

State of the County Health Report  
2018



*The mission of the Burke County Health Department is to promote and protect the health and environment for the citizens of Burke County.*



The Burke County Health Department



The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) is a comprehensive analysis of the county’s health and helps determine health priorities that will be addressed in a community health improvement plan. The CHNA is completed every three years. The Burke Wellness Initiative is working on Burke County’s 2019 CHNA through the MAPP process. Burke Wellness Initiative is a group of dedicated stakeholders and county residents collaborating to positively impact the health and well-being of Burke County’s residents.

The State of the County Health Report (SOTCH) is a supplemental document published every year between CHNA’s to provide an overview of any changes within the community and update progress on the identified priorities in the action plan.

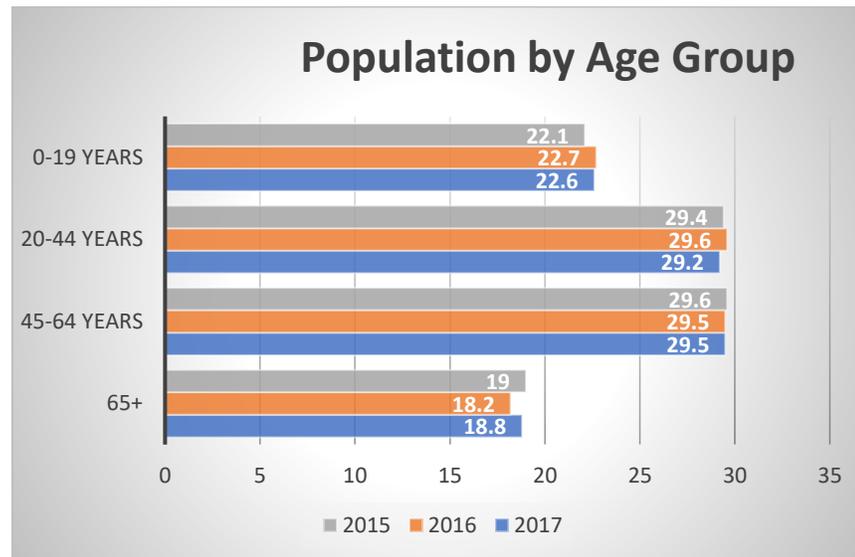
**Burke County’s most recent CHNA was completed in 2016 with the following identified top priorities:**

- Substance Use/Misuse**
- Mental Health**
- Poverty**

## BURKE COUNTY STATS AT A GLANCE

### Total Population

Estimated 2017: 88,898  
 Down slightly from 2016 estimates of 89,082  
 Still down from the 2010 population at 90,912



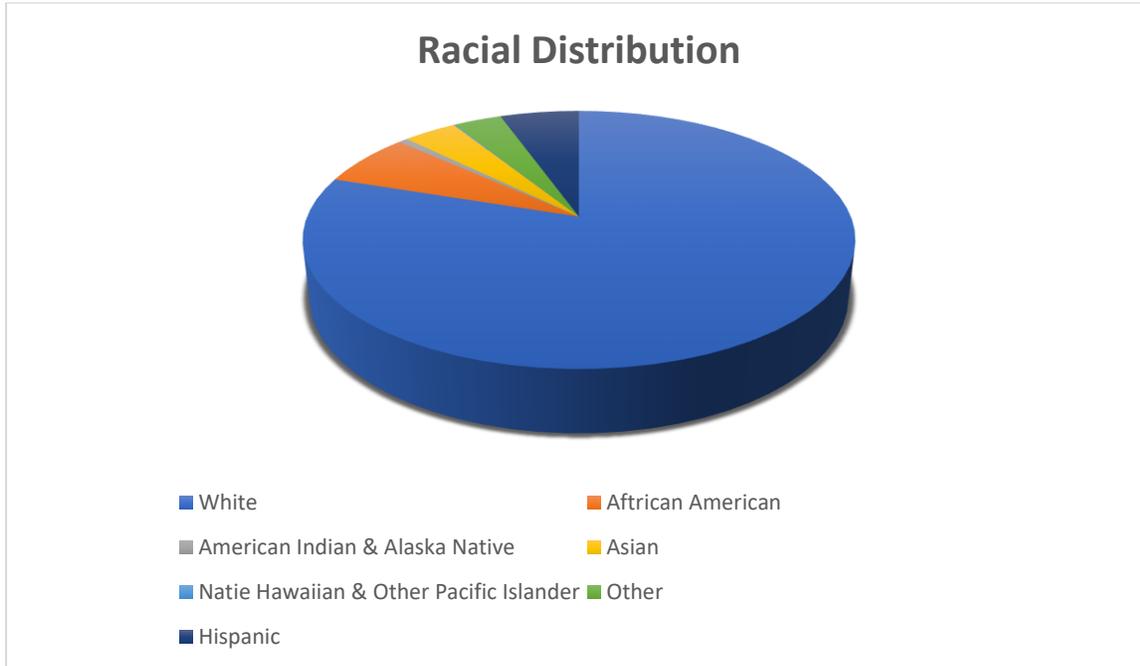
Estimated percentages of the age groups in Burke County have stayed about the same for the past several years.

