



Caldwell County

NORTH CAROLINA

Health Department



2021 State of the County Health Report

The Caldwell County Community Health Assessment was completed in 2017. Our research team determined that preventative care, substance abuse, and mental health are the three focus priorities based on the primary and secondary data collected and analyzed. The progress made in these focus areas is listed below.

PREVENTATIVE CARE

- Hepatitis A- In recent years, cases of Hepatitis A have been on the rise in Caldwell County. The Caldwell County Health Department, in partnership with Yokefellow, Lenoir Soup Kitchen, and several local shelters, has implemented Hepatitis A vaccination and educational drives to serve the homeless and individuals who use substances populations. The Caldwell County Health Department offers Hepatitis A and STD testing and free Hepatitis A vaccines to those who are homeless and participate in substance abuse and men who have sex with men. The Caldwell County Health Department is invested in reaching these populations further to stop the spread of Hepatitis A in Caldwell County.
- Youth Mental Health- The Caldwell County Local Interagency Coordinating Council is a community-based advisory group in each county of North Carolina. They are housed under the North Carolina Department and Health and Human Services. Our local service providers and parents in Caldwell County work together to ensure all families know about early intervention services. The Caldwell County LICC compiled a Mental Health Supports list for Caldwell County to share various resources, including counseling, health services, and services for children in foster care. Youth-serving agencies have seen the necessity for providing mental health intervention at a young age. Caldwell County works to make the services more available to our youth.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Drug-Free Caldwell- Drug-Free Caldwell, previously known as Project Lazarus, is a substance abuse coalition whose mission is to create a more connected, productive, and healthy community for adults and youth in

Caldwell County by reducing substance use through education and community engagement. In 2021, the coalition continued to meet, despite the focus that COVID-19 took. The coalition has gained a variety of new members in the last year. We have many participating agencies, including Jonas Hill, Caldwell County Schools, RHA, Vaya, Granite Falls Police Department, UNC Healthcare, Caldwell County Health Department, local pharmacies, primary care providers, etc. The coalition is focusing on recruitment and establishing finite goals and objectives. This coalition is beneficial to the substance abuse serving the community as it is an opportunity for agencies to share their services and resources.

- RESTART- The Caldwell County Restart Program was initiated in September 2021. This program is currently grant-funded and housed under Caldwell County Emergency Services. The program serves individuals in Caldwell County who have had an overdose and incarcerated individuals with substance abuse addictions. So far to date, Restart has given out 127 doses of Narcan to the community.

MENTAL HEALTH

- Jonas Hill Hospital and Clinic- Jonas Hill Hospital is an integrated inpatient and outpatient behavioral health pavilion that increases access to inpatient psychiatric beds in rural Western North Carolina. Jonas Hill Hospital is a division of Caldwell Memorial Hospital. They have resources that help with mental health, such as referral programs that help refer patients to third-party organizations like RHA Healthcare and Vaya Health. The facility provides services that provide mental health resources for the community, including in-hospital care, education, and at-home care management. Whether an individual is in crisis or wants to improve skills to manage everyday life, Jonas Hill can help meet the need.
- RHA- RHA's behavioral health services include a wide array of mental health and substance use programs and services for adults and children, provided by experienced and compassionate professionals. This includes facility-based services in our offices and community-based services and crisis services to serve people where they are.
- VAYA Health- VAYA health is a public managed care organization. VAYA operates Medicaid, federal, state, and local funding for services and support related to mental health, substance use, and intellectual/developmental disabilities. 24/7 Access to Care Line is available to people seeking

information about care or in crisis. This service is open to all residents, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. Better communication among providers means that your team can address the many parts of your life that help shape your health and recovery journey.

Despite COVID-19's influence on public health resources, Caldwell County could successfully implement many initiatives that target our focus areas of preventative care, substance abuse, and mental health. We implemented new programs that we had not used before to target recurring issues. We started a new substance abuse rehabilitation program known as Restart. We also targeted our preventative service toward the mental health of adults of youth. We hope to broaden our mental health services and combat Hepatitis A in the homeless and substance-abusing populations in the following year.

MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY

- From January 2021 until December 2021, Caldwell County had 15,197 COVID-19 cases.
- The Health Department collected 4,293 COVID-19 tests.
- There were over 100 deaths in Caldwell County.

Rank	2020	2021
1	Diseases of heart	Diseases of heart
2	Cancer	Cancer
3	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	Chronic lower respiratory diseases
4	Alzheimer's disease	Alzheimer's disease
5	Cerebrovascular diseases	Cerebrovascular diseases
6	All other unintentional injuries	All other unintentional injuries
7	Diabetes mellitus	Diabetes mellitus
8	Pneumonia and Influenza	Pneumonia and Influenza
9	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis
10	Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome and nephrosis	Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome and nephrosis

Source: State Center for Health Statistics, North Carolina

EMERGING ISSUES

- SIDS/ Infant Mortality- Nationally, the infant mortality rate is 5.7 percent for every 1,000 live births. In Caldwell County, it is 7.2 percent. State numbers show that more than 90 percent of infant deaths can be traced to perinatal conditions. This pertains to situations that are happening before, during, and after birth, including but not limited to: maternal health issues, access to prenatal care, use of tobacco or alcohol, proper sleep habits for the baby, and education and access to care that can make a difference in those areas can be hard to come by in many rural areas. The local area hospital no longer offers obstetric care. The health department has partnered with our local pregnancy care center to prevent infant mortality further to increase access to care for maternity patients.
- Syphilis- Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection that can cause serious health problems without treatment. Recently, there have been increased incidences of Syphilis in Caldwell County. The Caldwell County Health Department has worked to identify the population affected most prevalently, targeting the homeless and substance abuse populations. The health department has focused on educational/ vaccine clinics in the community to mitigate these cases, including local shelters and homeless serving agencies. The Caldwell Health Department has documented 19 cases in 2021. So far, in 2022, there are already 20 cases that are being monitored. The health department and collaborating agencies will continue to target these populations and reduce the cases of Syphilis through education and vaccination.
- Hepatitis A- Hepatitis A was another emerging issue we identified for 2021 and continues to be in 2022. Many people do not know they have Hep A, so they spread it without realizing it. The virus can be spread through sharing drug paraphernalia, sexual intercourse, touching objects, or eating food that someone with Hepatitis A handled. This virus became a health warning for people living homeless and recreational drug users due to how the virus spreads. In 2021, Caldwell County was identified as a Hepatitis outbreak with 40 positive cases. Of those 40 cases, 23 were male, and 17 were female. The Caldwell County Health Department was unable to go into the community to

vaccinate the affected population due to COVID-19 but has planned vaccine drives for 2022.