu® & Other Drug Survey can locally track the issue and correlate asthma rates with student smoking.

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Chatham Objective: 1) Missed School

Description: In 2006, 9% of children were missed school for an average of 4.4 days. The Coalition and Health Department worked with 6 elementary schools to develop programs to reduce school absence.

Future: There is a continuing need to find new, effective ways to stop preventable deaths and injuries and to more effectively use the methods currently available.

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Chatham Objective: 1) Physical Inactivity

Description: In 2002, a lack of recreational facilities and programs ranked number one challenge for need for Chatham County. Obesity ranked high as a concern and it is very closely tied to the amount of physical activity a person gets. In 2005, a new park opened in the Bear Creek and Health and Human Resources data were held in a workshop as Townsend. The Coalition will join a new group of concerned individuals, formed called Growing Healthy Communities to work with youth and people are getting immunized against childhood illnesses and influenza.

Future: There is still more work to be done to provide services to people, areas and create additional safe places for people to use.

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Chatham Objective: 1) Unintended Pregnancy

Description: In 2002, motor vehicle crashes were the number one cause of death to children and other unintentional injuries. However, with the help of the Coalition and Health Department, the number of injuries from community Health Assessment was a key health concern was drinking and driving.

Future: There is a continuing need to find new, effective ways to stop preventable deaths and injuries and to more effectively use the methods currently available.

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Chatham Objective: 1) Obesity/Nutrition

Description: In the 2002 health assessment, 50 percent of key community members interviewed and 60 percent of local residents interviewed indicated that the most serious health concern was cigarette smoking by youth under 18, 48% indicated concern about smoking by adults. Smoking has been linked to lung cancer, heart disease, and increased rates of asthma. The Alcohol and Other Drug Program increased its efforts to prevent smoking by youth under 18, 49% indicated concern about smoking by adults.

Future: We have a lot of work to do to address the national trend of increasing waist lines. It will be important to focus on making physical activity a part of every day life for children and to continue making healthier options the easiest option.

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Chatham Objective: 1) Adolescent Pregnancy

Description: In 2004, 51% of those surveyed indicated that the most serious health concern was cigarette smoking by youth under 18, 48% indicated concern about smoking by adults. Smoking has been linked to lung cancer, heart disease, and increased rates of asthma. The Alcohol and Other Drug Program increased its efforts to prevent smoking by youth under 18, 49% indicated concern about smoking by adults.

Future: Schools should continue their good work of improving the school environment by instituting integrated pest management strategies to further reduce children’s exposure to asthma triggers such as pesticides. Also, continuing monitoring student breathing difficulties through the Ambu® & Other Drug Survey can locally track the issue and correlate asthma rates with student smoking.
1. Physical Inactivity  
**Chatham Objective:** Increase the proportion of adults who engage in physical activity.

**Description:** In 2002, 27 percent of the residents interviewed in the community health assessment reported not being active on a regular basis. This is one of the major health concerns identified in the community. In order to help move Chatham County closer to a healthy lifestyle, the Chatham County Public Health Department has created a program that will help increase the proportion of adults who become active on a regular basis. The program will focus on increasing awareness of the benefits of physical activity and making it easier for residents to become more active.

2. Unintended Injury  
**Chatham Objective:** Reduce the number of children and adolescents who are overweight or obese.

**Description:** In 2002, 20 percent of Chatham County residents were classified as overweight or obese. This is one of the major health concerns identified in the community. In order to help move Chatham County closer to a healthy lifestyle, the Chatham County Public Health Department has created a program that will help decrease the proportion of adults who are overweight or obese. The program will focus on increasing awareness of the benefits of physical activity and making it easier for residents to become more active.

3. Contaminated Water  
**Chatham Objective:** Increase the proportion of adults who engage in physical activity.

**Description:** In 2002, the Chatham County Health Department launched a program to improve water quality in the county. The program will focus on increasing awareness of the importance of water quality and making it easier for residents to access clean water.

4. Obesity/Nutrition  
**Chatham Objective:** Reduce the proportion of children and adolescents who are overweight or obese.

**Description:** In 2002, 20 percent of Chatham County residents were classified as overweight or obese. This is one of the major health concerns identified in the community. In order to help move Chatham County closer to a healthy lifestyle, the Chatham County Public Health Department has created a program that will help decrease the proportion of adults who are overweight or obese. The program will focus on increasing awareness of the benefits of physical activity and making it easier for residents to become more active.

5. Adolescent Pregnancy  
**Chatham Objective:** Reduce the incidence of unintended pregnancies among adolescents and young adults.

**Description:** In 2002, 11 percent of Chatham County residents were classified as pregnant. This is one of the major health concerns identified in the community. In order to help move Chatham County closer to a healthy lifestyle, the Chatham County Public Health Department has created a program that will help decrease the proportion of adults who are overweight or obese. The program will focus on increasing awareness of the benefits of physical activity and making it easier for residents to become more active.

