

# 2021 State of the County Health Report Lee County, North Carolina

## In this Report:

Purpose  
Health Priorities  
Demographics  
Morbidity and Mortality Data  
Obesity Reduction Update  
Teen Pregnancy Prevention Update  
Addressing the Opioid Epidemic in Lee County  
Mental Health Update  
Addressing the Opioid Epidemic in Lee County  
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)  
New Initiative  
Changes in Data  
Emerging Issues in Lee County

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## **Purpose**

The mission of the Lee County Health Department is to emphasize prevention as we: monitor and respond to environmental issues, provide access to health care for those who are in need, prevent and control the spread of disease, and promote healthy lifestyles in the community based on current patterns and guidelines.

The vision of the Lee County Health Department is to provide Lee County with ideal health and wellness programs and services that address the social determinants of health. The Lee County Health Department and LeeCAN (Community Action Network) conducted a Community Health Assessment in 2018.

## **Health Priorities**

The 2018 Community Health Assessment reported that the top health priorities for Lee County are tobacco use, substance use, obesity and teen pregnancy/STDs. In addition to these, with the pandemic beginning in 2020 we have heavily focused our efforts on providing care & guidance to the community. According to data collected from the 2018 CHA, 19% of Lee County residents were reported to be current smokers. 51% of Lee County residents reported being exposed to secondhand smoke in the past year. In 2018, there were 1,137 visits to the Emergency Department due to substance use. 29% of Lee County residents were considered obese compared to North Carolina residents as a whole at 32.1%. Lee County consistently ranks in the top 25 counties in the State in regards to teen pregnancy rates.

The 2022 State of the County Health Report discusses each health priority, and the actions taken to address them.

## Lee County, NC Demographics

According to the U.S. Census, Lee County's estimated population as of July 1, 2021 was 64,138. The primary races/ethnicities in Lee County are Caucasian (74.7%), African American (20.0%), and Hispanic or Latino (19.6%). Persons under 5 years old make up 6.3% of the county, 23.7% make up individuals who are under 18 years old, and 16.8% make up persons who are 65 years and over. 51.2% of the population are female and 48.8% are male.

	Lee County	North Carolina
<b>Total Population</b>	64,138	10,551,162
<b>% Caucasian</b>	74.7%	70.6%
<b>% African American</b>	20.0%	22.2%
<b>% American Indian and Alaskan Native</b>	1.3%	1.6%
<b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>	19.6%	9.8%
<b>% Asian</b>	1.4%	3.2%

Source: US Census Bureau Quick Facts

Lee County's median household income from 2016-2020 was \$52,294 compared to North Carolina's at \$56,642. There are approximately 15.4% of the county's residents are living in poverty compared to 12.9% in NC as a whole.

## Review of Major Morbidity and Mortality Data

### Leading Causes of Death for All Ages in Lee County 2015-2019

2018 Rank	Cause	# of Deaths	Death Rate
1	Cancer- All Sites	648	194.2
2	Diseases of the heart	609	191.0
3	Alzheimer's Disease	163	53.4
4	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	141	48.6
5	Cerebrovascular disease	156	61.5
<b>Total Deaths- All Causes</b>	--	<b>2,975</b>	<b>992.6</b>

Source: NC State Center for Health Statistics

According to the 2019 mortality statistics on the NC Center for Health Statistics, Lee County's top five leading causes of death in order were: Cancer, Diseases of the Heart, Alzheimer's Disease, Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases, and Cerebrovascular Diseases.

# Obesity Reduction Update

"The mission of LEEding Toward Wellness is to educate, empower, and connect all Lee County residents to opportunities that provide them with healthy resources that improve their overall well-being. During the first few meetings, the group discussed that although various health-related resources are available in the community, many people are not aware that these resources exist.

Under the facilitation of NC Cooperative Extension Lee County Center, A Healthy Resource Map was created by LEEding Toward Wellness. Major partners included the City of Sanford Planning and Development and Lee County GIS/ Strategic Services. The map includes the location of local parks, sports facilities, playgrounds, walking trails, wellness centers, greenway trails, passive parks, roadside produce stands, and community gardens. The Health Matters Grant through the CDC provided the funding for the printing of 750 maps. These were distributed to the Sanford Welcome Center, Lee County Health Department, Christians United Outreach Center Food Pantry, Lee County School Systems, and First Health Community Health Services. The map is digitally available on the LEEding Toward Wellness web portal. The taskforce is working to further expand the formats of the map that will be available in 2022."



