

2020 STATE OF THE COUNTY HEALTH REPORT



Screenshot taken at the June 15, 2020 Orange County Health Department all staff meeting.



PURPOSE

This 2020 State of the County Health Report (SOTCH) provides an update on local health concerns and the actions being taken to address them. It uses the most recent data to highlight the leading Orange County, North Carolina (OC) causes of death and disease as well as progress towards addressing the leading health concerns identified in the [2019 Community Health Assessment](#) (CHA). Results from the 2019 CHA, to include secondary data, opinion surveys, and community input sessions, resulted in the identification of the three priority areas that will be addressed over the next four years (2020-2024). They are:

- Access to Care
- Health Behaviors
- Health Equity

LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH (2013-2017)

The top 10 leading causes of death in OC are represented below, with the top three being:

- Cancer
- Heart Disease
- Cerebrovascular Disease (ie. a stroke)

OC has a lower age-adjusted death rate (per 100,000 population) than North Carolina (NC) averages in all categories. While OC does not exceed NC in any category, OC has experienced a decline in rates among all ten causes of death.

Cancer remains the top cause of death in OC. Trachea, bronchus, and lung cancers are the most common cancers experienced in OC, followed by prostate cancer with a rate of 19.5 per 100,000 persons, and breast cancer, with a rate of 16.2 per 100,000 persons.

Age-adjusted Death Rates (per 100,000 population)¹

Rank	Cause of Death	# of Deaths (2014-2018)	Death Rate (2014-2018)
1	Cancer	972	137.7
2	Heart Disease	752	111.9
3	Cerebrovascular Diseases	187	28.8
4	Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases	181	27.1
5	Unintentional Injuries	172	25.5
6	Alzheimer's Disease	144	23.5
7	Diabetes	101	15.5
8	Septicimia	73	10.6
9	Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and Nephrosis	69	10.3
10	Suicide	70	9.4

NEW AND EMERGING

COVID-19 in Orange County

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

January 25, 2020

The Orange County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) moves to a monitoring posture for COVID-19. **This counts as the first day of the pandemic response.**

March 3, 2020

Governor Cooper and DHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen **confirmed the first case of COVID-19** in North Carolina, in Wake County.



March 10, 2020

Governor Cooper signed an executive order **shutting down K-12 public schools for at least two weeks and banning public gatherings of over 100 people**. Three days later, he announced an executive order that closed restaurants and bars for dine-in customers.

March 13, 2020

The EOC is fully activated and **a state of emergency was declared in OC** in order to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

March 17, 2020

UNC-Chapel Hill closes dorms to students. **COVID-19 cases are confirmed in all 50 states.**

March 19, 2020

The first case of COVID-19 is identified in OC. Contact tracing begins.

March 23, 2020

Governor Cooper signed an executive order shutting down all hair salons, gyms and movie theatres as well as **banning public gatherings of over 50 people**.

March 30, 2020

Governor Cooper **issues a Stay at Home Order** that limits leaving home to traveling to work, or engaging in essential activities such as seeking food or medical assistance.



April 10, 2020

OC reports first COVID-19 associated death. There are outbreaks of COVID-19 at two long-term care facilities in OC.

COVID-19 in Orange County, continued

May 21, 2020

OC moves to “Safer at Home” Phase, **advising that all businesses require customers to wear a face covering while inside the business.**

BY ORDER OF ORANGE COUNTY

Face Coverings
REQUIRED
in Public



June 12, 2021

Ahead of the NC state order, **OC mandates face coverings in public** for everyone ages 12 and up. The age is later lowered to ages 5 and up. OCHD begins offering free weekday COVID-19 testing in Hillsborough.

June 10, 2020

The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 hits 2 million in the United States as new infections continue to rise in 20 states. Cases begin to spike as states ease social distancing restrictions.



June 16, 2020

The OC Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) releases a resolution denouncing the murder of George Floyd and approves the health director’s **declaration of structural racism as a “public health crisis” in OC.**

July 29, 2020

In a letter to university leadership, **the Health Director recommends UNC consider begin the fall 2020 semester with virtual classes** and restrict on-campus housing to at-risk students with housing needs.

August 10, 2020

UNC students officially return to class in Chapel Hill wearing face masks and abiding by social distancing guidelines.

August 17, 2020

After only a week of classes, **UNC announces it will move to remote learning** indefinitely due to the ongoing spread of COVID-19 on campus.