6. Family Violence  
**Chatham Objective:** Reduce the number of suicides by adolescents and young adults.

**Description:** In 2002, 20 percent of Chatham County residents were classified as pregnant. This is one of the major health concerns identified in the community. In order to help move Chatham County closer to a healthy lifestyle, the Chatham County Public Health Department has created a program that will help decrease the proportion of adults who are overweight or obese. The program will focus on increasing awareness of the benefits of physical activity and making it easier for residents to become more active.

7. Tobacco Use  
**Chatham Objective:** Reduce the incidence of unintended pregnancies among adolescents and young adults.

**Description:** In 2002, 11 percent of Chatham County residents were classified as pregnant. This is one of the major health concerns identified in the community. In order to help move Chatham County closer to a healthy lifestyle, the Chatham County Public Health Department has created a program that will help decrease the proportion of adults who are overweight or obese. The program will focus on increasing awareness of the benefits of physical activity and making it easier for residents to become more active.

8. Indoor Air Quality - Asthma  
**Chatham Objective:** Reduce the incidence of asthma in children and other vulnerable populations.

**Description:** In 2002, 11 percent of Chatham County residents were classified as pregnant. This is one of the major health concerns identified in the community. In order to help move Chatham County closer to a healthy lifestyle, the Chatham County Public Health Department has created a program that will help decrease the proportion of adults who are overweight or obese. The program will focus on increasing awareness of the benefits of physical activity and making it easier for residents to become more active.
3. Contaminated Water

Chatham Objective: 1) Assure that subsurface onsite wastewater treatment systems are installed and operated according to statutes and regulations to reduce and ultimately eliminate groundwater contamination. 2) Encourage the practice of best in conducting septic inspections and maintenance of septic systems to ensure that the system is functioning properly and reducing the risk of contamination.

Description: In the 2002 Community Health Assessment, two of three people said they were concerned about clean water, potable water, and access to potable water. In January 2002, the Chatham Wastewater Monitoring Program was initiated by the Environmental Health Division of the Chatham County Health Department to improve the quality of septic systems and to educate people about the proper installation and use of septic systems. In addition, classes are planned for February 2006. The Chatham Wastewater Monitoring Program will serve as a source of data on the performance of septic systems and will allow the Department to identify and clean up areas of potential contamination.

Future: The Chatham Wastewater Department hopes to interface in the infrastructure in place to allow all Chatham County home systems to have as many systems working as possible before 2015. While working toward that goal it is important that private drinking water wells be continued to be protected. The water quality of the public water supplies must be monitored and systems from contaminating ground and surface water sources be controlled.

5. Unintended Pregnancy

Chatham Objective: 1) Reduce the incidence of unintended pregnancy among adolescents and adult women.

Description: In the 2002 health assessment, 50 percent of those surveyed indicated that birth control was an important health concern and 49% indicated concern about smoking by youth under 18. 49% indicated concern about smoking by adults. Smoking has been linked to lower grades in school for children and increased rates of asthma. The Alcohol and Other Drug Survey indicates that proper smoking cessation efforts have increased with student learning rates and decreased smoking rates.

Future: Programs that encourage youth advocacy and peer education smoke-free environments for students in order to reduce the student's school policy to further reduce tobacco use.

6. Family Violence

Chatham Objective: 1) Increase the number of victims of intimate partner violence seeking and receiving services. 2) Reduce number of children permanently taken away from their parents.

Description: In 2004/05, 4.1% of households in Chatham County were exposed to abuse and/or family violence. The Family Violence and Rape Crisis Services (PVRC) and the Coalition for Family Peace are working to encourage and implement strategies to reduce intimate partner violence. In February 2004, 7.1% of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault sought services. The PVRC and Coalition for Family Peace were working to reduce intimate partner violence and implement numerous outreach projects to increase awareness of domestic violence and use of their services. Child Abuse Prevention Month in April has been used to highlight the issues. Trainings have been provided to child care providers so they can better identify victims in need.

Future: Chatham County Schools have adopted a no bus idling policy that will help to limit children's exposure to fumes from buses. Also, continuing to focus on prevention and building healthy relationships from the start by working with children, men, and the faith community. This should include implementation of recommendations from the court to build a more effective response to child abuse and neglect.

7. Tobacco Use

Chatham Objective: 1) Reduce tobacco use by adolescents.

Description: In 2002, 51% of those surveyed indicated that the most severe health concern was cigarette smoking by youth under 18, 19% indicated concern about smoking by adults. Smoking has been linked to lower grades in school for children and increased rates of asthma. The Alcohol and Other Drug Survey indicates that proper smoking cessation efforts have increased with student learning rates and decreased smoking rates.

Future: Programs that encourage youth advocacy and peer education smoke-free environments for students in order to reduce the student's school policy to further reduce tobacco use.

8. Indoor Air Quality - Asthma

Chatham Objective: reduce the percent of children in counties school reporting wheezing or breathing problems.