**Median Age**

Estimated 2017: 43

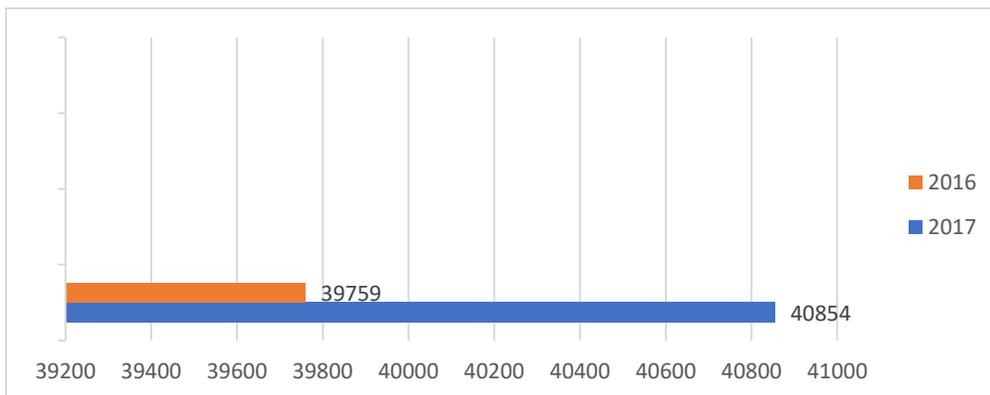
Median age has stayed the same

Burke County’s 2017 total population estimation is 49.4% males and 50.6% females



Racial distribution has not changed over the last year.

**Median Household Income**



Burke County’s estimated median household income has risen over the last year by \$1,000. In Burke County, 41% of the total working population makes less than \$50,000 in income and benefits with 59% making over \$50,000 in income and benefits.

**Poverty**

- In 2015 and 2016 the estimated poverty rate was 19.9%
- 2017 estimated poverty rate in Burke County is 19.3%
- 29.3% of those in poverty is under the age of 18 with 41.3% being under the age of 5
- Of the Burke County population, those living below the poverty level by education level:
  - 30.7% of those 25 and over have less than high school graduate
  - 14.0% are high school graduates
  - 14.3% have some college or an associate degree
  - 4.3% have a bachelor’s degree or higher

