

Caldwell County

2024 State of the County

Health Report



CALDWELL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Health Director
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Mission: To Promote, Protect, and Improve the Health of Our Community

The Caldwell County Health Department is pleased to present the 2024 State of the County Health Report. This document provides updated information on key indicators for Caldwell County to compare local and state health data about our community's health and well-being.

This report includes information on the progress made over the past three years as well as information on the identified priority areas for the 2022 Community Health Assessment: Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Transportation.

This information is designed to educate and update community members, community leaders, agencies, organizations, and others on progress in addressing certain health issues. This update is also intended to influence the development of new policies that affect the health of the community, guide the planning of health programs, and recruit interested community members to participate in future activities.

The Caldwell County Health Department seeks to “promote, protect and improve the health of our community” by focusing on long-term health priorities identified in the 2022 Community Health Assessment.

If you would like more information on the services and programs offered by the Caldwell County Health Department or would like to be involved in community health programming, please contact the Health Education and Health Promotion Department at 828-426-8506. For additional information on Caldwell County, please visit the county's website at www.caldwellcountync.org.

Sincerely,

Anna Cook

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Health Director

Caldwell County Health Department

Community Health Improvement Plan Progress

Substance Abuse

Intervention: HOPE for Caldwell

HOPE for Caldwell has recently initiated a Fentanyl Awareness Challenge for students in grades 9 through 12 to address the increasing concerns about fentanyl in their communities. This program focuses on educating and equipping students with the necessary knowledge and tools to recognize and combat the dangers of fentanyl. The challenge was rolled out across Caldwell's high schools, incorporating a variety of interactive activities, workshops, and discussions that highlight the perils of fentanyl use. It employs a thorough educational method, offering vital information on the lethal risks of fentanyl, preventative strategies, and resources that students can utilize and share with their peers and families. The main goal of the initiative is to enhance student awareness of the dangers associated with fentanyl, promote wise and informed choices, and encourage a drug-free lifestyle. It also aims to provide students with the abilities needed to support at-risk peers. By embedding the Fentanyl Awareness Challenge within school activities, HOPE for Caldwell strives to foster a safer educational environment and reduce fentanyl incidents among students. Moreover, this initiative helps raise community awareness and stimulates continuous dialogue on preventing substance abuse.

Intervention: Catch My Breath

The School Health Association Council, in collaboration with Caldwell County health educators, has implemented the "Catch My Breath" program in high schools across the county. This program is specifically designed to address issues related to vaping among students. It provides targeted educational sessions that inform students about the health risks associated with vaping and offers strategies to quit. The aim is to reduce the prevalence of vaping among teenagers by equipping them with the knowledge and resources to make healthier choices. This initiative is part of a broader effort to promote wellness and prevent substance abuse in the community's youth.

Intervention: Lock Your Meds

"Lock Your Meds" is a public health campaign focused on preventing prescription drug misuse, particularly among teenagers and young adults. It emphasizes the importance of securing medications by using lock boxes or secure cabinets to keep them out of reach. The initiative aims to educate parents and guardians on the dangers of prescription drug abuse and provides practical steps for safe medication storage. By promoting community involvement and awareness, "Lock Your Meds" seeks to reduce the risk of medication misuse and protect families and communities from the growing issue of prescription drug abuse.

Mental Health

Intervention: Crisis Response Collaboration

The Sequential Intercept Model Mapping Report for Caldwell County provided a detailed analysis of the services and interventions available for individuals with behavioral health needs as they intersect with the criminal justice system. Key findings from the report highlight several opportunities and gaps across different intercept points:

1. **Services and Supports at Various Intercepts:**

- At Intercept 0 and 1, the focus is on crisis intervention, with services like mobile crisis management, behavioral health crisis lines, and emergency housing.
- Intercepts 2 and 3 cover the initial detention and court hearings, offering intake screenings and emphasizing the need for more behavioral health supports within jails.
- At Intercepts 4 and 5, which focus on reentry and community corrections, there is a push to expand peer support and develop recovery housing to assist individuals transitioning back into the community.

2. **Gaps Identified:**

- Notable gaps include staffing shortages, limited access to Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) in jails, and inadequate transportation for services outside major areas.
- Data integration issues persist, impacting the effectiveness of services provided to individuals interfacing with the criminal justice system.

3. **Priorities for Change:**

- Key priorities for improvement include expanding peer support across all intercepts, establishing recovery housing, developing a behavioral health urgent care center, and setting up a recovery court to provide targeted support.

4. **Strategic Action Plans:**

- The report outlines specific actions such as improving coordination and data sharing among agencies, increasing access to MAT, and integrating more comprehensive behavioral health services within the criminal justice system.

Transportation

Intervention: Transportation Collaborative

The Transportation Group in Caldwell is a collaboration of local leaders and directors addressing community transportation challenges. The goal is to focus on inclusive representation, data-driven approaches, and community engagement to develop targeted solutions. Emphasizing sustainability, the group promotes public transit, bike lanes, and electric vehicles. They collaborate with experts, plan for the long term, partner with regional authorities, advocate for funding, measure impact, and run public awareness campaigns. Through these efforts, the Transportation Group aims to enhance the transportation experience for all residents and visitors.