September 17, 2020

Governor Cooper announces that elementary school and charter school students may return to classrooms at full capacity on October 5. **OCHD has worked closely with K-12 public schools and has successfully prevented any outbreaks in the 2020-2021 school year.**

October 15, 2020

President Trump visits NC and states, “North Carolina, tell your governor open up your state, open up your schools.” On the same day **North Carolina reported 2,532 new lab-confirmed cases, the highest daily count thus far.**

COVID-19 in Orange County, continued

December 1, 2020

*It is announced that COVID-19 vaccines will be free and distribution will begin soon in phases. **A record high of 2,033 people are in the hospital in NC with illnesses related to COVID-19.***



December 30, 2020

OCHD hosts its first vaccine clinic at Cedar Ridge High School in Hillsborough to vaccinate first responders.

March 13, 2021

One-year anniversary of the pandemic in OC. OC has had 7,852 cases of COVID-19 and 97 deaths and is averaging two new cases each day. 19.1% of OC is fully vaccinated.

May 21, 2021

OC has no long-term care facilities in outbreak status for the first time during the pandemic. There were 25 outbreaks in 13 facilities. These outbreaks included 390 resident cases and 242 staff cases, resulting in 69 deaths (more than 2/3 of all deaths in the county).

December 14, 2020

*The first shipment of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine arrives in NC. **Despite pleas from public health officials to celebrate Thanksgiving with their immediate households only, a surge in infections leads to hospitalizations doubling in one month, threatening to overwhelm the healthcare system.***

January 14, 2021

*The human services group convenes for the first time. **Consisting of community members, county staff, and partners, the group works to ensure equitable vaccine distribution in OC by eliminating barriers and facilitating pop-up vaccine events throughout the county.***

GET YOUR SHOT A graphic with the text "GET YOUR SHOT" in large, bold letters. The word "SHOT" is in a larger font. To the right of the word "SHOT" is a blue syringe. A white bandage with a grid pattern is placed over the letter "O" in "SHOT".

April 7, 2021

Everyone age 16 and up is eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. On May 10th the emergency use authorization is approved to administer the Pfizer vaccine to ages 12 and up.

June 30, 2021

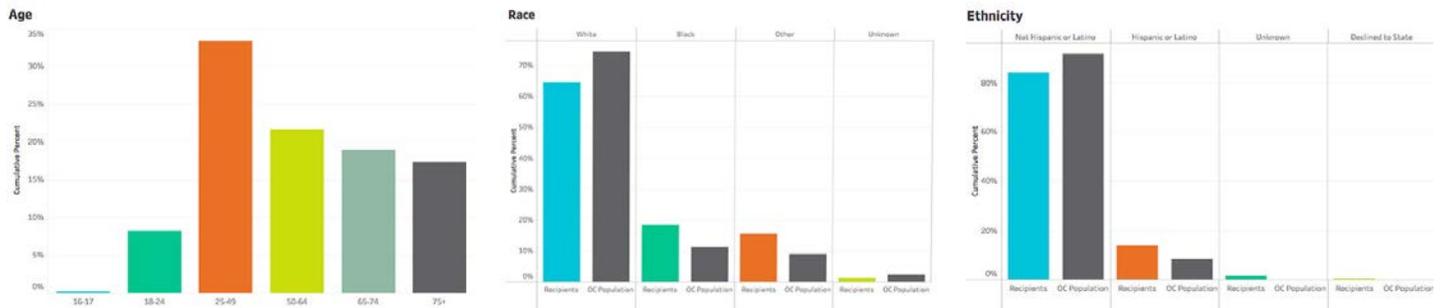
*The EOC is deactivated. This counts as the last day of the pandemic response. This is, by far, the longest EOC activation in the history of OC at 530 days. Prior to the pandemic, the longest was the 2004 ice storm for two weeks and four days for Hurricane Fran. **OC leads the state in vaccination with 62% fully vaccinated.***

Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in Orange County

The below data are laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases, deaths, and other demographic information for both OC and NC.