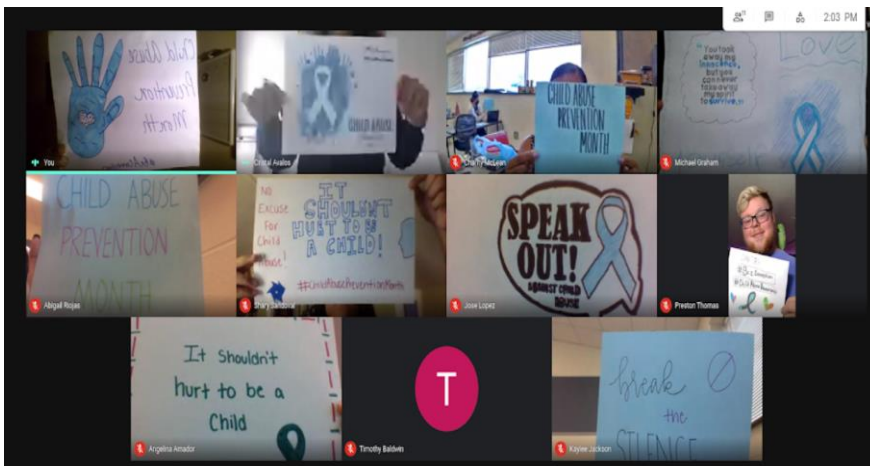
# Teen Pregnancy Prevention Update

Teen pregnancy has been a concern and health priority in Lee County for many years. Lee County consistently ranks in the top 25 counties in the state with regards to teen pregnancy rates. However, the total number of teen pregnancies has decreased throughout the state and Lee County. At this time Lee County is now rank 35<sup>th</sup> in county rankings for the state.

In 2021 Lee County had 54 pregnancies amongst 15-19 year old's. The majority of those pregnancies took place among 18-19 year old's with 43 pregnancies. For 15-17 year old's there were 11 pregnancies. Lee County also saw an increase in teen repeat pregnancies, going from 18% in 2010 to 24.7% in 2021.

The Teen Advisory Council serves as a collaborative team of professionals from various local agencies that works to educate the community on issues affecting teens, promote program materials, and guide program staff to deliver effective services to teens in Lee County.

TOP®, Teen Outreach Program, empowers teens from 7-12 grade with the tools and opportunities needed to build a foundation of healthy behaviors, life skills and a sense of purpose, and avoid risky behaviors that can derail success. A life skills program implemented in 9th grade health classes. Teens learn to build on the skills of: communication, healthy relationships, reproductive health, and decision-making. Adolescent Parenting Program (AP2) is a program that supports adolescent parents to get an education, acquire job skills, improve parenting abilities and prevent future pregnancies helps them become self-sufficient and better able to support themselves and their families. It also establishes a strong, stable foundation upon which the baby will be raised. By investing in teen parents today, the Adolescent Parenting Program (APP) protects the future of two generations - the young parents themselves and their babies.



# Lee County Teen Pregnancy Statistics

Lee County, NC Teen Pregnancies: 2020

<b>Number of pregnancies among 15-19 year old girls</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Teen Pregnancy rate per 1,000 15-19 year old girls</b>	<b>29.4</b>
<b>Teen Pregnancy rates by race/ethnicity:</b>	
<b>African American</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>Teen Pregnancy rates by age:</b>	
<b>15-17 year old's</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>18-19 year old</b>	<b>68.7</b>
<b>Number of Teen Pregnancies:</b>	
<b>Among 15-17 year old's</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Among 18-19 year old's</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Percent of repeat pregnancies</b>	<b>24.1%</b>
<b>Teen birth rate per 1,000 15-19 year old's</b>	<b>29.4</b>

\*Rates based on small numbers (<20 pregnancies) are unstable and not provided.

Source: North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics



## Mental Health Partners Update



### **Lee County Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) 2021**

Crisis Intervention Training provides instruction for first responders to better understand individuals who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis. CIT plays an important role in educating first responders during a crisis, and puts a strong emphasis on officer/first responder safety. Participants learn skills to safely de-escalate situations, and to recognize people in crisis so they can get the help they need. CIT also teaches participants about resources available within the community to encourage individuals who need treatment to access services.