Emerging Issues

High Rates of Injury Deaths:

- Emerging Issue: The injury death rate in Caldwell County is higher than both the state and national averages. This suggests emerging concerns around community safety, including potential increases in accidents, violence, or other factors leading to injury.
- Potential Focus Areas: Increased safety programs, community education on injury prevention, and targeted interventions for high-risk groups (e.g., elderly, youth, or workers in hazardous occupations).

Increase in Drug Overdose Deaths:

- Emerging Issue: The rate of drug overdose deaths in Caldwell County is significantly higher than state and national averages. This indicates an emerging crisis with substance abuse, particularly with opioids or other narcotics.
- Potential Focus Areas: Expanded access to substance abuse treatment and prevention programs, harm reduction strategies (like needle exchange programs), and community education on the dangers of drug use.

Higher Teen Birth Rates:

- Emerging Issue: Teen birth rates in Caldwell County are significantly higher than state and national averages, which can correlate with increased health risks for both infants and young mothers.
- Potential Focus Areas: Enhanced sexual education programs in schools, access to contraception and family planning services, and targeted support programs for teen mothers.

High Rates of Adult Smoking:

- Emerging Issue: A larger percentage of adults in Caldwell County smoke compared to state and national averages, posing a significant risk for chronic diseases like lung cancer and heart disease.
- Potential Focus Areas: Smoking cessation programs, public health campaigns to reduce smoking, and policies to limit smoking in public areas.

Obesity and Physical Inactivity:

- Emerging Issue: The county shows a higher prevalence of adult obesity and physical inactivity, contributing to the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension.

- Potential Focus Areas: Community programs promoting physical activity, nutrition education, and initiatives to reduce obesity, such as improving access to healthy foods and safe places to exercise.

Limited Access to Mental Health Care:

- Emerging Issue: Caldwell County has a significantly higher ratio of residents to mental health providers compared to state and national averages. This suggests limited access to mental health services, which could lead to untreated mental health conditions.
- Potential Focus Areas: Increasing the number of mental health professionals, integrating mental health services into primary care settings, and promoting telehealth solutions to expand access.

Morbidity and Mortality Rates

Mortality Indicators

1. Alcohol-Impaired Driving Deaths:

- Caldwell County: 12%
- North Carolina: 25%
- United States: 26%
- **Analysis:** Caldwell County has a significantly lower rate of alcohol-impaired driving deaths compared to state and national averages.

2. Injury Deaths:

- Caldwell County: 95 per 100,000 people
- North Carolina: 88 per 100,000 people
- United States: 80 per 100,000 people
- **Analysis:** The injury death rate in Caldwell County is higher than both the state and national averages, indicating a potential area of concern for community safety and health interventions.

3. Drug Overdose Deaths (not included in the summary but relevant):

- Caldwell County: 38 per 100,000 people
- North Carolina: 30 per 100,000 people
- United States: 27 per 100,000 people
- **Analysis:** The rate of drug overdose deaths in Caldwell County is notably higher than the state and national averages, highlighting the need for targeted substance abuse prevention and treatment programs.

4. Teen Births (related to mortality of infants and maternal health):

- Caldwell County: 25 per 1,000 females

- North Carolina: 18 per 1,000 females
- United States: 17 per 1,000 females
- **Analysis:** The teen birth rate in Caldwell County is significantly higher than both the state and national averages, which can correlate with increased infant mortality rates and maternal health risks.

Morbidity Indicators

1. Adult Smoking:

- Caldwell County: 20%
- North Carolina: 15%
- United States: 15%
- **Analysis:** A higher percentage of adults in Caldwell County smoke compared to the state and national averages, contributing to increased risk for chronic diseases such as lung cancer, heart disease, and respiratory illnesses.

2. Adult Obesity:

- Caldwell County: 37%
- North Carolina: 36%
- United States: 34%
- **Analysis:** The obesity rate in Caldwell County is slightly higher than both the state and national averages, which can lead to a higher prevalence of related health conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease.

3. Physical Inactivity:

- Caldwell County: 25%
- North Carolina: 22%
- United States: 23%
- **Analysis:** Physical inactivity is more prevalent in Caldwell County compared to state and national averages, contributing to higher risks for obesity and associated morbidities.

4. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs):

- Caldwell County: 325.6 per 100,000 people
- North Carolina: 603.3 per 100,000 people
- United States: 495.5 per 100,000 people
- **Analysis:** The rate of STIs in Caldwell County is lower than both the state and national averages, indicating better performance in this aspect of public health.

5. Mental Health Providers Ratio:

- Caldwell County: 910:1
- North Carolina: 320:1
- United States: 320:1

- **Analysis:** Caldwell County has a much higher ratio of residents to mental health providers, indicating limited access to mental health care, which could negatively impact community morbidity related to mental health conditions.

6. Preventable Hospital Stays:

- Caldwell County: 2,776 per 100,000 Medicare enrollees
- North Carolina: 2,838 per 100,000 Medicare enrollees
- United States: 2,681 per 100,000 Medicare enrollees
- **Analysis:** The rate of preventable hospital stays in Caldwell County is slightly lower than the state average but higher than the national average, reflecting moderate access to effective primary and preventive care.