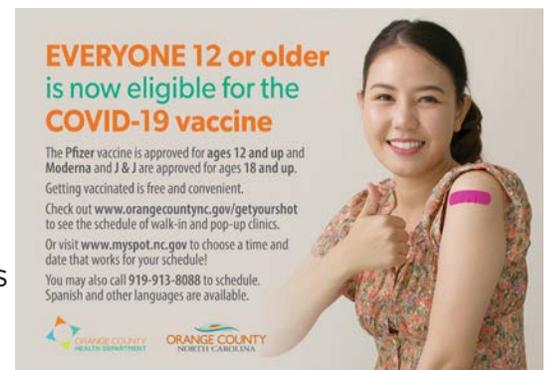
As of June 10, 2021	Orange County	North Carolina
Total Tests	376, 753	13,455,767
Total Cases	8,576	1,007,273
Total Deaths	101	13,246
People Vaccinated with at least One Dose	94,099	4,287,113

The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases is disaggregated by age, gender, race and ethnicity to help identify and see what groups, if any, are impacted more (or less) than any other group. It shows that the highest rates (32%) of cases are among those 18-24 and 25-49 years of age. When looking at the percent of women in OC (54%), compared to the percent of men (46%), 53% of confirmed cases are among women, compared to 47% of confirmed cases among men. In regard to race and ethnicity, majority of the confirmed cases are experienced by non-Hispanic, white individuals. It's important to note that Black and African Americans make up 11% of OC's total population but 16% of Blacks and African Americans tested positive for COVID-19².



COVID-19 Vaccine

Vaccines are one of the most effective tools to protect health and prevent disease and they work with your body's natural defenses so your body will be ready to fight the virus, if exposed (also called immunity). OCHD made plans to help ensure that the COVID-19 vaccine was, and continues to be distributed equitably and efficiently to county residents. Initial phases concentrated on the most vulnerable populations, including long-term care facilities, first responders, healthcare workers and others involved in treating COVID patients or administering the vaccine. OCHD, Emergency Management and UNC Health worked closely to begin setting up vaccine clinics throughout OC. Stationary events were provided at the Friday Center in Chapel Hill and at Whitted Human Services Center, while also providing pop-up events throughout the county. [Moderna](#), [Pfizer](#) and [Jansen](#), all tested and made a safe and effective vaccine that is available and free to everyone, ages 12 and up, who want it. OCHD provides free vaccinations, with walk-in options available. No ID or insurance is required. The [OCHD vaccine page](#) has the latest schedule of walk-in and pop-up clinics.



While OC is leading the state in vaccinations with over 60% of community members fully vaccinated, there are still individuals who are at a disadvantage and OCHD will not rest until everyone who wants a vaccine is able to get a vaccine. In an effort to ensure that all community members have access to the vaccine, the OC Mobile Vaccine Team is ready to vaccinate people who are homebound or are otherwise unable to travel to a vaccine clinic. To date (June, 2021), the OC Mobile Vaccine Team has administered the vaccine to 44 homebound individuals. The most reported challenge of this program has been identifying those in need. To refer individuals for the vaccine, who may be encountering challenges, visit www.orangecountync.gov/MobileVax or call 919-245-6127.

Are you homebound or unable to travel to a COVID-19 vaccine clinic?

Our mobile vaccination team can help!

Fill out this form to make an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccination at your home by community paramedics:
www.orangecountync.gov/MobileVax
 Or call 919-245-6127 and leave a message.
www.orangecountync.gov/getyourshot

ORANGE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT | ORANGE COUNTY NORTH CAROLINA | ORANGE COUNTY COMMUNITY PARAMEDICS

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

During an emergency the county's EOC is activated as well as the Joint Information Center (JIC). The JIC operates out of the Health Department and serves to unify the information network so that all community members receive consistent messaging about the emergency as it evolves. It also serves as a centralized portal for information and complaints. Messaging is available in multiple languages and is delivered through multiple channels and in a variety of formats in order to bridge the digital and literacy divide. The JIC and the larger communicators workgroup meet often to address disinformation, review new COVID-19 guidance and to disseminate ready to use resources on a regular basis.

Joint Information Center (JIC)

Public Information Officer (PIO) | Kristin Prelipp

E-Newsletter Krishnaveni Balakrishnan	Media Inquiries Todd McGee	Call Center Donna King
Immigrant Refugee Susan Clifford	Web Master Lee Barnes	COVID 19 Email Dana Crews
FSA Families Erika Cervantes	Equity Officer Beverly Scurry	Emergency Preparedness Natalie Bontrager
FSA Partners Meredith McMonigle	Graphic Design Melissa Blackburn	SMS and Texting Caroline Shumaker
Refugee Community Partnership	OC Immigrant & Refugee Health Coalition	Business Liasion Victoria Hudson
El Centro Hispano	Refugee Support Center	Social Media Ana Salas
CHICLE	Family Success Alliance	Informatics Juliet Sheridan
Town of Chapel Hill- Building Integrated Communities	Apoyo- Centro para la Comunidad	Resource Coordinator Rita Krosner
	Liasion to OC Sheriff Alicia Stemper	Communicators Workgroup
		Community Partners
		Board of Health
		Volunteers
		Media



Six Feet Apart
 Social distancing graphics to remind people to keep a safe distance away from each other while out in public.