A 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training program was held at Central Carolina Community College in Lee County during the week of October 18-22, 2021. Fifteen law enforcement officers graduated from the course. They represented the Lee County Sheriff's Office, the Sanford Police Department and the Greensboro Police Department. Sgt. Patrick Carroll of the Sanford Police Department served as host officer. Lee County CIT is a partnership between Sandhills Center, Central Carolina Community College, Lee County Sheriff's Office, Sanford Police Department, Therapeutic Alternatives, Central Carolina Hospital, Lee County Public Health (LeeCAN) and NAMI-Cumberland, Harnett and Lee Counties.



# Addressing the Opioid Epidemic in Lee County

The Lee County Health Department has built a partnership with the City of Sanford's Commission on the opioid epidemic. The general purpose of the Commission on The Opioid Abuse Epidemic is to recommend a plan for education and prevention, treatment and rehabilitation and enforcement to combat the opioid epidemic in the City of Sanford, which is of great concern to the health, safety and welfare of the Citizens of Sanford, and to advise the City on strategies to address the opioid epidemic. The six principles of the commission are education, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, enforcement, and harm reduction. The committees that encompass this commission are resource, education/awareness, inclusion/community outreach, law enforcement and government relations.

The specific duties of the Commission include: 1) advising the City of Sanford on the opioid epidemic; 2) educating the public and local officials about opioid abuse issues; 3) performing special studies and projects on the opioid epidemic; 4) preparing a report for the City Council addressing prevention, treatment, and enforcement to address the opioid epidemic; 5) facilitating citizen participation; 6) remaining informed about changes in laws and regulations affecting the City (and informing the public and local officials about such changes); 7) seeking funding, fundraising and grant opportunities and 8) promoting the State/City and public/private cooperation and coordination. This list is not exhaustive, and the Commission shall construe its duties broadly. The Commission shall not have authority to enforce any regulations, rules, ordinances, or laws.

Effective June 18, 2019, and under the authority granted in Chapter 160A-146 of the North Carolina General Statutes and Resolution No. 2019-34, dated June 18, 2019, the City of Sanford created a Commission on The Opioid Abuse Epidemic, in an effort to develop a strong team of advisors, with representatives from the community, City of Sanford, Lee County Sheriff's Department, Sanford Police Department, Treatment facilities and the Medical Community.

The Commission on The Opioid Abuse Epidemic shall be comprised of nine (9) voting members: three (3) appointed At Large by the Sanford City Council,

- one (1) representative from the Lee County Sheriff's Department,
- one (1) representative from the Sanford Police Department,
- one (1) representative from a treatment facility,
- one (1) representative from the post-treatment follow up community,
- one (1) representative from the medical community, and
- one (1) representative from the education community.

In addition, two representatives of the Sanford City Council, who serve at the appointment of the Council, shall be ex-officio, non-voting members.

The commission meets the first Monday of each month at 6pm. Their website is [www.sanfordopioidcommission.com](http://www.sanfordopioidcommission.com) and their Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/sanfordopioidcommission>.

