



The 2011 Community Health Assessment (CHA) seeks to help local public health officials and community groups look at health issues, identify top health concerns, and determine the availability of Orange County resources to address these concerns.

The Healthy Carolinians of Orange County (HCOC) Partnership is a group of 125 individuals from 80 local agencies and community representatives. The Orange County Health Department and the HCOC Partnership worked together to complete the community health assessment. They gathered information from nearly 230 community members (through surveys and focus groups), data from local agencies, and county and state statistics.

During the assessment, HCOC wanted to get the opinion of all populations in the county, especially those who already face challenges. In the spring and summer of 2011, HCOC did door-to-door surveys in specific parts of the county, and also held discussions (“focus groups”) with groups of residents who would be harder to reach through the surveys. After this, five open community meetings (“forums”) were held at different locations in Orange County, and nearly 200 individuals participated. Attendees were presented with the main findings from the survey and focus groups. There they selected their top health concerns.

## **Current Focus Areas**

The results from the five community forums were brought to the HCOC Annual Meeting in September 2011. Participants attending the Annual Meeting were also asked to choose their “Top Five” issues. Based on votes, the top health concerns in Orange County are:

1. **Access to Health Care, Insurance, and Information**

Access includes availability of health care services; affordability of services and health insurance; ability to navigate and understand the health system; physical access to services (including transportation and disability access); and information about health care.

2. **Chronic Disease, Exercise, and Nutrition**

Chronic disease refers to diseases that are long-lasting. Physical activity and nutrition contribute to good physical health. Regular physical activity and good nutrition can help prevent cancer, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and respiratory ailments, and can help one maintain a healthy body weight.

3. **Mental Health**

Mental health refers to a wide range of conditions that affect one’s mood, thinking, and behavior. Broad classes of mental illness include mood disorders (depression, bipolar disorder), anxiety disorders, psychotic disorders (schizophrenia), eating disorders, personality disorders, and addictive behaviors/substance abuse disorders.

4. **Substance Abuse**

This refers to the harmful or hazardous use of alcohol, tobacco, and other illegal drugs (including the misuse and illegal use of prescription drugs). It is related to underage drinking, impaired driving, mental health, addiction, and injury related to alcohol and drugs.

5. **Injury**

This is the chief cause of death and disability for people under age 44 and may be unintentional like those resulting from motor vehicle crashes, falls, burns, poisonings, drowning, etc.; or violent and intentional including sexual assault, child abuse, partner violence, homicide, and suicide. Like most chronic disease, injuries are preventable.

## Next Steps

HCOC is sharing the report with agencies and people throughout Orange County so that they can use this information to plan and improve their programs and services. By the summer of 2012, the HCOC Partnership will form committees to develop “action plans” to address the top health concerns. It is hoped that this report and the future committee work will be useful to community members and service providers, for all are working towards the shared goal of making Orange County a healthy place to live, work, and play.

## A Call to Action

In order to make progress, HCOC needs total community involvement including the government, businesses, local agencies, the university, hospitals and health care, and all residents in order to improve the quality of life for people living in Orange County.

## How to Be Involved

Join the more than 125 other individuals and 80 county agencies and organizations who are working with Healthy Carolinians of Orange County to find creative solutions so that all Orange County residents can choose health as their first priority.

To find out how to become involved with workgroups addressing the top health concerns in the county, please contact the Healthy Carolinians Coordinator at (919) 245-2440 or [hcoc@co.orange.nc.us](mailto:hcoc@co.orange.nc.us). In Spanish, please call (919) 245-2387.

Membership information and a copy of the full report in English can be found at [www.orangecountync.gov/healthycarolinians](http://www.orangecountync.gov/healthycarolinians).



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