Image (PNG) in English, Español, Chinese, Arabic, Burmese, Karen, Kinyarwanda, Swahili

Stickers for printing on Avery mailing labels SIZE 94207 in English & Español

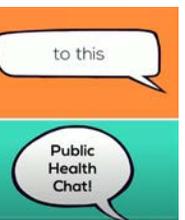
PDF in English/Español

Practice the 3Ws



Image (PNG) in English & Español

Social Distancing



How to Wash Your Hands



PDF in English, Español, & Chinese

Image (PNG) in English, Español, & Chinese



ORANGE COUNTY, NC
CORONAVIRUS UPDATES
TEXT OCNHEALTH TO 888-777
 QUESTIONS/ CONCERNS CALL (919) 245-6111

EL CONDADO DE ORANGE, NC
ACTUALIZACIONES DE CORONAVIRUS
MANDE MENSAJE DE TEXTO OCNCSALUD A 888-777
 PREGUNTAS/ PREOCUPACIONES LLAME AL (919) 245-6111

Thank You For
WEARING A FACE COVERING
Turabashimiye ko
MWAMBAYE AGAPFUKAMUNWA



Gratefully, YOUR HARD-WORKING STAFF
 Mwarakazi, ABAKOZI BANYU BADACOGORA

HOW TO USE A FACE COVERING

- Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer
- Cover your face with the covering and be careful not to touch eyes, nose and mouth
- Covering should fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- Covering should be routinely washed depending on the frequency of use

ORANGE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
 ORANGECOUNTYN.C.GOV/CORONAVIRUS

Welcome to this Episode of: Public Health Chat!

Durante la pandemia, es mejor quedarse en casa el mayor tiempo posible. Pero cuando tenga que salir, asegúrese de recordar estas tres importantes cosas:

- Usar una MASCARILLA de tela cubriendo nariz y boca.
- MANTENER 6 pies (dos metros) de distancia de los demás.
- Lávase las MANOS con frecuencia o usar desinfectante para manos.

www.orangecountync.gov/Coronavirus

OCHD Pandemic Response by the Numbers

Item	Number	Description / Notes
Infection prevention visits to long-term care facilities	85	Performed by the OC Strike Team and the Reginal Infection Prevention Support Team.
Total COVID-19 tests conducted by OCHD	36,200	Since September 2020 OCHD has offered free, daily, walk-in COVID-19 testing every at two locations in OC.
Hits to the OCHD COVID-19 website	321,000	www.orangecountync.gov/coronavirus
Hits to the OCHD COVID-19 vaccine website	180,000	www.orangecountync.gov/getyourshot
Hits to the OCHD COVID-19 testing website	89,000	www.orangecountync.gov/testing
COVID-19 text messages	525	Sent in English and Spanish to 4,305 community members each time.
COVID-19 newsletters	94	Each edition of the newsletter goes out to 1,716 subscribers and is also posted on multiple social media channels.
COVID-19 cases investigated	9,251	COVID-19 case investigations are initiated when OCHD receives a positive COVID-19 test result report from a laboratory.
COVID-19 contacts traced	9,168	Notifying contacts of exposure, addressing concerns, referring for SARS-CoV-2 testing, encouraging self-quarantine, monitoring of symptoms, and assessing the need for additional supportive services during the quarantine period.
COVID-19 vaccinations administered by OCHD	22,327	The total OC vaccination statistics may be found at the NCDHHS dashboard .
Pop-up COVID-19 vaccine clinics by OCHD	75	Includes community COVID-19 events held all over the county and organized by the human services group.
Calls answered by the COVID-19 information line	7,524	919-245-6111 has been available to community members for questions about COVID-19 and is able to serve non English-speaking callers.
Press releases	111	Press releases are regularly translated to other languages and include a weekly COVID-19 data update.
Vaccine postcards distributed	10,000+	A low-literacy, multilingual postcard has been distributed widely via businesses and community partners in order to span the digital divide.
Complaints addressed by Environmental Health	565	The JIC publicized a complaint form so community members could ask for assistance with COVID-19 regulations at businesses.
Social media posts	10,585	Multilingual COVID-19 information on Facebook Twitter, Instagram and Nextdoor. 8,801 shares with 59,331 clicks.
Videos published	55	Videos published on a variety of COVID-19 topics in English, Spanish, Chinese, Kinyarwanda, Swahili, Karen, Burmese and Arabic with a total of 9,274 views.
Volunteers trained and deployed to staff vaccine sites	2,270	66 volunteers and staff gave more than 100 shots each. The top vaccinator gave 837 shots.