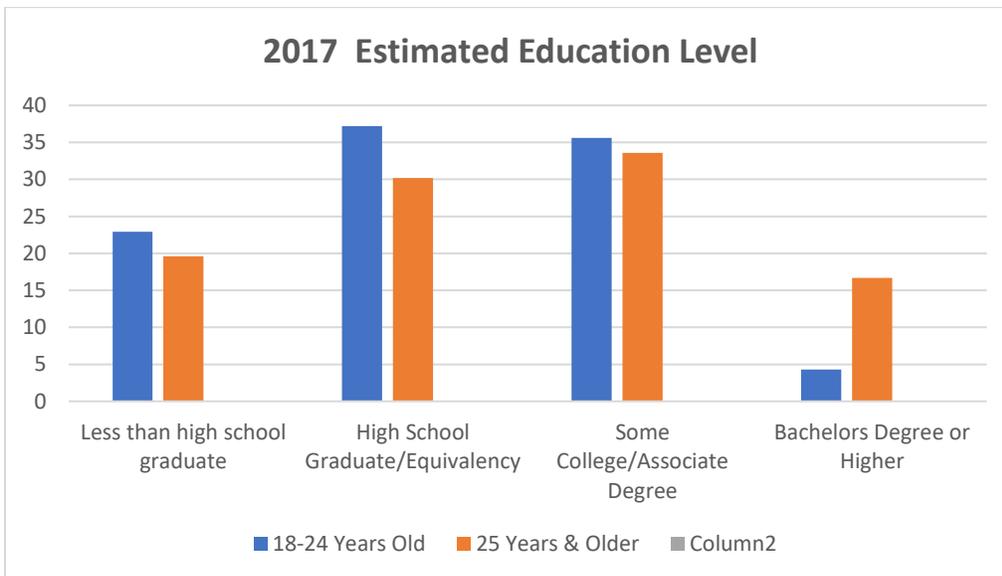


**Unemployment**

Burke County’s unemployment rate over the last three years:

- Average of 5.4% in 2015
- Average of 4.8% in 2016
- Average of 4.3% in 2017

**Educational Attainment**



Demographic Source: [www.uscensus.gov](http://www.uscensus.gov) American Community Survey Demographic Estimates



## KEY LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH FOR BURKE COUNTY

### 2012-2016 Ten Leading Causes of Death

Rank	Cause	Number	Rate
1	Diseases of the heart	1,129	253.5
2	Cancer – All Sites	1,105	248.1
3	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	383	86.0
4	Cerebrovascular disease	298	66.9
5	Alzheimer’s disease	253	56.8
6	Other unintentional injuries	239	53.7
7	Diabetes mellitus	154	34.6
8	Pneumonia & influenza	127	28.5
9	Suicide	94	21.1
10	Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome, & nephrosis	88	19.8

### 2017 Ten Leading Causes of Death

Rank	Cause	Number	Rate
1	Diseases of the heart	222	21.7
2	Cancer	218	21.3
3	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	77	7.5
4	All other unintentional injuries	55	5.4
5	Alzheimer’s disease	51	5.0
6	Cerebrovascular diseases	45	4.4
7	Diabetes mellitus	37	3.6
8	Motor vehicle injuries	2	2.3
9	Parkinson’s disease	20	2.0
10	Pneumonia & influenza	18	1.8

Leading causes of death order has changed since the 2016 data was published. Other unintentional injuries moved from 6 to 4 and could be due to the drug epidemic within the county. Motor vehicle injuries and Parkinson’s disease were previously not in the top ten leading causes but have moved up to into the rankings. The Burke Wellness Initiative group will need to review this data and discuss next steps that need to be taken.

Source: State Center for Health Statistics, NC

## **Priority Progress**



### **Priority #1: Substance Use/Misuse**

#### **Strategies/Interventions:**

- Decrease the rate of unintentional/undetermined prescription opioid overdose deaths
- Decrease the rate of controlled substances and opioids dispensed
- Reduce the percentage of high school students who report drinking alcohol in the past 30 days
- Adult/youth focused consistent communication and prevention education

From 2017-2018, Burke County has successfully hosted three community forums to focus on the many facets of substance use disorder. Each forum gathered community input and found three overarching needs for the community. These needs were identified as: (1) establishment of an adult drug court with a diversion component, (2) additional residential treatment options and long-term recovery support after treatment and (3) prevention efforts at all community levels.

Over this last year, the Burke County Health Department assembled community and governmental agencies to work on securing funds to implement two of the important needs identified. After one grant was rejected, Partners Behavioral Health Management offered to provide funds to implement the L.E.A.D (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion) program in Burke County. LEAD is a pre-arrest community-based and law enforcement led diversion program with the goals of improving public safety and public order, while reducing short-term incarceration and recidivism of low-level drug and sex offenders. This program diverts these voluntary offenders into community based, intensive case management and treatment receiving a wide array of support services. In 2018, the L.E.A.D program was initiated within the entire county including all local municipalities.

In November 2018, Burke County was awarded a Department of Justice grant to implement adult drug court, Burke County Recovery Court. Over the next four years, these grant funds will be used to implement Burke County Recovery Court which is a post-adjudication, voluntary, supervised, holistic, cognitive-based, judicially mandated intensive treatment program for offenders who have been identified as having problems with drugs and/or alcohol. The population this will serve is the high risk/high need adult non-violent offenders convicted of DWI level 1 and 2 with a felony or misdemeanor drug conviction, or a felony or misdemeanor conviction other than a drug conviction, if alcohol or drugs were a contributing factor in the crime.