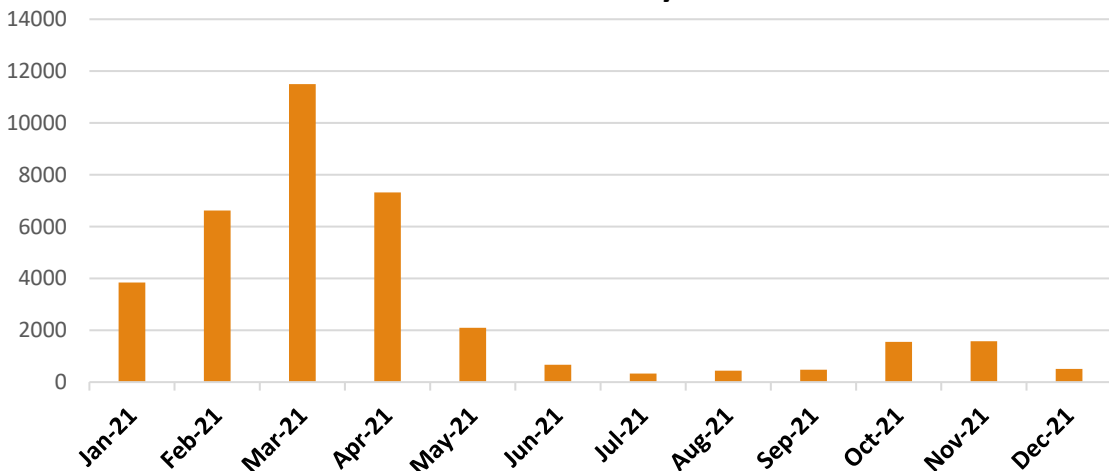


## Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Lee County North Carolina experienced the first death as a result of COVID-19 May 2020. Thus far in Lee County, there have been 119 deaths, with a total of 10,157 cases meaning 10,038 of those infected have recovered. Although residents are being vaccinated, the CDC still recommends preventative actions be taken such as avoiding close contact with people who are sick, and those not residing in the same household. To help prevent and stop the spread of COVID-19, the public is reminded to follow the three W's— Wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth; Wait six feet or more away from others to maintain a safe social distance; and Wash your hands and clean surfaces thoroughly and frequently.

Lee County has proactively reviewed existing public health preparedness plans and established drive through clinics to serve our residents and surrounding counties. They have also created a call center and online registrations to adequately vaccinate all those interested. Emergency Preparedness, Health Education and volunteers distributed information on the vaccines as they registered participants.. These vaccines are being offered by the Lee County Health Department staff at the Dennis Wicker Civic Center. The Health Department is also working in the community at the residential facilities, correctional institutions, and homeless shelters, in an effort to vaccinate the most vulnerable in our community.

**Vaccinations Given by Month**



## **New Initiative**

### **Opioid Prevention**

Lee County Health Department has a standing order for Naloxone (Narcan). We are in the process of training nursing staff to educate patients on the administration of Narcan and will begin dispensing it early 2022. Moving forward we intend to educate our patients who are substance users on overdose prevention and the administration of Narcan. We have begun the process of creating a brochure. This brochure will be a viable resource in educating the community of the impacts of opioid usage, steps towards care and a guide to prevention. We are in partnership with the City of Sanford's Commission on the opioid epidemic. Moving forward the Lee County Health Department intend to re-establish Project Lazarus, and provide linkage to care, education, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. Law enforcement will be included in this plan to provide safety and they too will be trained on the administration of Narcan. Lee County's portion of the Opioid settlement will be utilized to help with this initiative.

## **Changes in Data**

According to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and Shift NC, Lee County has experienced a decrease in teen pregnancies since 2019. The statistics showed that the number of teen pregnancies from those aged 15-17 years old dropped by almost half. The number reflects 2019 at 20 and is 11 in 2020.

Lee County experienced an increase in teen repeat pregnancies increasing from 19.7% in 2019 to 24.7% in 2020.

The CDC also acknowledges the importance of teen pregnancy prevention. Pregnancy and birth are significant contributors to high school dropout rates among girls. Only about 50% of teen mothers receive a high school diploma by 22 years of age, whereas approximately 90% of women who do not give birth during adolescence graduate from high school. The children of teenage mothers are more likely to have lower school achievement, higher chances of high school dropout, more health problems, face unemployment as a young adult, or be incarcerated at some time during their adolescence.

Through the NC Coalition to end Homelessness, the Balance of State Continuum of Care is an annual report that reviews important datapoints. Notably, the number of those seeking Emergency Shelter increased by 37%. In 2020 it was 51 and it increased to 70 in 2021.

## **Emerging Issues in Lee County**

Lee County has begun to see an increase in the unsheltered and transient population. Our partners, who are normally capable of aiding this community, have found themselves overwhelmed or otherwise incapable of providing traditional assistance. Due to this we have been looking at alternative means to close the gap.

This population is oftentimes underserved and falls to the margins. Through the NCDHHS there is an opportunity for the Community Health Grant. This grant is explicitly for the community that is underserved and in need. If successful this will be a means of closing the gap and expanding the care we offer to the underserved.

COVID-19 has been a persistent issue this year. Although the daily case count had decreased consistently in the last quarter of the year they began to increase in December. With the introduction of the Omicron variant we are looking to scale up our offerings here at the Health Department to stay in line with potential increases. We have begun to look into re-establishing testing here at the Wellness Center and are looking to implement staffing increases within our COVID-19 team to be prepared.



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