(From January 25, 2020 to June 28, 2021)

2020-2024 ACTION PLANNING

[Healthy Carolinians of Orange County \(HCOC\)](#) and its partners went through an action planning process in 2020 and the early part of 2021 to identify potential strategies to address, at the community level, around **1) access to care, 2) health behaviors and 3) health equity**. Due to COVID-19, each committee of HCOC experienced barriers that delayed the action planning process and the outcomes. Similar to every other agency and coalition, majority, if not all, of our members had to deal with transitioning to work from home, caring for children and school responsibilities while working from home, assuming new or modified responsibilities as a result of COVID-19, and/or transitioned out of their role or the county. Through it all, the committees continued to meet (on a limited schedule) and think through efforts that could not only be useful to Orange County post COVID, but could also incorporate new COVID protocols and requirements.

For the next four years, HCOC will make efforts around each priority area and implement and support new or existing efforts to help improve access and the overall health and well-being of those who live and work in Orange County. The Access to Care committee will help to ensure that all individuals receiving services in Orange County will have everything they need, with no limitations, as it pertains to transportation, healthcare, prevention, as well as, intervention and treatment services. The Health Behaviors committee will focus on alcohol access and alcohol outlet density and work to ensure that all Orange County supports safe and responsible use of alcohol. The Health Equity Council will work to ensure that all members of the Orange County community have meaningful access to resources and supports to define, maintain, and improve their physical, mental, and social health and wellbeing.

GET INVOLVED

To get involved or to assist with the ongoing work of HCOC, around any of the three focus areas of Access to Care, Health Behaviors or Health Equity, email us at: hcoc@orangecountync.gov or call 919-245-2440.

PRIORITY 1: ACCESS TO CARE

Education, employment, income, family and social support, access to affordable and quality healthcare, and safety all provide the foundation for overall health and wellbeing. Social and economic factors have a huge impact on where and how one lives, jobs obtained, the care provided, and one's overall day-to-day experiences.

Health Care

Orange County has a strong health care community that includes a [nationally-ranked hospital system](#), an accredited [School of Public Health](#), a [federally qualified health center](#), a [local public health department](#), a medical and [dental school](#), and various private medical practices. Even though OC has a physician rate of 119.62 per 10,000 population, residents

continue to report barriers accessing health care services. Some voiced barriers include:

- 1) no medical insurance
- 2) the concentration of health care resources in the southern part of the county
- 3) inadequate transportation systems in the central and northern part of the county
- 4) language barriers
- 5) perceived discrimination or racism within health care facilities

Insurance

According to small areas health insurance estimates, 10.5% of OC residents 0-65 years of age are currently uninsured, compared to the NC rate of 12.5%. NC children and seniors show higher rates of coverage, largely due to [Medicaid and Medicare](#). Having health insurance provides individuals access to the health care system. A lack of coverage creates barriers that can limit or prohibit individuals from receiving the health care that they need and can cause an individual to have poor health status, late or no diagnosis and/or premature death³.

NC's Medicaid program currently uses managed care in a limited way, where primary care case management is done through [Community Care of North Carolina](#), the LME/MCO system for behavioral health services, and the [Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly \(PACE\)](#).

OCHD contracts with [Community Care Physician Network \(CCPN\)](#), which is a Clinically Integrated Network (CIN) in NC. CCPN then contracts with all of the PHPs that are eligible to provide coverage in Orange County on our behalf (AmeriHealth Caritas, BCBSNC, Carolina Complete Health, United Healthcare, and Wellcare), and are able to negotiate contracts with better fees and conditions for a large number of NC counties.



Transportation

On March 5, 2021, [Orange County Public Transportation \(OCPT\)](#) launched [MOD \(Mobility On Demand\)](#), an innovative pilot program that will provide flexible and dynamic transportation service within the Hillsborough service area. Orange County's MOD program will cost \$5 per trip and will be available on Fridays from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Similar to companies like Uber and Lyft, Orange County MOD vans will accommodate riders with disability needs and users will have the option to request a same-day ride through a smartphone app called [TransLoc](#). The app will provide passengers with an estimated pick-up time, track the MOD van's location in real-time, and alert them when

their ride is about to arrive.