As part of the continuum of substance use disorder services available for those in active addiction involved in the legal community, Burke County also offers a jail program. The jail services program offers treatment and recovery support services to those incarcerated due to substance use disorder. The BRIDGE program offered through Burke Recovery, assists offenders released from incarceration continued outpatient treatment, recovery support services and assistance with reintegration back into the community.

These programs involve a large multidisciplinary team representing the following agencies: Burke County Sheriff's Office, Probation, Glen Alpine Police Department, Valdese Police Department, Drexel Police Department, Morganton Public Safety, Catawba Valley Behavioral Health, Burke Recovery, Burke County Health Department, Partners Behavioral Health Management, Community Care of NC, The Cognitive Connection, TASC, 25th District Attorney's office, Clerk of Court's office, Defense Attorney, and the District Judges. These agencies are working together simultaneously on multiple mitigation efforts to improve the health and safety of the citizens of Burke County.

### **Prevention efforts:**

In October 2018, Burke Recovery was awarded a Drug Free Communities grant to focus on the prevention of underage drinking and the adolescent non-medical use of prescription drugs. A major part of this effort is to grow and strengthen Burke's community collaborative, the Burke Substance Abuse Network (BSAN).

Burke County was 1 of 25 applications identified by NCADD for a Communities Project with Facing Addiction. With the strong infrastructure of BSAN, Burke County was poised to dive deeper into community organizations and pull from the population of community members to develop a community-wide response through community trainings and activities to the substance use/misuse crisis. Social impact begins in the home then grows to affect change in every part of a community and beyond. Without the investment of every single layer of this process, we cannot create and develop the change we desperately want and need. In February 2019, Facing Addiction with NCADD chose Burke County as one of the top 10 sites in the country.

Burke Recovery and partnering agencies have been blanketing the community with prevention education and programming to positively impact the reduction of substance use/misuse.

Between May and December 2018, 746 lock boxes have been distributed throughout the community to allow citizens the opportunity to lock their medications and help



reduce the availability of theft of prescription medications. A follow up program called "Follow the Box" involves members of the prevention team to reach out to all lockbox recipients to ensure they are using their box, determine the effectiveness and discover if any additional resources or lockboxes are needed.

To further reduce the availability of unused prescription medications, medication drop boxes continue to be encouraged for use to discard these types of medications. Burke County has secured an additional three drop boxes within the county bringing the total to seven. In September 2018, it was reported from the Burke County Sheriff's Office disposed of 36,750 pills in a single shipment.

A public information and advocacy group with representation from: Burke Recovery, Alcoholics Anonymous, The Meeting Place, Burke County Sheriff's Office, Burke Youth Health Coalition, The Cognitive Connection, Vessels of Mercy (Women's Treatment and Recovery Program), Community Care

of NC, NAMI, Western Piedmont Community College and community members assembled to create and develop adult/youth focused consistent substance use/misuse communication and prevention education for the community. Messages are distributed through print, radio and many avenues of social media to reach as many citizens as possible.

The RxEAP Task Force led by physicians at Carolinas Healthcare System Blue Ridge involves the medical community in policing the medical community's prescription policy. A couple years ago, the task force worked to implement a stricter prescription policy change to reduce the number of pills dispensed by medical providers. This task force continues to work with physicians and mid-level providers to slow the flow of medications in the community.

## Priority #2: Mental Health

### Strategies/Interventions:

- Increase support for mental health through involving stakeholder's communication, education and awareness within Burke County
- Provide 20 adult/youth mental health first aid trainings to community partners
- Reduce the number of mental health emergency department visits by 3%
- Implement a web-based application for emergency responders to provide appropriate and timely resources during a mental health crisis



The Mental Health Task Force is currently working with community mental health agencies to develop current and consistent messaging for the community at large. They will utilize collaborative groups to assist with disseminating information through many media outlets such as, print, radio, social media and targeted digital media to promote community education around behavioral health services, access to resources and proper utilization of limited resources. Analytics on access and usage of resources will be obtained through the new Community Resource Hub managed by Carolinas Healthcare System Blue Ridge.

The Mental Health Task Force is also working on strategies to reduce the number of mental health emergency department visits through several avenues. A social worker was added to the emergency department to help decrease behavioral health holds along with establishing additional outpatient resources for the community to obtain mental health services. Burke Integrated Health, a collaboration of agencies offering behavioral health services, primary care and substance use treatment, has assisted with providing an alternative to presenting to the emergency department. This group is also working to adapt a web-based tool with Burke County resources for emergency responders to use when dispatched to someone in a mental health crisis and then provide training for those emergency workers.