Description: A Chatham County Schools asthma survey in 2000 indicated that 5 of 9 schools had high numbers of asthma related concerns. The Health Department worked with the Coalition for Family Peace and the Coalition for Family Peace developed the following recommendations for intervention:

Future: Schools should continue their good work of improving the school environment by infiltrating integrated pest management. Programs that reduce children's exposure to asthma triggers such as pesticides. Also, continue monitoring student breathing difficulties through the Alcohol & Other Drug Survey can locally track the issue and correlate asthma rates with student smoking.
Health Priorities

Who Does Public Health in Chatham County?

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Public Health - The Big Picture:

True or False? Your health is completely in your control.

10

Current Health Priorities

(The order of importance)

1. Physical Inactivity
2. Unintentional Injury
3. Water Quality
4. Nutrition
5. Adolescent Pregnancy
6. Family Violence
7. Tobacco Use
8. Indoor Air Quality - Asthma
9. Affordable and Available Childcare
10. Alcohol and Other Drug Use
11. Infant Mortality

Chatham Objective:

Early childhood experiences, whether at home or in a child care center, provide children with essential building blocks for becoming healthy, thriving adults. For many families in Chatham County, child care is essential to what parents can do, but it is difficult to find affordable, quality child care. This is especially true for low-income families whose children need the best child care possible. Programs offered by such as Chatham County Partnership for Children and the work of child care providers are helping to increase the number of child care facilities with high ratings.

Future: We are still far from our goal. To get a more complete picture of the child care needs in the county to develop program improvements, facilities that serve special needs children could also be more closely evaluated.

10. Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Chatham Objective: 1) Increase the percent of students who report that their parents disapprove of drug use. 2) Increase the percent of students who report that their parents disapprove of alcohol use. 3) Establish a recovery house in Chatham County to aid recovering substance abusers.

Description: In 2002, alcohol and drug use was the leading most serious problem in Chatham County by those surveyed (57%). Resources for intervention and treatment were limited. Federally funded prevention programs and no local recovery services available. In February 2005, the ad hoc committee centered by the Chatham County Board of Commissioners presented their recommendations which included a recovery house and a prevention specialist. No action has yet been taken by either the Board or the local mental health agency.

Future: Continued advocacy and resource development for implementation of the recommendations prepared by the ad hoc committee is needed.

9. Infant Mortality

Chatham Objective: 1) Increase the percent of pregnant women smoking. 2) Reduce aggregate smoking among pregnant women.

Description: Infant mortality was chosen as a priority in Chatham County in 2002 because disparities between racial/ethnic groups indicated that minorities had higher rates than the state and Chatham County. Smoking during pregnancy is known to be associated with low birth weight babies and low birth weight is a major contributing factor to infant death. In 2005, new efforts began to target local pharmacies working with programs to increase physician office counseling center mandates.

Future: Efforts need to continue in the areas of tobacco use prevention. Additionally methods to increase the use of early prenatal care, particularly by those most at risk, need to be fostered and implemented.

How Can You Get Involved?

• Become a member of an advocacy or action group.

Leading the charge to a healthier Chatham

Chatham County Board of Health Members

• Don Rocco, Jr., OD
• Jane K. Miller, R.Ph
• Patrick Barnes
• William Brewer, Jr.
• Jane Hollingworth
• Mary Jacobs
• Gregory King
• Paul Mitchum, DDS
• Kevin Monce, DVM
• Jacqueline Turnu
• Danny Wimberly

Health of Chatham 2006

PERCENT 5-12 GRADE STUDENTS THAT SAID YES (Chatham County Schools Alcohol & Other Drug Survey)

Parents Talk About the Dangers of Drugs Often

Subsidized Children in 4 or 5 Star Rated Facilities (Chatham County Partnership for Children)

Infant Death Rate Per 1000 Live Births (Chatham County Office of Health Improvement)
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Public Health - The Big Picture:

True or False? Your health is completely in your control.

Without you, it would be impossible. It is also impossible for one person or one organization to carry all the burden, especially true for low income families whose children need the best quality health care possible. Programs offered by such as Chatham County Partnership for Children and the work of child care providers are helping to increase the number of child care facilities with high ratings.

Future: We are still far from our goal. To get a more complete picture of the child care needs in the county to develop program improvements, facilities that serve special needs children could also be more closely evaluated.

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Subsidized Children in 4 or 5 Star Rated Facilities

Infant Death Rate Per 1000 Live Births

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Goal</th>
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Infant Mortality

Chatham Objective: 1) Decrease infant mortality.

Subsidized Children in 4 or 5 Star Rated Facilities

11. Infant Mortality

Chatham Objective: 1) Increase the percent of students who report that their parents disapprove of drug use. 2) Increase the percent of students who report that their parents disapprove of alcohol use. 3) Establish a recovery house in Chatham County to assist recovering substance abusers.

Future: Efforts need to continue in the area of tobacco use prevention. Additionally methods to increase the use of early prenatal care, particularly by those most at risk, need to be tried and implemented.

How Can You Get Involved?
• Become a member of an advocacy or action group.
• Encourage your church, club, or other organization to become involved in addressing these issues.
• Contact the Health Department at 919-542-8221 or on the web at www.chathampublichealth.org.