[Chapel Hill Transit](#) provides transportation service to two UNC Health vaccination clinics and OCHD's vaccination clinic, which was previously provided at the RR Lot. Chapel Hill Transit operates GoTriangle's 420 route, which provides service to UNC Health vaccine clinic in Hillsborough.

PRIORITY 2: HEALTH BEHAVIORS

Foods consumed, lack of exercise, use of seatbelts, substance use (i.e. tobacco and alcohol) and sexual activity all affect ones overall health. Health behaviors are not always determined by a choice to be healthy or unhealthy, however, it is important to note that where one lives, learn, work and play, as well as social and economic circumstances and trauma exposure often dictate the ability to make healthy choices.

Tobacco Prevention and Control during COVID-19

[OCHD's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program](#) is evidence based, personalized and intentional in its approach to tobacco cessation. COVID is an illness that can impact the respiratory system, and in individuals who smoke or use tobacco COVID can have a devastating impact on the health of the lungs. OCHD pivoted the ways in which services were delivered to meet the needs of community members interested in quitting tobacco during the pandemic.

FreshStart Group Support Classes



Are you ready to QUIT tobacco?

Prepare for your QUIT day for FREE with our Freshstart 4-Week Tobacco Cessation Class:

- Make your plan
- Control your cravings
- Identify your support system
- Maintain your quit
- Know what to expect
- Get FREE patches, gum, and lozenges

CLASS DATES AND TIMES

Tuesday, March 2, 2021	5:30-6:30PM	Tuesday, March 16, 2021	5:30-6:30PM
Tuesday, March 9, 2021	5:30-6:30PM	Tuesday, March 23, 2021	5:30-6:30PM

You will need to have access to a computer or cell phone to participate in the virtual GoToMeeting classes. To register, call Rita Krosner at 919-245-2424 or SMOKEFREE OC at 919-245-2480 or email smokefreeoc@orangecountync.gov. Registration deadline is February 23, 2021

Connect to QuitlineNC: 1 (800) QUIT-NOW for a private Quit Coach
www.orangecountync.gov/QuitSmoking

ORANGE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

FreshStart is a tobacco cessation class that meets one hour per week for four weeks and offers participants educational cessation information, group support, and 12 weeks of free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) Products. As a result of COVID, the FreshStart Program had to adapt to community closures and pivoted from face-to-face classes to virtual classes. The virtual classroom provided community members the ability to access the course from their home environment, which resulted in increased registration, participation, and group support. Like most things, COVID created various challenges to the normal way of operating

and providing service. The first challenge was the need to mail all course material and NRT products rather than distributing them in person. The second challenge was the need for all participants to have access to a smart phone or computer with reliable WIFI connection.

Individualized Tobacco Treatment Services

Individualized Tobacco Treatment Services offers individuals 12 weeks of counseling and NRT products to those interested in quitting smoking, vaping or using any other tobacco products. Due to COVID and office closures these services adapted and changed from weekly face-to-face meetings to weekly telephonic meetings. The benefit of telephonic and virtual sessions was the ability for participants to access necessary support at their convenience, which yielded more referrals from the Orange County Medical and Dental clinics and area healthcare providers, and more satisfied participants. Currently, this programmatic service is seeing over 20 patients at varying stages of cessation in their smoke free journey, ranging from 30 days to 7 months.

The [UNC Tobacco Treatment Program](#) (formerly the Nicotine Dependence Program) has provided leadership for implementing comprehensive tobacco use treatment services, education and training, and dissemination of resources for promoting tobacco free communities for the past 12 years.

UNC's Tobacco Treatment Program (TTP) provides services across the UNC Health Care System, regardless of ability to pay. Services include:

- UNC Family Medicine Center: Open to all community members
- NC Cancer Hospital: TTP's on-site specialists engage patients from across the state who are fighting cancer.
- UNC Hospitals: Trained specialists ensure that patients receive medications for withdrawal upon admission to the hospital, resources for remaining tobacco free after discharge, and follow-up support.
- Worksite Programs: TTP works with local and regional employers, including UNC Health Care and the Town of Chapel Hill, to help their employees become and remain tobacco-free.

[Orange Partnership for Alcohol & Drug Free Youth](#) (OPADFY) connected with a Pediatric Physician to facilitate the development of a pediatric smoking/vaping cessation program and a youth vaping prevention program. That partnership yielded the initiation and implementation of a fellowship with the UNC Pediatric Pulmonary team where their staff will use this program to assist youth in quitting vaping, particularly those suffering from e-cigarette or vaping product use-associated lung injury (EVALI).