In 2018, community partners were trained in Adult/Youth Mental Health First Aid. These evidence-based trainings teach members of the public how to help a person with a mental health problem, experiencing a worsening of a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis. Mental Health First Aid does not teach people how to treat or diagnose mental health or substance use conditions but teaches

people how to offer initial support until appropriate professional help is received or until the crisis resolves. This group will continue to train additional community members such as faith-based organizations, teachers, coaches, school counselors, civic organizations, etc. with a goal of providing 20 or more trainings.

### Priority #3: Poverty

#### Strategies/Interventions:

- Increase utilization of 211 resources by 25%
- Decrease those residents living in poverty by increasing opportunities for involvement in the evidence-based program, Circles



Poverty Community Forum

During 2018, Greenway Transportation implemented two fixed bus routes to almost cover the county. These routes will provide access to transportation for educational, medical and employment opportunities for those especially affected by poverty. Greenway Transportation has been offering free fares for everyone to encourage ridership and have riders feel comfortable about riding the bus. This strategy in the action plan has been accomplished.

On October 15, 2018, Burke County hosted a Poverty Community Forum with approximately 86 participants. The forum offered the citizens an opportunity to gather information on poverty and the effects of poverty on a community. The forum featured a poverty introduction from the director of the Burke United Christian Ministries and the keynote speaker Dr. Robert Strack from UNC-Greensboro who spoke about a community poverty framework that helps to assist those struggling with the social determinants of health such as poverty, reach a “smoother road” while attempting to keep healthy. The forum also offered speakers from 11 community resources who presented the participants with information and resources about services for those working through poverty. The last portion of the forum focused on a 2-hour poverty simulation and in-depth discussion about the challenges facing those working through poverty.

Blue Ridge Community Action has partnered with Burke United Christian Ministries to expand the evidence-based program, Circles to the Burke Mission Station. This program assists families working their way out of poverty. This expansion includes access to a computer lab that helps create additional

services to help those secure employment or continue their education.



Pictures from Poverty Simulation during Poverty Community Forum



### **Emerging Issues**

The Burke Wellness Initiative developed a list of emerging issues within the county that will need to be discussed further in our planning meetings. Below is the list to be considered:

A positive outcome of the negative publicity of the opioid crisis/awareness has translated into additional dollars into new and existing programs to benefit community in helping to reduce the number of overdose cases and provide additional treatment and prevention efforts.

Lack of housing and affordable housing is a growing issue within the county. A group of community partners have begun tactical planning to assist with this issue.

The growing homeless population and the ability to continue giving services at the same level if this population continues to grow.

Medicaid transformation and the many facets of change this will bring for all providers.

The increased numbers of grandparents/great-grandparents/foster parents that are raising children that have been taken out of their home environment along with the number of adults in foster care.

Burke County is seeing an increase in the use of Meth and other drugs since the accessibility to opioid has been reduced.

### **New Initiatives**

The Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion program and Adult Drug court are two new initiatives discussed previously in this document. Several new initiatives have been submitted and awaiting grant approval and will be discussed within the next State of the County Health Report.

A group of community partners has formed to assess and begin developing strategies to help assist with the lack of housing and affordable housing issue.



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### **Got a Community, Get Involved**

The Burke Wellness Initiative is the community collaboration working together to impact the health and identified priorities within this report and the CHNA. We would welcome additional community members that are passionate to help Burke County move toward a healthier place to live, work, play and pray. If you are interested in being part of the Burke Wellness Initiative, please contact Lisa Moore at 828-764-9218 or at [lisa.moore@burkenc.org](mailto:lisa.moore@burkenc.org)

This report does not cover all the positive community partner initiatives taking place in Burke County but provides a snapshot of progress being made within the community.

The most recent Burke County CHNA published in 2016 and the State of the County Health Reports can be viewed online at <http://www.burkenc.org/departments/health-department>. Burke Wellness Initiative group will distribute copies of the SOTCH to their respective agencies and to their contacts. Presentations of the current SOTCH will be given to the Board of Health, Burke County Board of Commissioners and to the community at large during programs and upon request.

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**Acknowledgement: Thanks to the community partners that supplied information and continue to work together to make Burke County a great place to live.**