

## Progress on CHIP



All Caldwell County priorities are addressed in the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). Click on the links below for Progress Made in 2023.

For the priority area of Substance Abuse, see the progress tabs for each program below.

### RESTART

For the priority area of Mental Health see progress tabs for each program below.

### Crisis Response Collaborative

For the priority area of Transportation, see the progress tabs for each program below.

### Transportation Collaborative

As the Caldwell County Health Department undergoes a pivotal transition, moving away from the intense focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, a strategic redirection of attention is underway. The department is turning its efforts towards reinstating and enhancing essential programs that had been temporarily suspended in 2019. This deliberate shift in priorities is guided by a commitment to fostering the holistic well-being of the community, acknowledging that health encompasses more than just the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic.

One of the key areas of emphasis in this renewed approach is the comprehensive tackling of substance abuse. Recognizing the pervasive impact of substance use disorders on the community, the Health Department aims to implement targeted interventions and support systems to address this critical issue. By reinstating and reinforcing programs related to substance abuse prevention, treatment, and recovery, the department endeavors to make a positive impact on the lives of individuals and families affected by these challenges.

Mental health is another paramount aspect of the renewed priorities. Understanding the profound connection between mental well-being and overall health, the Health Department is committed to advancing mental health services. This includes initiatives to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and provide accessible and effective mental health resources. By integrating mental health into its core programs, the department aims to contribute to a community where individuals can thrive emotionally and psychologically.

Additionally, the renewed focus extends to transportation services, recognizing the pivotal role transportation plays in accessing healthcare and support services. By addressing transportation barriers, the Health Department aims to ensure that community members can readily access vital healthcare resources, attend appointments, and participate in essential programs. This holistic approach acknowledges the interconnectedness of various factors influencing community health and well-being.

In essence, this strategic shift in priorities by the Caldwell County Health Department signifies a forward-looking commitment to community health. By actively addressing substance abuse, mental health, and transportation services, the department seeks to create a resilient and thriving community that extends beyond the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic, reflecting a dedication to the long-term well-being of the residents it serves.

## Morbidity and Mortality Changes Since Last CHA



Caldwell County, North Carolina, is ranked #66 out of 100 counties in the state. In terms of Health Outcomes, it falls in the lower middle range (25%-50%). This metric assesses the average lifespan and the level of physical and mental health experienced by the community. The county also ranks in the lower middle range (25%-50%) for Health Factors, which represent areas that can be improved to enhance longevity and overall health. Additionally, Caldwell County is classified as Metropolitan, with 34.4% of its population residing in low population density areas. The demographic information emphasizes the historical context, acknowledging the Indigenous nations that have inhabited the region for thousands of years.

**Health Outcomes:** In terms of health outcomes, Caldwell County is not specified for "Length of Life." However, for "Quality of Life," it has a 15% rate of "Poor or Fair Health," 3.4 days of "Poor Physical Health," 4.8 days of "Poor Mental Health," and a 10% rate of "Low Birthweight."

**Health Factors:** Under health factors, Caldwell County's health behaviors include a 22% adult smoking rate, 34% adult obesity rate, a Food Environment Index of 6.2, 24% physical inactivity, 80% access to exercise opportunities, 18% excessive drinking, 22% alcohol-impaired driving deaths, 389.4 sexually transmitted infections, and 30 teen births.

**Clinical Care:** In clinical care, Caldwell County has a 14% uninsured rate, a ratio of 2,220:1 for primary care physicians, a ratio of 3,090:1 for dentists, a ratio of 1,100:1 for mental health providers, 2,805 preventable hospital stays, a mammography screening rate of 44%, and a flu vaccination rate of 55%.

**Social & Economic Factors:** Social and economic factors in Caldwell County include an 81% high school completion rate, 55% some college, 4.9% unemployment, 21% children in poverty, an income inequality score of 4.6, 25% children in single-parent households, 12.5 social associations, and 86 injury deaths.

Physical Environment: Concerning the physical environment, Caldwell County has an air pollution particulate matter level of 8.1, drinking water violations (not specified), 12% severe housing problems, 83% driving alone to work, and a 33% long commute driving alone.

## Emerging Issues Since Last CHA



Caldwell County Commissioners recently approved the allocation of a portion of the North Carolina Opioid Settlement for the expansion of the opioid relief program called R.E.S.T.A.R.T. Initiated in December 2022, R.E.S.T.A.R.T. has been making significant strides in addressing the drug addiction issue in Caldwell County. The mission is clearly defined: "To advocate for individuals and their families affected by substance use disorders and misuse, by meeting each individual where they are through the promotion of evidence-based strategies originating in prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery, while ultimately reducing overdose deaths."

The program offers the following services:

- Resources, application assistance, and transportation support for detoxification, rehabilitation, and in-patient treatment facilities
- Medication Assistance Treatment options
- Recovery housing
- Assistance with Medicaid/Food Nutrition Benefits applications
- Free medical testing for HIV, Hepatitis C, and pregnancy
- Access to Peer Support Specialists to provide guidance and support throughout the recovery journey.

## New/Paused/Discontinued Initiatives Since Last CHA



In a significant change as of October 2023, the Caldwell County Health Department has taken the lead in the "Hope for Caldwell" coalition. This shift positions the department as a central force in addressing community well-being. Caldwell County is actively pursuing funding through the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) grant, aiming to combat drug issues through strategic partnerships. The coalition, under the Health Department's leadership, exemplifies a united front against substance abuse, utilizing the DFC grant for targeted interventions and support services. This collaborative effort underscores the county's commitment to a resilient community and a healthier future.

Caldwell County's school council has launched a crucial initiative to combat vaping in schools. Addressing this pressing issue, the council is implementing the "Catch My Breath" program, training teachers and staff to educate middle and high school students about the dangers of vaping. The emphasis is on fostering a mindset change among students, aiming for a lasting impact on their choices and overall well-being. This proactive approach reflects the council's commitment to creating a healthier school environment and tackling the immediate challenges posed by vaping.

As Caldwell County returned to normal health department functions post-COVID-19, VAYA Health and the Health Director of Caldwell County reinstated the Caldwell County Crisis Response Collaboration. This initiative unites mental health providers in the county, fostering collective efforts to enhance crisis response mechanisms. By coordinating resources and expertise, the collaboration aims to ensure a comprehensive and timely response to mental health crises, reflecting a commitment to the well-being of the community.