Prescription & Opioid Drug

Decades of prescribing more opioids at higher doses have led to a rising number of opioid overdose deaths creating a public health crisis in North Carolina to include Orange County. At the end of 2019 and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNC Medical Center and OCHD partnered to further coordinate efforts to address this epidemic in our community. This partnership will be a 3-5 year commitment to work with stakeholders in the opioid use disorder (OUD) and substance use disorder (SUD) community in OC. This partnership will build a more resilient infrastructure equipped to assess community needs to current and potentially the next wave of the opioid epidemic. The [NC Opioid State Action Plan](#) will serve as the foundation for the work with the below three priorities to address:

- 1) education**
- 2) reduce oversupply of prescription opioids**
- 3) expand treatment and recovery oriented systems of care**

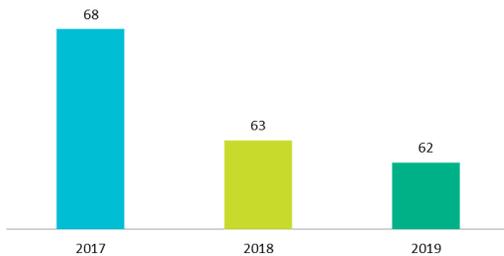
It is the hope to resume this group in 2021-2022, once things calm down around COVID-19, the vaccine, and reallocation of time back to this effort among both UNC Medical Center and OCHD.

Currently, there are eight permanent drop box locations in OC, to help dispose of expired and unwanted medications. Permanent drop boxes are located within all of OC's police departments (Carrboro, Chapel Hill and Hillsborough), the Orange County Sheriff's Office, Hillsborough Pharmacy, Walgreens, and three within UNC Health (two at the Chapel Hill campus and one at the Hillsborough campus).

Alcohol

The third leading cause of preventable death in NC is excessive drinking, and has been trending upward from 2012-2017. Excessive drinking is defined as binge drinking (4-5 drinks or more in one sitting by women and men), heavy drinking (8-15 drinks per week for women and men), and any drinking by pregnant women or people under the age of 21. Nine out of 10 excessive drinkers are not dependent on alcohol but may not realize that excessive drinking is associated with increased risky behavior, violence, suicide, homicide, vehicular accidents and/or multiple chronic diseases⁴.

OC Underage Alcohol Use ED Visits

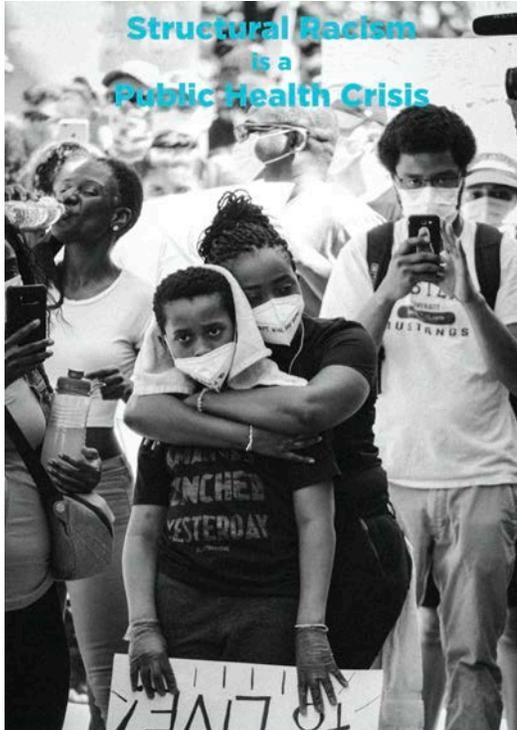


While the number of alcohol related ED visits, among OC minors, has declined from 2017 – 2019, alcohol continues to be the number one most frequently used substance among OC youth. There is strong evidence that alcohol outlet density restrictions can help reduce the rate of alcohol consumption, violent crime, individual alcohol consumption and underage drinking⁵.

PRIORITY 3: HEALTH EQUITY

Racism and Health

“Racism structures opportunity and assigns value based on how a person looks. The result: conditions that unfairly advantage some and unfairly disadvantage others. Racism hurts the health of our nation by preventing some people the opportunity to attain their highest



level of health. Racism may be intentional or unintentional and operates at various levels in society. Racism is a driving force of the social determinants of health (like housing, education and employment) and is a barrier to health equity”⁶.

OCHD acknowledges that public health is a system that was and continues to be structurally and foundationally built on racist policies, practices, and procedures. Due to this history, OCHD must actively work to gain the public’s trust and grow the department to become a more equitable system.

OCHD also acknowledges that our county’s marginalized populations face barriers across systems due to racial inequities in housing, banking, education, employment, etc. all of which contribute to poor health outcomes. This is why Health Director Quintana Stewart [declared structural racism a public health crisis](#).

OCHD’s Racial Equity Commission (REC) wanted to find a way to share resources and encourage OC’s community to enter the equity conversation. The [health equity webpage](#) was created to help others in the community grow in this work, to show the community the strides made in this work, and to help stay accountable to the community.

OC's Health Equity Council (HEC) was formed when OCHD received funding from the NC Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities to address the health status gap between racial/ethnic minorities and the general population. Members of HEC provide input and approve plans and budgets that outline action steps to advance health equity, address social determinants of health, reduce health disparities, and impact Culturally Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards.

To assist community partners with COVID-19 relief, HEC used existing funding to support language access as it relates to interpretation and translation needs. HEC is open to all community residents, businesses, agencies, and organizations. HEC's 2021-2024 action plan focuses on increasing educational opportunities and raising awareness of health equity in OC, increasing access to qualitative data by engaging community residents and working to inform the development of the Racial Equity Index, and improve health equity in COVID-19 recovery efforts by advocating for systemic policy change and continuing to vaccinate marginalized and vulnerable populations. To get involved, call 919-245-2405.

Race/Ethnicity and COVID-19

While race and ethnicity are markers for other underlying health conditions, including socioeconomic status, access to healthcare, and exposure to viruses, it also proves to be a marker for COVID-19. Early in the pandemic it quickly became clear that marginalized communities were being disproportionately affected by COVID-19, in particular the Hispanic/Latinx community. To help reach and address the concerns of COVID-19 among the Hispanic community, OCHD and Orange County Human Rights and Relations launched a video series called [“Cafecitos con el Condado de Orange”](#) (Coffee with Orange County) which aims to address the questions and concerns of the Hispanic community.



In response to this urgent need an existing Latinx Equity group began meeting weekly. The group includes attendees from various organizations from within the county and the state that identify as Hispanic/Latinx and are deeply involved with the Hispanic community. Topics have included health, housing, food scarcity, school closing, the challenges of virtual learning, and much more. In addition to sharing resources, the Latinx Equity group also collaborates on messaging that is tailored to the Hispanic community.

Human Services COVID-19 Response

December 21, 2020, OC created and launched a Human Services Consulting Group to help reduce vaccine barriers for people of color and other historically marginalized groups in OC. This is a racially diverse group of doctors, community center directors, public health educators and communicators, and County and non-profit staff representing more than 15 organizations. While the group originated as a result of COVID, the plan is to make the Human Services Group a subcommittee of HEC which will allow it to continue to guide and support the equitable distribution of vaccines and advocate for systemic policy change in COVID-19 recovery efforts.

The focus of the Human Services Consulting Group is to:

- Align County departments, who provide direct human services to residents, with non-profit service providers to identify historically marginalized groups (LGBTQ+, people of color, disable, etc.) across the County who are facing barriers to getting

the COVID-19 vaccine and finding ways to remove those barriers.

- Identify locations and host organizations for pop-up community vaccine clinics, and support those host organizations by directly reaching out and getting people signed up for appointments. During the early months of the vaccination effort, demand for vaccines was so high that people who had the free time and the technology to sign up often took vaccine appointments. The direct outreach conducted, along with trusted community organizations, was key to ensuring that historically marginalized groups had access to the vaccine.
- Work to identify homebound residents to get them vaccinated at home.
- Help establish a partnership to vaccinate unsheltered individuals in the OC.
- Report community feedback to the vaccination leadership team to help continuously improve the OC's practices. Community feedback led to improvements like centering community volunteers at community vaccination events, ensuring that police officers stayed in the background of vaccination events, and ensuring messages were sent in the ways and in the languages that would be most effective.

The work of the Human Services group, along with that of OCHD's vaccination team, has helped lead to vaccination rates among OC's Black and Latinx residents that are higher than their share of the population in the County.

DATA SOURCES

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⁴ NC DHHS (2019). New Data Dashboard Illustrates State, County Impacts of Excessive Alcohol Use in North Carolina. Accessed from <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/news/press-releases/new-data-dashboard-illustrates-state-county-impacts-excessive-alcohol-use-north>

⁵ County Health Rankings (2021). Alcohol Outlet Density Restrictions. Accessed from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/alcohol-outlet-density-restrictions>

⁶ APHA (2021). American Public Health Association: Racism and Health. Accessed from <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>